

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 18 February 2013 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Anthony Gearing
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Alan Thompson
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat

Officers: Eira Hale, Lead Analyst
Jacquie Bugeja, Head of Registration and Coroner's Service
Dave Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer (Item 5)
Richard Webb, Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety (Item 5)
Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Item 8)
Carys Alty, Community Safety Unit Manager (Item 9)
Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager (Item 10)
Claire Phillips, Senior Policy & Performance Officer (Item 11)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

5/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies sent and noted from Councillor Mallon, who had been invited to attend for item 9.

Two members noted disappointment that he was not able to attend.

6/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

7/13 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising from the meeting 12 November:

- Item 57/12: Councillor Pressel requested a road safety update. The chairman confirmed that this would be covered as part of item 5 on this agenda.
- Item 57/12: Councillor Pressel requested an update on the community library co-ordinator. The chairman confirmed that this would be covered as part of item 5 on this agenda.
- Item 59/12: Councillor Pressel requested a report be brought to the committee on hate crime. The chairman confirmed that this was part of the work programme for the coming year.
- Item 65/12: Councillor Pressel queried whether Councillor Mallon had been invited to speak to the committee about cohesion. The Chairman confirmed that this was also part of the work programme for the coming year and that he would do his best to ensure that Councillor Mallon attended meetings when invited.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

There were no matters arising from the meeting 10 January.

8/13 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests to address the committee or petitions.

9/13 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Jacquie Bugeja gave a verbal update on behalf of the Head of Law and Culture, Peter Clark. The update included, amongst other items:

SSC3

- Oxfordshire are members of the national working group for implementing the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, but it is not due to come into effect for some time. A timetable for implementation is still being developed.
- Refurbishment of the Coroner's Court is almost complete. It has included the introduction of a range of technological improvements. The cost of this has been partly covered by the Ministry of Justice.
- Library Service:
 - Now implementing 'Universal Offers'. This is a national approach to library services, defining what public libraries should provide, and what users should expect.
 - The National Library day on 9th February was a great success.
 - The self-service project is on track for delivery to all libraries. It is currently installed in 35 libraries and feedback is positive.
 - James Hazelwood has now been appointed as the Community Library Co-ordinator.
 - CIPFA statistics show that Oxford Central library is the second busiest in the country for issues.
- A review of the items and collections within the museum service is underway. A new collection has gone on show and is receiving positive feedback.

Jacque answered a range of questions and confirmed that there were many complexities with the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act but Oxfordshire would follow the national guidelines, once they had been established, to ensure the integrity of the service. She also explained that the project to introduce voluntary staff into libraries was progressing well and getting support from local communities.

Dave Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer, gave a verbal update from Community Safety. The update included:

- A summary of the role of Oxfordshire Trading Standard in supporting the Food Standards Agency with the investigation into horsemeat in some beef products. More testing would be carried out over the next few weeks but we have good local controls over labelling of meat products. There were a range of questions to which Councillor Heathcoat stated that all Oxfordshire County Council contractors will have been checked within the terms of their contract and that the Council has tight controls over those contracts. She also stated that at this stage it was not possible to categorically say that food or food sources used by Carillion were being tested or what any results may be, as the Food Standards Agency was still conducting its investigations. In response to further questioning Dave Etheridge also clarified that recent reductions to trading standards staff had been at the management level. This had not effected front line staff or their ability to respond to the situation.
- There have been 5 authorisations for the use of RIPA in the last quarter. Three of these were in relation to doorstep crime and one of these resulted in evidence being passed to another agency, a conviction and custodial sentence.

SSC3

- A very wet winter and high river levels meant that there has been some flooding in the last quarter, but this has been dealt with effectively. It is possible there may be more flooding to respond to in the next quarter. A full report on flood responses will be discussed at the next meeting of this committee.
- The Fire Control project is going well. The tenders for software and hardware will be submitted in the next month.
- Dave Etheridge extended his thanks to members for their support of the OFRS Risk Management Plans.
- The road safety strategy is incorporated into the Integrated risk Management Plan and road safety information will now be included in the Fire Service Annual Performance Report.

Several questions were asked and confirmation was given that the changes to RIPA which require prior authorisation by a judge should not harm the confidentiality of each case. Dave Etheridge also undertook to explore the any opportunities for the Council to have a greater input into commenting on planning applications with regard to flooding issues.

