

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrryr-R-vNU>

Present:

Ian White (Chairman)

Mocky Khan, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Alexandrine Kantor, George Levy and David Turner

Officers:

John Backley, Jayne Bolton, Emily Cockle, Liz Hayden, Mark Hewer, Candida Mckelvey, Adrianna Partridge.

Also present:

Cabinet members, Councillors Robin Bennett and David Rouane

67 Apologies

There were no apologies received.

68 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 29 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting and will be signed by the chair as such.

The minutes of the meeting on 19 October will be ready for review at the next meeting.

69 Declarations of interest

None.

70 Urgent business and chair's announcements

There was no urgent business.

71 Public participation

There was no public participation.



Listening Learning Leading

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

The three planning items identified for the work programme at the last meeting will be added to the work programme, once further clarification is received on how the items will be covered. Dates to be confirmed.

The request to invite OxLEP to speak to skills needed to carry out green home grants work will be progressed. Dates to be confirmed.

A view was expressed that scrutiny would like to see technical details of the new council office building plans for Didcot as they emerge— such as dimensions, equipment, community facilities.

73 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending strategy

Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration, Councillor Robin Bennett, introduced the report on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The headline changes are;

1. Simplifying the process and prioritising the district's corporate plan priorities.
2. Widening the geographic area where funds may be spent to provide more flexibility in funding projects across the whole of South Oxfordshire along with allowing funding to be spent across the district council boundary for projects in the Didcot Garden Town area, part of which is in Vale of White Horse district.
3. Extending funding parameters, so that we can effectively respond to priorities in the Council's Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and our new Corporate Plan by removing the percentage allocation to internal council departments and widening the availability of the health care allocation, which to date, remains unspent.
4. Partnership working improvements with Town and Parish, to help them spend their CIL money.

No plans to change the County percentage as this is linked to projects identified in the infrastructure plan and is starting to be spent.

District portion is to be more flexible, so projects can get underway.

The paper can be reviewed in one year if needed.

Jayne Bolton, Infrastructure and Development Manager, and Mark Hewer, Infrastructure Development Team Leader, were also present to answer questions.

The committee raised the following points:

- Would like to see funding used for public toilets and car parking. A view was expressed to include free to use toilets, to keep them accessible to all and consider gender neutral facilities. Officers added that toilet improvement projects are underway, example in Henley. This is a capital project. Car parking electric charge points may be considered under CIL. The district can change the split of CIL but the regulations are set by government and need to be capital projects. Projects can be developed by parish/town and then they could approach Jayne Bolton's team to see if funding could be available towards the project from the district council's CIL allocation. However, the district council's allocation is aimed at delivering district council projects / facilities.

- The committee were informed that the essence of CIL is to get new infrastructure, but enhancing existing infrastructure is ok if it improves access or is a significant improvement. CIL is mainly governed by regulations.
- Committee questioned the admin funding allocation. Officers explained that this is set in the CIL regulations. The district has spent a lot less than allocated, and the funding is carried forward. If not spent at the end of three years, it goes into the infrastructure pot, not lost. The funding for admin used to be for the monitoring planning team only. Now the funding also includes the infrastructure development team and there is more awareness of CIL because of this.
- The green infrastructure pot is a case of just removing the 5% cap, potentially more can be spent.
- A view was expressed that CIL could be spent on trial shuttle buses to leisure facilities from rural to town areas. It was confirmed that buses aren't a capital project. It could be considered in the parish council CIL funding, but not the district pot, due to projects needing to be a capital project.
- Councillor Turner will discuss Chalgrove funding with officers and Councillor Bennett.
- Could the community enablement team help parishes to utilise funding, joint projects etc? e.g. connecting villages and towns with cycle routes. The development team do contact town and parish to help promote use of CIL.
- The infrastructure development team started in year three of the funding and the use of CIL has been promoted.
- Discussion was had about accessing the infrastructure pot. Committee was directed to paragraph 10D in the report – a panel and bidding process would be a bigger admin burden. The infrastructure team can be contacted for potential projects. There is five years for the town and parish councils to spend the money after receipt of it, and then it can be clawed back, but this would not necessarily happen straight away. The infrastructure team will work with town and parish councils to help them spend their allocation if required. The deletion of Regulation 123 lists and restrictions lifted on use of S106 funds, means that funds can be combined on projects. There is no developer clawback for CIL but there is still a need to demonstrate spending within CIL regulations.
- Officers confirmed that healthcare projects were being worked on, working with OCCG to bring schemes forward. Examples are health centres in Harwell/Didcot and Benson.
- Difference between strategic and normal development sites – strategic sites have a Section 106 agreement and all financial contributions are captured by this method rather than CIL. Concerns were raised about the financial impact of strategic sites on nearby parishes, if the build is gradual. It was confirmed that strategic sites are exempt from CIL charge and S106 secures financial contributions.

