

## **SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Monday, 30 April 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.30pm

### **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

Councillor Sandy Lovatt (substituting for Cllr Alyas Ahmed)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor Kieron Mallon (items 1-5)

Councillor Judith Heathcoat (items 6-13)

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting Kathrin Luddecke

Part of meeting

### **Agenda Item**

	<b>Officer Attending</b>
5	Chief Constable Sara Thornton QPM, Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball
6	Dave Etheridge
7	Carys Alty
8	Richard Webb, Gary Brewer
9	Colin Thomas
10	Simon Kearey, Peter Clarke, Jacquie Bugeja
11	Simon Kearey, Karen Warren

*The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.*

## **12/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Sandy Lovatt substituted for Councillor Alyas Ahmed. Councillor Susanna Pressel gave her apologies for part of the meeting, as she would be attending a constituent's funeral.

## **13/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE**

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

**14/12 MINUTES**  
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 February (**SSC3**) were approved as a correct record, subject to amending the spelling of Mike Bardsley (p.3), and were signed by the chairman.

Matters arising:

- Item 3/12: Councillor Lilly **agreed** to approach the council's Business Continuity Manager and keep Councillor Pressel informed
- Item 3/12: an update about the Adult Learning service is on the committee's forward plan; it was **agreed** for the committee officer to circulate the recent Ofsted report rating the service as 'good'
- Item 5/12: it was confirmed that the joint community engagement project by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action had received Local Area Agreement (LAA) funding; it was **agreed** for the committee officer to circulate an update about the project
- Item 5/12: Cllr Pressel asked to be kept informed in relation to all libraries serving her division; Cllr Heathcoat noted that new arrangements had taken effect at the beginning of the month and elected members will be informed as work progresses
- Item 8/12: an update by Richard Webb had been circulated to the committee.

**15/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE**  
(Agenda No. 4)

There were no speakers or petitions.

**16/12 THAMES VALLEY POLICE: PRESENTATION AND Q&A**  
(Agenda No. 5)

Chief Constable Sara Thornton QPM of Thames Valley Police gave a presentation, covering performance in priority crime and other measures such as confidence and satisfaction. It was **AGREED** to circulate the presentation to committee members.

She highlighted key processes underway to improve performance and productivity in view of £55m of savings identified over four years to March 2015, such as changing shift patterns and over time arrangements, collaboration with the Hampshire Force and increasing use of technology. The aim was to protect frontline services, with increased numbers of patrol and neighbourhood officers. A zero based budget approach was being applied to corporate functions such as finance, human resources and development. In the absence of a basic Oxfordshire Command Unit, any issues went directly to Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball at headquarters.

The committee noted the strong performance by Thames Valley Police on target measures set by the Police Authority. Members put a range of questions to the Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball, including on these matters:

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- Boundaries of Neighbourhood Policing areas have been revised to create larger areas, to ensure greater resilience through organising existing staff in different ways (including officers patrolling on their own).
- Neighbourhood Action Groups are working very well in many areas by focusing partners on local priority concerns, such as quality of life issues. The Police will not impose a standard model but use different processes to establish local concerns in communities with different levels of engagement.
- Sexual abuse of children is recognised to be an issue wider than the city and the county. Criminal trials are currently underway in Oxford, and the Police remains in the process of gathering intelligence. It is working closely with social services in its efforts to look at organised crime and vulnerable people including young people in care.
- Metal theft is recognised as an issue, with a focus on preventative work, including supportive relationships with scrap metal outlets, as well as covert operations and immediate response to any incidents. This was in liaison with the British Transport Police who have the national lead on metal theft.
- It was noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner would decide whether to participate in scrutiny discussions across the 18 local authorities in the Thames Valley area. By law, the Commissioner will be accountable to their local Police and Crime Panel.

Also discussed were decriminalised parking and road policing, costs of translation services, cycling in Oxford and the Olympics. The committee thanked the Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable for the presentation and discussion.

### **17/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - FIRE & RESCUE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY** (Agenda No. 6)

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Community Safety, gave a verbal update on key issues, highlighting recent achievements:

- The successful £3.6m Fire Control centre bid with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- The South East Fire Improvement Partnership's £2.8m of efficiencies over the last two years
- 26 of 46 English Fire services now benefiting from the Oxfordshire work wear project contract
- Renewal of the Customer Service Excellence Award for Fire & Rescue
- Trading Standards uncovering instances of counterfeit alcohol being sold in six out of 30 premises inspected.

In response to a question by Councillor Pressel, he confirmed that to date no significant negative issues had been identified following the transfer of the consumer helpline to a national call centre on 2 April 2012. It was noted that an update is scheduled for committee at its next meeting in June.

In response to a question by Councillor Goddard concerning the proposed joint Trading Standards Service with Buckinghamshire County Council, David Etheridge outlined the reasons for this project not being pursued further. These included little

operational benefits and projected efficiencies not exceeding around 0.6%. He noted that the county council still wishes to discuss opportunities for mutual support arrangements to improve resilience in relation to managerial and legal capacity.

Members were offered copies of a children's book "Drago the dragon" teaching about fire safety, produced by the Risk Reduction Team at the Fire & Rescue Service. There is also a website: <http://www.365alive.co.uk/wps/wcm/connect/micro/365alive/Drago/>.

## **18/12 OXFORDSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN** (Agenda No. 7)

Councillor Mallon, Cabinet Member for Police & Policy Co-ordination, introduced this item, explaining that the plan (**SSC7**) has been developed within the context of the upcoming changes to policing discussed at the previous meeting. He was joined by Carys Alty, Manager - Safer Communities Unit. Matters raised included:

- Recent changes to the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership with strategic leadership by elected members, in preparation for linking into the future Police and Crime Panel and ensuring a strong unified voice for the county
- The five year plan is to be refreshed annually; it set provides clear evidence of local priorities and successful approaches to address them, to be shared with the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Quarterly performance reporting will focus on the direction of travel, with an annual report due in April 2013; the close links to Police priorities was noted, for example on priority issues such as sexual abuse of children
- The Partnership is developing a commissioning framework prospectus and off-the-shelf business case template, as budgets and responsibility for commissioning will transfer to the new Commissioner

Councillor Thompson suggested that, while success rates for drug treatment were generally low, the voluntary sector was more successful. He also queried how success could be measured in particular bearing in mind data protection. Carys Alty **agreed** to pass on these points to the relevant business group within the Drug And Alcohol Team (DAAT).

The committee also **agreed** to receive regular updates as the changes to policing arrangements come into effect.

## **19/12 UPDATE ABOUT OXFORDSHIRE GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SERVICE** (Agenda No. 8)

Gary Brewer, Manager of the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Gypsy & Traveller Services, gave a presentation updating the committee about the service's work, which had expanded to cover Buckinghamshire and was under contract to Brent Housing Partnership.

He highlighted achievements in working proactively with travellers and district councils, resulting in no waste clearance being required for unauthorised

encampments over the last two years. A number of fixed sites had seen improvements, including sites taken on by the service from private landlords. On one overcrowded site additional units had been built with funds secured from national government.

The committee discussed the update, including:

- Changes to the planning system and the potential impact on new sites; the service's links to district planning teams was noted
- The approach taken to any larger gatherings in Oxford City in terms of managing relationship with the community, e.g. codes of conduct, waste collection arrangements and City Council by-laws for green spaces.

It was **agreed** that the portfolio holder would circulate further information concerning maintenance arrangements which differed across the two counties.

## **20/12 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CALL RECEIPT, MOBILISING AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT FOR THE OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

(Agenda No. 9)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, gave an overview of the proposals (**SSC9a**) following on the delegated decision taken by Councillor Heathcoat in February. The consultation document (**SSC9b**) had been agreed with her and Councillor Stratford as chairman of scrutiny.