10/13 DEATH CERTIFICATION

(Agenda No. 6)

Jacque Bugeja provided a verbal update on the Death Certifications Reforms and Introduction of Medical Examiners. The consultation period on this change was due to have opened but it is not now expected to commence until March, although implementation is still expected in April 2013. The purpose of the change is to introduce medical examiners to improve the accuracy of mortality statistics and to prevent a reoccurrence of Shipman. The examiners will be funded from the introduction of a fee payable by the bereaved at the time the death is registered. This would be nationally set and transparent. It would not be part of the funeral directors costs. Last year there were 4,000 deaths that would have been effected by this fee if it were levied. Therefore there is a significant financial and reputational risk to the council. Councillors are encouraged to use the consultation period, when it is opened, to feedback their concerns.

11/13 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 7)

There were no comments regarding the Forward Plan.

12/13 DRAFT OFRS STRATEGIC INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013/18 & INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN - ACTION PLAN 2013/14

(Agenda No. 8)

Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the paper Draft OFRS Strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/18 & Integrated Risk Management Plan – Action Plan 2013/14, giving a summary of the consultation feedback and taking questions. This year there were 200 responses, a significant improvement on previous years.

- Risks at Home
OFRS continue to support the use of sprinklers in domestic buildings, but there is no statutory requirement to fit them. Other extinguishing technologies are also being explored for use in buildings over a certain height.
- Risks at Work
OFRS operate a risk based inspection of business property. Businesses with a higher fire risk are inspected more frequently than lower risk properties.
- Risks while Travelling
Feedback on the plan was supportive of the plans for road safety education, with particular emphasis being put on the need to educate adult cyclists. OFRS are working closely with the Police, Economy & Environment Directorate and other partners to understand the cause and effect of road traffic collisions and to explore the potential to share buildings, where appropriate.
- Heritage Risks
OFRS work with owners of heritage properties to mitigate the potential impact of fire damage on properties. They also have specific plans to deal with any fires at certain significant sites.
- Extreme Risks
The feedback from the consultation was supportive of the proactive approach taken by OFRS to respond to extreme risks, such as flooding.

The committee agreed the recommendation to adopt the plans subject to full cabinet approval.

13/13 OXFORDSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN REPORT

(Agenda No. 9)

Carys Alty, Safer Communities Unit Manager, gave a presentation on the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership Business Plan. The report focused on the six emerging themes that have been developed from the strategic intelligence assessment:

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Acquisitive Crime
- Violent Crime
- Road Traffic Accidents
- Reducing Re-Offending

The presentation also covered the development of a performance framework to monitor progress in relation to the themes and the work that the partnership are doing to develop a commissioning framework able to respond to the community safety needs of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The committee discussed the difficulty of balancing the needs to respond to the concerns of local communities with broader community safety issues, such as child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse and reducing the fear of crime. The relationship between the partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner was also discussed and the Chairman confirmed that the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable would be attending the next meeting of this committee to introduce their plans for 2013/14. Reports of the Police and Crime Panel meetings are available online and the Chairman also confirmed that Councillor Mallon had been invited to attend the next meeting of this committee to explain the work of the panel.

14/13 VILLAGE HALL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE GRANTS POLICY
(Agenda No. 10)

Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager, introduced the report. The grant scheme eligibility covers halls in both urban and rural areas. There are very clear and concise criteria, publically available on the website, and through ORCC. Decisions are made by Councillor Heathcoat at delegated decision meetings and are open for all members to attend. Karen emphasised the investment on need basis on which decisions were made but explained that they were reliant on which requests came forward. This explains why there are more grants made in some areas than others. Members were concerned “that the criteria relating to buildings having to be made available for public use for 21 years after the grant were made”, may exclude some organisations from applying. This criteria is in place to ensure that “good value for money” can be obtained from the use of public money and that local communities benefit from the improvements for a significant period of time.

15/13 COUNCILLOR COMMUNITY BUDGETS
(Agenda No. 11)

Claire Phillips, Senior Performance and Policy Officer, introduced the paper and explained that the deadline for committing spends for this budget was the end of February. To date 64% of the funds have been allocated and 36% remains. 7 councillors have yet to allocate any of their funds, although five of these are well on the way to submitting complete applications. 16 councillors have allocated all of their funds. Over half of councillors have spent at least 75% of their fund. From the total amount of grants made, 91% were for projects of less than £3,000 and these projects were wide ranging and supported a wide range of communities. Most of the groups supported were well established but it is possible to use the fund to support and benefit new groups. The majority of the funds were used to support sports groups, outdoor play spaces and activities for both young and old people across the county.

The committee discussed the scheme, agreeing that it was a positive scheme, and easy to make applications to. They also suggested that a way to remove any barriers

to spending would be to promote the scheme more widely at the launch and to support members to develop networks and reach out to new groups.

16/13 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 12)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing