

# Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

## Scrutiny Committee

HELD AT 6.00PM ON 7 JUNE 2012

AT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

### Present:

Mrs E Hards (Chairman)

Ms J Bland, Mrs C Collett, Mr S Connel, Ms K Crabbe, Mrs P Dawe, Mr L Docherty, Mr W Hall, Mr D Turner

### Apologies:

Mr P Harrison, Mr S Harrod and Mrs E Hodgkin submitted their apologies.

### Officers:

Ms K Arnold, Mrs J Bolton, Mr B Crooks, Ms P Fox, Mr M Prosser, Mrs J Thompson, Mr C Webb

### Also present:

Mrs A Ducker, Leader of the Council  
Mr D Dodds, Cabinet member for finance, waste and parks  
Mr B Service, Cabinet member for leisure, grants and community safety  
Mr J Amatt, business manager for GLL  
Mr C James, partnership manager for GLL

## 1. Minutes, 17 April 2012

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2012 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign these as such.

## 2. 2011/12 performance review of GLL

The committee considered the report of the head of economy, leisure and property setting out GLL's performance in delivering the council's leisure management contract from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Ms K Arnold, Shared Leisure Manager, Mr C Webb, Shared Leisure Facilities Development Manager, and Mr B Service, Cabinet member, introduced the report,

and they and Mr C James and Mr J Amatt of GLL answered questions from the committee.

The committee noted that:

- In KPT7, a 'decrease in subsidy' per visit now means an increase in the surplus which GLL pays to the council.
- Measures to reduce power consumption were ongoing, such as the LED lights fitted in Henley pool hall.
- Fully online booking for all leisure card holders had been available for only six months and in that period there had been a substantial rise in the number of online bookings.
- There are no plans at present to upgrade or extend the Abbey sports centre.
- The merger of GLL and Nexus during the year had resulted in major changes and put pressure on GLL staff and council officers, resulting in a lower score for council satisfaction with the contract. However customer satisfaction had been maintained at a good level. The new operational structures were in place and staff changes reduced, and council officers were satisfied with the overall management.
- The review of equipment showed that there were concerns about specific items but no strong dissatisfaction overall.
- New maintenance agreements were being put in place with Oxfordshire County Council for centres operated under joint use agreements.
- Although the online survey gave a harsher judgement than the face to face survey, GLL would continue to use it and would accept the results. The council and GLL would continue to work to improve customer satisfaction year on year.

The committee commented that GLL were to be congratulated on their very good service provision.

**RESOLVED** to recommend that the Cabinet member for leisure, grants and community safety make a final assessment of GLL's performance as **GOOD**.

### **3. Revenue grant policy 2013/14 to 2016/17**

Mrs E Hards declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a trustee of Didcot Citizens Advice Bureau. She left the room for the duration of this item and took no part in the debate or voting.

Ms J Bland, Vice-Chairman, took the chair for this item.

The committee considered the report of the head of corporate strategy setting out a new revenue grant policy for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Mrs J Bolton, Shared Grants Team Leader, and Mr B Service, Cabinet member introduced the report and answered questions from the committee. They reported that projects to support young people could be funded if they could meet the criterion of reducing anti-social behaviour, but would not be funded if they were properly the responsibility of or could reasonably be funded by a different local authority. The lower limit on awards reflected the administrative costs of processing applications and was not intended to stop smaller organisations applying. Awards would be made once in the four-year period and the scheme would effectively close. However as the grants budget was set annually a contingency fund could be made available to fund viable projects coming forward later in the four-year period. The cabinet member received annual monitoring reports on the use of each grant award.

The committee **recommended** that Cabinet consider the following points when agreeing the final revenue grant policy from 2013/14 to 2016/17:

- Grants to the Citizens Advice Bureaux should be explicitly excluded from the maximum limit on revenue grants
- Awards should include a condition that audited accounts are required annually
- Applications from brand new organisations should not be excluded from consideration
- Applications from parish councils should not automatically be refused. Both the impact of not funding a project proposed or run by a parish council and the capacity of the parish council to raise funds via the precept should be taken into account

#### **4. Section 106 audit – follow-up report 2011**

Mrs E Hards resumed the chair at the start of this item.

