

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 13 February 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair
Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Anthony Gearing
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor John Sanders
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Alan Thompson
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat

Officers:

Whole of meeting	Kathrin Luddecke
Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5	Colin Thomas, Karen Warren
6	Carol Anderson
7	Mat Carlile
8	Sarah Langley
9	Carys Alty

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.

1/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed was not present; Councillor Kieron Mallon had sent his apologies.

2/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE (Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3/12 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 7 November (**SSC3a**), 12 December (**SSC3b**) and 15 December 2011 (**SSC3c**) were **approved and signed**.

Matters arising:

- Item 158/11: Councillor Lilly had established through relevant portfolio holders and officers that appropriate back up and remote working arrangements were in place for all three sites mentioned and updates on power outage actions had been circulated to committee members; Councillor Pressel noted that her concerns extended to other businesses in the area – **AGREED** for Councillor Lilly to raise with Cabinet members outside the meeting, keeping Councillor Pressel informed
- Item 161/11: Members noted the information circulated by Mike Beardsley following the meeting and that a fuller item remains on the committee's forward plan; Councillor Heathcoat informed members that an OFSTED report rating the service as 'good' was expected next month
- Item 171/11: Committee members were reassured that the Library Service, including the proposed review of mobile libraries, remains on its Forward Plan.

4/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda No. 4)

There were no speakers or petitions.

5/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE
(Agenda No. 5)

The Acting County Librarian, Karen Warren, on behalf of the Director for Social & Community Services, gave a verbal update on Community Services. She gave a more detailed overview of developments concerning the Library Service.

Management support across Library Services is being rationalised from 15 to 9 posts, with changes to come into effect for April 2012. Jillian Southwell has been appointed to the lead post for the service of Library Service Manager, with other appointments to be confirmed. Contact with Friends' Groups is being maintained. The support programme in place for the current 140 volunteers in the service is being evaluated. Liaison is taking place with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action in relation to their joint project to engage with people in communities that are not usually active or who are at risk of social exclusion.

Book issues have increased over quarter 3 last year by 1.89% (4.49% for children's books). Self-service is now available in Summertown library. The WiFi pilot project has been introduced in Central Library since December and is to be introduced to Abingdon, Banbury, Didcot and Witney libraries before the end of March; it will then be evaluated before considering further roll-out. E-books and e-audio downloads will be available from the library website from the end of this month.

SSC3

Karen Warren gave a verbal update on other services on behalf of the Head of Strategy & Transformation, including:

- History Service: a full report will come to the next meeting of the committee
- Museums Service: agreement with the Soldiers of Oxfordshire almost in place; work expected to begin on site later in the summer.
- The Mill Arts Centre (Banbury): positive year with ministerial visit to Job Club hosted there; future to be considered as part of master planning for the town

Responding to a query from Councillor Goddard, Councillor Heathcoat asked for her personal thanks to staff undertaking the libraries work, in particular Karen Warren, to be placed on record. Other issues raised by members included:

- Work is being planned to ensure Friends'/community groups form around libraries, including those in more deprived areas, and the Service is linked into work on 'Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation'
- A business case would have to be made for further roll-out of wifi following the evaluation; Councillor Service noted that district councils may wish to support

AGREED that the Library Service will keep local elected members informed about discussions with Friends'/community groups.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Colin Thomas, gave an update on key issues in Community Safety and Fire & Rescue, including:

- As a result of work by Trading Standards' financial investigator, a successful prosecution had been brought against a letting agent, resulting in a confiscation order of £250k
- Citizens Advice Consumer Service: county council is monitoring the transfer and supporting local Citizen Advice Bureaus; the council's own calls will transfer on 2 April 2012
- Gypsy & Traveller Service budgets: Richard Webb had provided a written note to members, any queries should be referred back to him
- Fire Control: a new system put in place in December is functioning well; a delegated decision is due following this meeting on the future arrangements for call receipt, mobilising and incident management for the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service including the submission of a funding bid with Royal Berkshire FRS to DCLG for a joint control centre
- Winter weather: a written update was circulated and a verbal update given in relation to a recent incident on the M40, responsibility of the Highways Agency

A written report on the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 by Oxfordshire County Council had been circulated for consideration by the committee (**SSC5**). The updates were followed by members' comments and questions.

