

## **OXFORDSHIRE PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6 April 2022 commencing at 1.35 pm and finishing at 4.05pm

### **Present:**

Councillor Ian Snowdon – in the Chair

Councillors:

Charlie Hicks

Brad Baines

Yvonne Constance OBE

Dan Levy

Kieron Mallon

Sally Povolotsky

Judy Roberts

Richard Webber

*The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **8/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item 1)

There were none received

### **9/22 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record

### **10/22 PROGRESS AGAINST POLICE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN FOR OXFORDSHIRE**

(Agenda Item 5)

(Matthew Barber, Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campbell, Chief Constable and Katy Barrow-Grint, Chief Superintendent, Thames Valley Police attended the meeting for this item)

The Police and Crime Commissioner, with the aid of slides, gave a presentation on the Thames Valley Police & Criminal Justice Plan for 2021-2025. He referred specifically to the changing nature of community policing, fighting serious organised crime, fraud, and cyber-crime, improving the criminal justice system, and tackling illegal encampments. He also outlined future strategies included rural crime, business crime, neighbourhood policing, road safety and fly-tipping and environmental crime. He referred to the work of community safety partnerships, the current position on police officer recruitment and services for victims and the violence reduction unit

The following issues were raised by members: -

- Concerns that the law on illegal encampments needed to be strengthened. The Commissioner said that legislation going through parliament would criminalise specific examples of trespass.
- Lack of enforcement of road offences and a need for more speed cameras and protection for vulnerable road users. The Commissioner said that improvements were needed in dealing with reactive reports of road offences and public confidence that these will be dealt with appropriately. He was waiting to see the results of a trial of average speed cameras in Hampshire. The Chief Constable said that the force issued around 200,000 fines for road offences. Members considered it would be appropriate for enforcement of these offences to transfer to local authorities.
- Concerns about racism, misogyny, and other types of discrimination within police forces. The Commissioner said that any cases within Thames Valley Police have been brought to the attention of senior colleagues and there was a healthy culture around reporting such incidents. He also emphasised the importance of screening applicants during recruitment
- Concerns about the increase in hate crimes in the County. The Chief Constable referred to the need to encourage the reporting of such crimes and the need for a better understanding of the motives.
- Question about the number of front offices in the County. The Chief Constable said he had to review the use of resources available and the level of use when deciding whether to keep open front offices.
- Concerns about rural crime and incidents of valuable items being stolen from properties at night. The Chief Constable said that a rural task force had been established to deal with these incidents
- The Commissioner reported that the Police and Crime Panel would be considering a report on CCTV provision recommending improved coverage and a unified system covering the entire force area.
- Need to improve the process for community trigger applications. The Commissioner said that he could provide a central secretariat and an independent chair.
- The Commissioner said that the force had new in-house expertise devoted to dealing with modern slavery and increased awareness and training was being provided
- Concerns that insufficient priority was being given to tackling crime against women and girls. The Commissioner said that there were priorities in the plain aimed at dealing with these types of crime
- Concern about the high proportion of annual council tax increase being allocated to the police. The Commissioner said that he had to justify any increase in Council Tax for police services when making recommendation to the Police and Crime Panel
- The need to use all criminal justice levers to deal with County drug lines and knife carrying
- Concerns that there were no statistics on the diversity of the workforce in the presentation. The Chief Constable said that the current

establishment was 52% male and 48% female and that recruitment of applicants from ethnic minorities had increased to 14% of the workforce.

- The Chief Constable said that authorities were working together on co-ordination of the homes for Ukraine initiative
- The Chief Constable said that sickness absence had affected the response times to answer calls to the 101 service

**RESOLVED to:-**

- a) note the presentation by the representatives of the Thames Valley Police and the responses to the points raised at the meeting;***
- b) ask members to relay any further questions and concerns to the Scrutiny Officer by e-mail so that these can be forwarded to the Commissioner and Chief Constable***

**11/22 NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY**

(Agenda Item 6)

(Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highways Management, and John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy & Policy Manager, attended the meeting for this item)

The Infrastructure and Policy Manager, with the aid of slides, gave a presentation on the National Bus Strategy and Bus Strategy Improvement Plan in Oxfordshire. He commented that bus patronage was around 75% of pre-covid levels across the network. The award of a £12.7m funding settlement was significantly less than had been included in the Council's bid and there was a prospect of service withdrawals. Work on getting people back on the buses included a bus summit, development of an enhanced partnership to be considered by Cabinet, and consultation with operators. The funding was indicative and not confirmed. He outlined the various initiatives to which the funding could be allocated.

Councillor Bearder commented on the limited funding available to the Council which would not lead to transformational change in rural bus services. He said there was a need to look at innovative ways to maintain the bus service. The Council can influence improvements to the network, but the bus services were operated by private companies and must run for profit. There was considerable scope to improve the efficiency of those services.

The following points were raised by members: -

- The governance of the Enhanced Partnership board needs to be scrutinised

- The impact of large numbers of people working from home and the need to consider priorities for bus services across the county, not only in Oxford
- The importance of conversion of bus fuel
- The need for increased investment in rural services
- The use of bus services by young people and financial initiatives to enable them to continue to use the services

**RESOLVED to: -**

- a) ***note the current position regarding the National Bus Strategy and Bus Strategy Improvement Plan in Oxfordshire***
- b) ***ask the Infrastructure and Policy Manager to bring a report to a future meeting on the governance of the Enhanced Partnership Board***

**12/22 UPDATES FROM TASK GROUP CHAIRS**

(Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Constance gave an update on the work of the Carbon Reduction Targets Working Group. She said that work on improvements and energy efficiency initiatives for the Council's property estate had been delayed due to change in the management of the property service.

Councillor Hicks gave an update on the work of the Transport Policy Working Group. This included meeting targets in LTCP5. road building in South Oxfordshire, buses and trains, active travel and disability, freight and logistics, and business needs

A member expressed concern about the late submission of papers to the working groups, the method of selecting expert witnesses, and the insufficient time to deal with the work programme Councillor Hicks explained the differences between the publication requirements for the formal committee and informal working groups. He said that the Scrutiny officers were working on an improvement plan which would deal with these concerns.

***RESOLVED to note the current position on the work of task groups.***

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....

