

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 17 December 2015 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 16.15pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Lynda Atkins
Councillor John Christie
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Jenny Hannaby (In place of Councillor Janet Godden)
Councillor Steve Harrod
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor Neil Owen (in place of Councillor Stewart Lilly)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer; Peter Clark, Head of Paid Service; John Courouble, Research and Intelligence Manager; Sue Whitehead (Corporate Services)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

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Officer Attending

CEF – Jim Leivers, Director for Children, Education and Families; Lucy Butler, Deputy Director Children's Social Care YOS; Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director, Education & Learning; Kate Terroni, Deputy Director Joint Commissioning; Gillian McKee, Finance Business Partner (CEF)

ASC – John Jackson, Director for Adult Social Services; Kate Terroni, Deputy Director Joint Commissioning; Finance Business Partner (ASC)

Corporate Services – Steve Munn, Chief Human Resources Officer; Maggie Scott, Chief Policy Officer; Nick Graham, Chief Legal Officer

Community Safety – Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer; Simon Furlong, Assistant Chief Fire Officer;

E&E – Sue Scane, Director for Environment & Economy; Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial; Graham Shaw, Deputy Director, OCS

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.

45/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Janet Godden (Councillor Jenny Hannaby substituting).

46/15 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 3)

The Chairman agreed the requests to address the meeting on Agenda Item 5, Service & Resource Planning 2016/17-2019/20 as detailed below. Prior to the speakers Peter Clark, Head of Paid Service and Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer gave a presentation setting the context of the service and resource planning report and papers.

Petition - Anne Thieba (in place of Mara Ranieri Davey), Terrence Higgins Trust, submitted a petition consisting of both hard copies and online signatures with over 1,000 signatures lobbying against Oxfordshire County Council's cuts to HIV Prevention and Support Services. She highlighted that they worked mostly with two groups of people: black and minority ethnic people and bisexual, transgender, lesbian and gay people. These groups were more likely to face difficulties accessing health care and to delay seeking health. In response to questions she outlined the support provided by the Trust

Richard Turner, a user of the HIV Prevention and support services spoke about the impact of the proposed cut of funding. He noted that it was the only specialised service outside the NHS in the County. It remained a complex condition and his experience was that the stigma of the condition still remained.

In advance of hearing from Paul Cann, Chief Executive, Age UK Oxfordshire the Committee was shown a video of older people expressing their views on the impact of the proposed cuts on day services such as community clubs, on advice and information services and on support for carers. Paul Cann challenged the Committee to prove that the consultation on the proposals was not a sham with the Council being able to think again. He outlined a number of actions he would wish to see considered. This included closer working between NHS and the County Council, structural change to bring services together and a transformation plan/fund involving stakeholders. Responding to questions from members Paul Cann stated that he did not think that voluntary help was sufficient to fill the gap that would be created by the proposed savings. It was not possible to replace the expert skills that would be lost. With regard to falls he noted that hip fractures resulting from falls were expensive but that over the last 10 years the figures in Oxfordshire were good due to the falls prevention service.

Mark Thompson, CEO of Connection Floating Support and Lesley Dewhurst, CEO of Oxford Homeless Pathways spoke against the proposed cuts to the Housing Related Support budget, on behalf of homelessness services. They highlighted the scale and

complexity of the issues involved and the support provided on both a short term crisis basis and in the longer term. The impact of the proposed savings would be more rough sleeping and more early deaths. They would create pressure on other services such as the health and social services. They both responded to questions concerning the proportion of funding provided by the County Council and also in response to questions about other funding indicated that funding was received from Oxford City Council but not from the other District Councils. The opportunity for significant additional funding from other sources was small although they kept on trying. Mark Thompson added that although not a statutory service they did cross over into a number of statutory areas such as safeguarding. Asked whether it was possible for the County Council to see detailed accounts Lesley Dewhurst indicated she was happy to do what she could.

Dr Judith Wardle, spoke on those savings proposals which related to services for carers. She stated that the Committee had insufficient information to do what was being asked of them. The cumulative effect could not be known. She highlighted that there was now a greater dependence on the role of informal carers who made a significant contribution and that the proposal to charge carers for services was penny pinching. She also spoke against proposals for savings from respite and the abolition of funding for Carers Voice.

