

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on 14 September 2009 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.50 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford - in the chair

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Steve Hayward (part of meeting)
Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance: Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities:
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat

Officers:

Whole of meeting: K. Coldwell (Corporate Core); Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer; N. Strick & C. Thomas (Community Safety).

Part of meeting:

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5.	Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer; B. Morgan & N. Strick (Community Safety); T. Cloke & P. James (Corporate Core)
6.	Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer; S. Gibson (Corporate Core)
7.	C. Thomas (Community Safety)

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.

13/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hayward declared a personal interest at this item in relation to Agenda Item 3 – Minutes – Annex 1 – by virtue of being a HGV Driver.

14/09 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 July 2009 were approved and signed subject to the following amendment in bold italics and strikethrough:

7/09 – Minutes – Matters arising on the 2 February 2009 Minutes – Minute 6/09 – Progress of Flu Pandemic Planning: Q&A

The Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities reported that she had ensured that the Cabinet had ***been kept up to date with the individual Directorate's progress with regard to a flu pandemic and had also informed Cabinet of this*** ~~been informed of the~~ Committee's concern.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Item 8/09 – Thames Valley Police Authority Three Year Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011: Presentation and Q&A – Councillor Hayward reported that a new service station on the M40 motorway had now opened in Beaconsfield. It was hoped that this would help to reduce the number of accidents caused by tiredness.

The Chief Fire Officer and Director for Community Safety undertook to undertake joint work with Chief Superintendent Brendan O'Dowda regarding accidents involving HGVs and to provide the Committee with additional information in relation to this (eg. the total number of foreign HGV drivers on the road), together with suggested options to deal with the problem.

15/09 PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES FIELD

(Agenda Item 6)

Officers from the Safer and Stronger Communities field informed the scrutiny committee about (a) their service areas (b) the challenges and priorities facing their areas for the period 2009/10:

- **Fire & Rescue** – Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer
- **Community Safety** – Head of Service – Community Safety & Trading Standards
- **Emergency Planning** – County Emergency Planning Officer
- **Coroners Service** – Assistant Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

This was followed by a presentation from the Head of Partnership Working on community cohesion, equalities and social inclusion.

A copy of all of the presentations was circulated to the Committee and is attached to the signed Minutes.

The Committee noted the challenges and priorities in relation to each service area and illustrative examples are given below:

- in terms of the Fire & Rescue Service, it was the 4th lowest cost per head out of 47 Brigades. Therefore the efficiency savings programme was very challenging for the service;
- there was no core funding to some of the critical services in the Community Safety Directorate. The Safer Communities Unit was a very small team and was heavily reliant on grant funding;
- in terms of emergency planning, pandemic flu was still the highest risk issue and a continuing challenge. As the virus mutated and public expectations changed, the service and its partners had to adapt their approach accordingly and maintain a constant state of readiness, as this was a long term commitment. Experience during the current pandemic had shown that more work needed to be done with parish and town councils and with community and voluntary organisations. Work was underway in this respect to try to embed community resilience to help people to help themselves. The Council also had a statutory duty to promote business continuity advice to the voluntary sector and business community.

In terms of community cohesion, examples were given as to how this related to the Council's and its partners' objectives. For example, the Council had a role to play in terms of ensuring that partnerships and targets were in place to improve well-being, to develop shared understanding and goals across partnerships, to deliver services that were fair and equitable and to help to create conditions for a thriving voluntary sector. In terms of the voluntary, community and faith sectors, officers were working to ensure that the Council's grants and contracts were fair and enabled the sector to do its best and work was underway to develop effective tools for working with the sector (via the Oxfordshire Compact) looking at grants and contracts guidance .

The Committee noted that a presentation from Community Services would be given to its next meeting.

After asking a number of questions in relation to the different service areas the Committee thanked all concerned for their informative presentations.

All Members of the Committee were invited to:

- sign up to the 365 Alive pledge www.365alive.co.uk
- visit the Fire Cadet Units to witness work to build young people's self confidence;
- visit the County Emergency Management Training Centre, Woodeaton School (Woodeaton Bunker).

The Chief Fire Officer undertook to provide the Committee with:

- this year's attendance figures to Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service 'open doors' events; and
- a copy of the five year strategy to increase the recruitment of fire fighters from black and minority ethnic communities ('Walk the Talk').

The Head of Service – Community Safety & Trading Standards undertook to:

- provide data on the number of checks, number of vehicles stopped and number of cases prosecuted in relation to weight restriction breaches, to all members of the Committee; and
- raise with the Licensing Team at the City Council Councillor Pressel's concern that establishments were serving alcohol to people that were drunk, which was against the terms of their alcohol licences, yet they were not being prosecuted.

16/09 ANNUAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME SEPTEMBER 2009 – JULY 2010

(Agenda Item 6)

The Committee noted that it would consider a proposed work programme at its October meeting.

Councillor Goddard stated that he wished the Committee to consider what action it wished to take in relation to the Debt and Money Advice Scrutiny Review at that meeting.

Members then put forward the following item to be included within the proposal forms:

- **Co-ordination of grants to voluntary, community and faith bodies and their effectiveness** - look at whether co-ordination between grant awarders can be improved (eg between county and district). Look at effectiveness in terms of capacity building and community cohesion.

17/09 FIRE SERVICE COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM – THE FIRECONTROL AND FIRELINK PROJECTS

(Agenda Item 7)

The Committee had before it a written update on progress of the Fire Service Command and Control Room (FiReControl and FireLink Projects) (SSC7).

Mr Colin Thomas (Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Head of Service Support) attended before the Committee to answer any questions which Members may have wished to ask.

The Committee asked a number of questions and noted that the government circular received that day on the finances of the FiReLink project gave the

Service further cause for concern, as it stated that the New Burdens funding would only be paid for three years and would then be reviewed.

The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities requested that her appreciation of Mr Thomas' hard work regarding the morale of control room staff be recorded.

18/09 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda Item 8)

No items were identified for consideration.

19/09 TRACKING SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item 9)

Report back on advice given by this Committee to the Cabinet, full Council, other scrutiny committees, relevant strategic partnership bodies and other organisations where appropriate.

There was nothing to report at present.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing.....2009