AGREED for a written update by Richard Webb on the development of the new Citizens Advice Consumer Service to be circulated to members.

6/12 DRAFT OXFORDSHIRE MUSEUMS STRATEGY

(Agenda No. 6)

Carol Anderson, Museum Service Manager, presented the draft Oxfordshire Museums Strategy (**SSC6**). It was noted as a correction that in par.4.2 on p.23 "Oxford University Museums" should be inserted.

Carol Anderson explained the increasing importance of collaborative working between museums and of active engagement with communities, through outreach where required. Local museums had become increasingly independent, with the service providing guidance and professional support where required. Partnership working would help maintain a broad spectrum of support with reduced budgets.

Members raised a number of queries, including:

- Engagement of district councils through the Museums joint working group
- Outreach to schools, in particular state schools, and marketing
- Close working with other council Community Services, e.g. the History Service
- Storage facilities (extensions to Standlake Resource Centre) and review of collections including archaeology
- Oxfordshire's and the County Museums Service's share of the Arts Council funding recently awarded (currently being negotiated).

AGREED for the Museums service to keep the committee updated on progress, in particular as the governance structure for Oxfordshire Aspires will be developed.

7/12 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY - DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2012-13

(Agenda No. 7)

Mat Carlile, Area Manager – Business & Improvement, gave a further update on this plan (**SSC7**), following consultation. The positive response overall was noted; members supported the service's plans to broaden the consultation for the service's 5-10 year vision next year by working with Oxfordshire Voice and focus groups.

AGREED members could to help check future consultation papers were accessible.

Responding to Councillor Pressel, Mat Carlile provided reassurance that the Road Safety educational service was linked into national networks and aware of best practice. Noted a discussion is scheduled for the committee meeting in June.

8/12 DRAFT PROPOSAL TO CREATE A JOINT TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE BETWEEN OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILS

(Agenda No. 8)

Sarah Langley, Interim Manager – Trading Standards, presented the report (**SSC8**) outlining the findings from the research that led to the proposals to be considered by Cabinet in March. In developing proposals for a joint governance board, learning from

other Trading Standards services across the country would be taken into account. A key concern was to retain political control including scrutiny of the service.

Members commended officers for the work to date and a clear report. They raised concerns about meeting increased demand, staffing levels and specialisms, TUPE arrangements and mitigating risks to the council, maintaining the excellent service currently provided in Oxfordshire and keeping local knowledge and priorities. It was noted that a joint service with Buckinghamshire would help enrich the service, increase resilience and put it in a good position for the future as the landscape for Trading Standards is changing.

AGREED for Richard Webb to provide further information about how staff savings will be achieved.

9/12 UPDATE ON SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP AND POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND PANEL
(Agenda No. 9)

Carys Alty, Manager - Safer Communities Unit, gave an update on the current position in preparing for the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in November this year, focusing on the setting up the Thames Valley-wide Police and Crime Panel (PCP) (**SSC9**). Noted as a correction to par.8 that the Home Office had increased the funding for the authority hosting the Panel to £53,500.

The committee was concerned that:

- The importance of retaining a diverse set of local priorities, reflecting diversity across both the area and the county, was to be communicated to the Commissioner and Panel
- Funding for projects considered to be successful in addressing local needs (such as for the Domestic Abuse and Mantra co-ordinator posts) might be at risk given funding will go from the district Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to the PCC next year
- The Commissioner, as well as the county council's representative appointed to the Panel, were encouraged to consider themselves as accountable to this committee (similar to the Chief Constable coming before it once a year).

In response, Carys Alty mentioned the importance of developing a robust evidence base to demonstrate what works and noted that the Thames Valley Police Authority (before it is abolished in November) and the Chief Constable will be developing a draft of the five year Police and Crime Plan before the Commissioner is elected. The Commissioning Prospectus will provide good coverage across all community safety work.

AGREED that:

- Carys Alty will circulate further information about the plans, including a timeline
- Officers will take into account the discussion at committee in representing the council on the Transition Group set up to develop arrangements
- Officers leading on the work will ensure the committee receives frequent updates leading up to November.

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10/12 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 10)

AGREED for the committee officer to circulate the committee's draft Work Plan.

11/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 11)

Close of meeting 1pm

..... in the Chair

Date of signing