Eddie Duller, Business Manager Healthwatch Oxfordshire spoke against the immediate cut of £100k which would impact on their ability to deliver their statutory obligations. He asked that cuts be phased. In response to questions Mr Duller stated that the organisation was looking at seeking charitable status and at opportunities to do research for other organisations.

Stephen Brown, Chair of Long Wittenham PC spoke against the withdrawal of bus subsidies. He referred to the severe and disproportionate effect the withdrawal of the subsidy would have on rural communities. He highlighted two court cases that related to bus subsidy decisions by other councils. He stressed the Council's moral duty to look after the more vulnerable members of the community. The free bus passes enable the elderly to remain independent and mobile and this would be threatened by the loss of buses due to the withdrawal of bus subsidies. Asked whether the Parish Council had thought of alternatives such as local volunteers he replied that they had been actively considering local options but that not all communities would be able to provide an alternative.

Councillor Laura Price highlighted the difficult decisions to be taken around adult social care.

47/15 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2016/17-2019/20

(Agenda No. 4)

Following the presentations from speakers the Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a report that formed part of a series relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The Committee considered in turn the savings proposed by each directorate for their service areas. The Committee were invited to consider and comment on: the savings

options and in light of the feedback from the public consultation to identify those savings that are the least acceptable; and the LGA report and the Council response.

Following lengthy discussions of the individual directorate proposals it was proposed by Councillor Harrod that Cabinet be requested to consider a 12% increase in Council Tax. Having been seconded it was put to a vote by a show of hands and by 3 votes for, to 6 against, with 1 abstention the recommendation was lost.

It was then proposed by Councillor Fawcett that cabinet be asked to consider the merits of a council tax increases requiring a referendum. Having been seconded it was put to a vote by a show of hands and by 5 votes for, to 6 against the recommendation was lost.

The Committee identified the following saving proposals as those that are least acceptable:

Ref No	Name	Proposal	TOTAL £000
Children, Education & Families			
CEF13	Services for disabled children and families	Contracts for a range of day and overnight short-break care services commissioned for disabled children with parents, young people and other partners are due to finish in March 2017. The council would review these services during 2016, in consultation with families and other key partners. The council wishes to make sure the funding available is used to achieve the best possible outcomes. The review would include the residential short break services, which are jointly funded by the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group with a contribution from Barnardo's.	-250

Ref No	Name	Proposal	TOTAL 000s
Adult Social Care			
SCS7	Emergency response - redesign emergency response services	Reduce duplication and overheads by redesigning emergency response and crisis services by combining the Crisis Response Service, the Emergency Carers Support Service and Telecare monitoring and response services. This will lead to more cost effective and responsive services.	-200
SCS8	Carers - Carers Oxfordshire	A reduction in the contract with Carers Oxfordshire could be made by reducing expenditure on marketing, information, advice and support, training, and the carers partnership board. This would focus resources on continuing to meet statutory responsibilities. The remaining funds would be focused on areas of greatest need such as face to face support and volunteer befriending.	-160
SCS9	Information and advice	Consolidating existing contracts information and advice services whilst maintaining statutory requirements under the Care Act, focusing on specialist advice e.g. accessing benefits, managing debt and finding your own care and support.	-120
SCS10	Carers – respite	Review the way respite is provided to focus more on alternatives to bed based respite i.e. increased care at home could provide more effective ways of ensuring carers get the breaks they need.	-100
SCS21a	Tier 2 Day Services (Voluntary Sector provided day services)	Stopping funding day services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. The majority of users (95%) of these services are not eligible for care and support from the council. Ending the funding could also mean transport savings. The council would assist current services to become financially independent where it is possible to do so; commission a new older peoples' community prevention service; ensure people using these services are aware of the information and advice options, which can inform and advise about what else is available in Oxfordshire, and work with the voluntary sector to look at options for increasing their role in delivering	-750