The committee considered the report of the head of planning setting out progress on the S106 audit action plan and an update on how local councils can get involved in S106 agreements, the new S106 supplementary planning document, and the progress of the community infrastructure levy.

Ms P Fox, Development Control Manager, Mr B Crooks, Shared Community Infrastructure Officer, and Rev'd A Paterson, Cabinet member, introduced the report, explained the key elements of the S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and answered questions from the committee as follows:

- The council would decide the priorities for payments from the Community Infrastructure Levy in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council and parish and town councils. Final regulations setting out detailed rules for allocating funds were still awaited.
- The level of consultation with parish and town councils would increase through the development of neighbourhood plans and as part of the development of the CIL scheme. Key policy documents would be agreed by Council.
- Parish councils had more information now about neighbourhood plans. Officers were considering what resources would be needed to help parishes develop

neighbourhood plans. Although these would be effective in helping a parish manage development, they were not essential. Community led plans, which were less onerous to develop, might be attractive to smaller communities but while they would be considered they would not have the same weight as a formal neighbourhood plan agreed by referendum.

- On current S106 contributions, the council had complete records of developer contributions and the agreements for items comprising the brought forward balance would be reviewed quarterly and reported to Cabinet annually.
- Training for district councillors and parish councils on the CIL and neighbourhood plans would be arranged before the end of 2012.

The committee noted the progress made and **agreed** to receive a further report on the progress of the S106 action plan, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the S106 Supplementary Planning Document in June 2013.

## **5. Board report – a graphical summary of the council's performance to the end of March 2012**

The committee considered the board report showing the council's performance in key areas from April 2011 to March 2012.

Mr M Prosser, Strategic Director, Mrs A Ducker, Leader of the Council, and Mr D Dodds, Cabinet member, answered questions from the committee.

The committee noted that:

- The temporary drop in the generally very good performance in planning caused by introducing new software, and that the performance targets would be reviewed for 2012/13.
- The council aimed to have one of the highest recycling rates in the country. The recycling rate had reduced slightly partly because of changes in categories which can be counted as recycling. There would be more publicity to encourage recycling generally and to publicise that items such as mattresses and batteries and small electrical items could now be recycled.
- Planning income was higher than initially forecast but did not cover the entire cost of delivering the planning service including increased caseloads and the work involved in the new neighbourhood plans.
- The finance team and service managers had made excellent progress in achieving and maintaining a low level of outstanding debts.
- Some outstanding debts for the garden waste service had been written off as not cost effective to pursue or as not in reality due. Payments for the garden waste service now had to be made by direct debit before the service started.

The committee commented that:

- The higher level of fly-tipping in South Oxfordshire than in the Vale was not fully explained and more investigation of the causes and the effect of the planned increase in enforcement action was needed. The impact of Oxfordshire County Council's van licensing scheme on fly-tipping should be investigated.

- It was pleasing to see such a dramatic increase in the number of affordable (social rented) houses being built now construction had started at Great Western Park at Didcot.
- Capita were to be congratulated on their performance in the quick processing and accuracy of housing and council tax benefit claims.
- Both councils showed a very good record of low levels of staff sickness reflecting that they were good councils to work for.

The committee noted the report and the council's performance from April 2011 to March 2012.

## **6. Work programme for 2012/13**

The committee agreed to:

1. consider the reports proposed by officers and listed in the agenda;
2. consider annual performance reports for the council's contractors;
3. request reports if feasible and at an appropriate meeting on:
  - staffing and the establishment;
  - progress on shared services with the Vale of White Horse District Council;
  - customer satisfaction: results from customer surveys;
  - good practice from the neighbourhood planning process in Thame and Woodcote.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

Chairman

Date