

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON TUESDAY 25 JULY 2017 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 MILTON PARK

Present:

Richard Pullen (Chairman)

Steve Connel, Anthony Dearlove, Elaine Hornsby, David Turner, John Walsh, Ian White and Sue Lawson (as substitute for Pat Dawe)

Apologies:

Pat Dawe tendered apologies.

Officers:

Gerry Brough, Phil Ealey, Helen Novelle, Ron Schrieber, Mark Stone and Sally Truman

Also present:

Councillors John Cotton and Lynn Lloyd

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

None.

3 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

4 Public participation

None.



Listening Learning Leading

5 Corporate delivery plan

The committee considered the report of the head of HR, IT and technical services on the council's corporate delivery plan which detailed the actions to be taken to deliver the council's corporate objectives and priorities for the period 2016-2020 as set out in the corporate plan.

Councillor John Cotton, Leader and Cabinet member for corporate strategy, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Sally Truman, policy and partnerships manager and Mark Stone, acting chief executive.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- Once agreed, the corporate delivery plan would form the basis of six-monthly progress reports to the committee. Progress would be red, amber, green (RAG) rated.
- The leader and the acting chief executive acknowledged that there were currently capacity issues at head of service level and outlined the steps being taken to address this matter. Although the heads of service were the named individuals responsible for ensuring that the actions in the corporate delivery plan were implemented, much of the work would be undertaken by other officers.
- Many of the vacancies in planning had been or would be filled. Despite limited resources the overall response rates on neighbourhood plans had improved continuously.
- Whilst the council would do all it could to help charitable groups supporting vulnerable young people, it did not have the financial resources to step in whenever the County Council had withdrawn or reduced funding.
- The figure for the percentage of residents volunteering was derived from the biennial residents' survey and was currently in the region of 25%.
- Further detail regarding the direct delivery of affordable rented accommodation was set out in the joint housing strategy submitted to this meeting (Minute 7 refers).
- An announcement regarding the future of the Crowmarsh Gifford site would be made in the next few weeks.
- The leader had requested the acting chief executive to investigate the feasibility of installing a council chamber and additional member facilities at Milton Park.

A member expressed the view that the committee should receive progress reports more frequently than currently proposed. However most members felt that there was no need for more frequent reports at this stage. It was noted that the committee could review the frequency of progress reports at a later date and, should the RAG rating identify specific concerns, detailed reports could be requested to the following meeting.

RESOLVED: to note the corporate delivery plan.

6 Temporary accommodation provision 2017-2022

The committee considered the report of the head of development and housing on the provision of temporary accommodation 2017-2022. The report detailed how best to meet the future demand for temporary housing accommodation in South Oxfordshire and recommended the purchase of two units of temporary accommodation in Didcot (Option b). The committee's views were requested prior to the submission of the report to Cabinet.

Councillor Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet member for housing, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Phil Ealey, housing needs manager and Mark Stone, acting chief executive.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- The report recommended that at least one of the two units of accommodation to be purchased should be wheelchair accessible but both could be.
- Should the required capital provision be approved by full Council in October, it was intended to purchase the units as soon as possible.
- The purchase of the two properties could save the council approximately £48,000 per annum in hotel bills. The properties would also generate an annual rental income of approximately £14,000.

The committee welcomed the report for the significant, positive and proactive way in which it sought to meet the future demand for temporary accommodation.

RESOLVED: to commend the report to Cabinet and to recommend that Option b), the purchase of two units of temporary accommodation in Didcot, be approved.

7 Joint housing strategy

The committee considered the report of the head of development and housing on a joint South and Vale housing strategy 2017-2027. The strategy detailed how both councils will work towards achieving the challenging housing targets set by government whilst aiming to deliver an appropriate range of housing that will meet the needs of people living and working in the districts.

Councillor Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet member for housing, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Helen Novelle, principal development officer and Mark Stone, acting chief executive.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- The aim of the strategy was not to challenge the housing targets set out in the strategic housing market assessment but to identify how to meet this and any revised target.
- Whilst the council was seeking to persuade and encourage housebuilders to build more sustainable houses, more affordable housing and more properties suitable for the elderly (thereby freeing up larger homes), it could not compel them to do so.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Cabinet that the joint housing strategy be approved, subject to the outcome of the public consultation.

8 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee was advised that a confidential report on staffing matters would be submitted to a future meeting.

A member expressed the view that the current process of considering a financial outturn report each September did not enable the committee to carry out proper scrutiny of the Council’s revenue and capital expenditure. Accordingly he requested that the committee receive quarterly budget monitoring reports. The acting chief executive agreed to investigate the feasibility of producing monitoring reports more frequently but advised the committee that quarterly reports had not been submitted for a number of years.

It was agreed to circulate to members the date when the practice of submitting quarterly budget monitoring reports to the committee ended.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman

Date