		day opportunities.	
SCS21b	Tier 3 Day Services (Health and Wellbeing Centres)	A saving of £2,050,000 could be achieved by stopping funding the seven Health and Wellbeing centres provided by the Council, and one provided by the Leonard Cheshire Trust. Stopping the funding would release capital and revenue savings and possibly savings in transport costs. The council would assist current services to become financially independent where it is possible to do so; commission a new older peoples' community prevention service; ensure people using these services are aware of the information and advice options, which can inform and advise about what else is available in Oxfordshire, and work with the voluntary sector to look at options for increasing their role in delivering day opportunities.	-2,050
SCS21c	Transport to day services	Savings of £200,000 may result from stopping funding of Tier 2 and Tier 3 day services as outlined above. This is because the council provides transport to and from these services for a number of people.	-200
SCS22	Housing related support	Funding homelessness services through Housing Related support is not a statutory requirement and would be further reduced. The council has continued to subsidise housing support and maintained investment in housing related activity for the past 5 years (even though it is not a county council responsibility) following the government decision to significantly reduce central funding.	-1,500
SCS25	Intervention and preventative services - Dementia	Savings could be achieved by a reduction in funding for the Dementia Support Service once the current contracts expire in 2019/20.	-400
SCS27	Intermediate care - Reablement	A review and redesign of the reablement service to deliver more effective, lower cost community-based support to help people regain and maintain independence.	-300

SCS28	Carers – Carers charging	Introducing charging for carers' services. This would put carers onto the same basis as the people they support, whereby an assessment and support plan would be developed and the cost of meeting their support needs calculated, as well as an assessment of their ability to contribute to the cost of the support they need. This proposal could lead to a rise in income for the council and there could be an opportunity to target available resources more effectively towards more vulnerable carers who need additional help by reviewing what types of support are most supportive and effective for carers.	-200
SCS29	Carers – Carers grants	Reducing funding to carers with eligible needs for support could save £200,000. This would create a stronger link between need and funding in line with the Care Act and create an opportunity to improve the targeting of available resources towards more vulnerable carers.	-200
Fire & Rescue Service			
FRS2	Trading Standards management and enforcement review	Greater integration with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and other local authorities and the development of a volunteer co-ordinator post could lead to some functions being supported by volunteers. In the medium term, the council could remove four further enforcement posts, reduce consumer advice and education posts. Greater integration with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and other local authorities and the development of a volunteer co-ordinator post could lead to some functions being supported by volunteers. The service could also seek to work closer with Thames Valley Police (including joint funding) especially around cyber-crime and human exploitation.	-270
Environment & Economy			
E&E25	Area Stewardship	Reduce service down to statutory only, i.e. maintain a safe highway, incl. through safety inspections. Area Stewards would no longer be available to discuss and resolve issues on day to day basis – would mean increased use of Fix My Street and empowering parish councils to identify	-620

		and/or undertake potential work.	
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The Committee made the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** on specific proposals:

SCS20 Review of contracts – Healthwatch (Reducing funding for Healthwatch Oxfordshire by 30%.)

The Committee recommended that in view of the importance of the role played by Healthwatch the saving be phased over 2 years at £50k per year.

E&E23 Subsidised Buses Consultation Proposals (This remaining funding would result in the routes being totally removed, unless they are linked to home to school transport.) Saving (£000s): **-1,220**

The Committee reiterated the following recommendation from their consideration in November of this matter following the public consultation:

“Cabinet be **RECOMMENDED** to support proceeding with reducing bus subsidies by £2.3m rather than £3.7m and to support updating the methodology to include additional criteria for the rurally isolated and deprived areas.”

The Committee added that if the saving was to go ahead then the Cabinet should ensure that a robust plan was in place on how they will work with communities to reduce the impact.

With regard to **E&E7** Councillor Mathew proposed that Cabinet be recommended to charge companies where VIPs were visiting when that resulted in road closure costs. Having been seconded it was put to a vote by a show of hands and by 4 votes for, to 7 against the recommendation was lost.

In addition to the comments on specific proposals the Committee made the following general points:

1. The Committee noted that other bodies including District Councils needed to be engaged around a number of the proposals. It was vital that overarching cuts and budget proposals be aligned with the work of other partners in terms of other models of provision or alternative funding.
2. The Committee discussed the need to ensure that funding to charitable/voluntary organisations was properly accounted for. In recognising that this funding was often in the form of payment for contracted services they asked that Cabinet recognise the need for accountability.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2016