Councillor Heathcoat recognised the sensitive nature of the proposals and the importance of scrutiny remaining informed. She also explained she was working closely with the relevant portfolio holder in Berkshire.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted that staff had been engaged in proposals throughout and that consultation would take place prior to any location for a new, single joint control function being chosen. He referred to the timelines in the consultation document, with implementation due in the summer of 2014. He responded to questions raised by Councillor Goddard about the way in which the consultation was being promoted and handled, to ensure sufficient responses to be representative of views across the county.

The committee was **invited** to comment as part of the consultation (available online <https://myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/tvfcsc/consultationHome>).

## **21/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - CULTURAL SERVICES**

(Agenda No. 10)

Simon Kearey, Head of Strategy and Transformation, gave his last report to the committee, as Community Services (now known as Cultural Services) reports to Jacquie Bugeja, Lead Manager for Cultural Services, and Peter Clark, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance, from April 2012. Their expertise on areas such as governance, income generation and volunteering will be valuable for the

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services going forward. He paid tribute to Karen Warren for her work both with the library service and now as acting manager of the wider cultural services portfolio.

Simon Kearey gave an overview of progress with the proposed change programme:

- Within the library service, the first phase of a self service programme and a restructure of the management have all now been delivered
- The proposals for the remainder of the work, which includes phase two of self service, the mobile library review and delivery of the funding strategy are now being taken forward by the new Management Team
- The management restructure with the museums service has been achieved, future work will focus on delivering on income targets and a revitalised friends group and additional volunteers
- Successful partnership working includes negotiations with the Soldiers of Oxfordshire (SOFO) and a share in the Arts Council funding awarded to the Renaissance Partnership with the universities
- Efficiency savings for the history service have been delivered as planned and due to the efforts of the History Services Manager, Carl Boardman, and his team, additional funding had been sourced for 2012/13
- The Mill in Banbury had achieved a small surplus in 2011/12 and a steering group chaired by Councillor Nick Turner is working on proposals for a management restructure to help deliver the medium term savings proposed
- The Victoria County History service had been successful in securing a £5k grant from the Fitch Family Trust.

Peter Clark paid tribute to Simon's energy, commitment and enthusiasm; he was looking forward to continue the work started with Jacquie Bugeja and the new Cultural Services Manager to be appointed. Councillor Heathcoat asked for her thanks to Simon for his work to be recorded.

Councillor Lovatt was re-assured that Cultural Services were playing a key part in the council's localities agenda. For example, libraries already acted as points of information including on concessionary fares and managers in the new structure were also responsible for liaising with partners and communities.

It was **agreed** that both proposals for the Mill and the governance structure for Oxford Aspires following should be brought to future meetings of the committee.

## **22/12 UPDATE ON THE OXFORDSHIRE HISTORY SERVICE AND ITS ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT**

(Agenda No. 11)

Councillor Heathcoat introduced the item, explaining that the Oxfordshire Record Office and History Service had been combined following a formal process. This had created a joint public research room, while losing educational and exhibition space. Feedback from users had been positive with 99% rating provision as good or very good. She expressed her personal thanks to staff for their hard work. As noted in the report to committee (**SSC11**), it had been agreed with National Archives to allow some time for the new arrangements to settle in before reassessing the service after the merger.

..... Simon Kearey provided a more detailed update, including on the challenges ahead as well as opportunities highlighted in the report. He recognised the importance of paid staff as well as volunteers and stressed the close working with partners and learning from elsewhere, for example in relation to digitizing archives to help free up storage space. Responding to a number of queries by Councillor Pressel, it was noted that:

- Records are stored at two sites (the Central Library and St Luke's)
- Fundraising efforts would not be solely left to the friends group to be set up
- A first step in discussions about the City archives was to find out what it contained and for the City and interested groups to develop their plans
- There was a wish to develop outreach points, learning from national experience.

The committee noted the report and **agreed** that the service would be discussed again at an appropriate time, which Councillor Heathcoat undertook to do.

**23/12 FORWARD PLAN**  
(Agenda No. 12)

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

The chairman thanked officers for their role in supporting the committee's work over the year.

**24/12 CLOSE OF MEETING**  
(Agenda No. 13)

Close of meeting 1.30pm

..... in the Chair

Date of signing