Committee expressed that they felt it was a very good report. Officers and the Cabinet member were thanked.

Committee motioned that they support the CIL paper and the spending of CIL going forward, with the comments above taken into account.

74 Car Parking Fees

Cabinet member for housing and environment, Councillor David Rouane, introduced the car parking fees report.

Liz Hayden, Head of housing and environment, and John Backley, Technical Services Manager, were present to answer questions.

The report focuses on the need to balance the budget. Parking charges are currently cheaper than bus fares, with no increase since 2007 (2007 was a decrease). There are two phases to the process:

1. Small increases across the board – 20p per hour increase and some increases to day-long parking charges – these have been advertised to be brought in on 1 December.
2. Structural changes – public consultation in progress, and the changes will be implemented in March 2021.

Point five in the paper – structural changes:

- a) Equalise charging times – fairness. 1 hour to be free in all towns rather than varying times per town. Positive change for traders.
- b) Bring in Sunday charging to ensure parking for shoppers to improve trading (deterring people parking all day for other reasons). Limits needed on all day parking – three-hour limit.
- c) Electric vehicle spaces and concessions.

The chair reminded that questions asked should be on the consultation.

The committee commented that the proposal had good logic, but it was felt that some areas such as Henley would benefit for the changes and others might not so much, e.g Wallingford.

A discussion was had about meter feeding and the technical aspects required. Work is ongoing with SABA (car park operator) to find solutions.

A view was expressed that could the across the board price increase be 50p per hour.

A view was expressed that a free hour parking is anti-public transport. Cabinet member responded that fewer cars in town centres is a longer-term aim that he supports.

Discussion was had regarding people still choosing to park on streets or driveways rather than pay for car parks that are cheaper than station parking in Didcot. The cabinet member said that civil parking enforcement will help in future.

It was confirmed that the driver for Sunday charging is to deter all-day day tripper or weekend-long parking and encourage shoppers and give them opportunity to find a space to park.

It was expressed that one size fits all may not be ideal. It was confirmed that the whole district needed to be considered together and to make charges fair. Exceptions need a very good reason.

It was confirmed that the paper was sent to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, so environmental objectives were considered.

Electric vehicle charge points were discussed, and it was asked when will there be more delivered? It was confirmed that projects are in the pipeline, working with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). It was added that enforcement powers are needed to be able to fine a combustion engine vehicle for parking in an electric charging space.

Chair added that Chinnor residents will be in the main pleased with two-hour time limits, so there is more opportunity to park. Will the limits be enforced? It was responded that this will be enforced as part of the SABA contract (car park contractor).

The consultation will be listened to, and parish and town councils can feedback. It was asked if the report could come back to scrutiny after consultation. The chair stated this needed further clarification.

The committee motioned:

Scrutiny committee notes the report on car parking fees and charges and asks Cabinet to consider the comments raised in conjunction with the report.

Officers and the Cabinet member were thanked.

75 Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)

Cabinet member for housing and environment, Councillor David Rouane, introduced the report on civil parking enforcement (CPE).

Liz Hayden, Head of housing and environment, and John Backley, Technical Services Manager, were present to answer questions.

This is led by County and 3 districts that do not have CPE. The Secretary of State will only accept one application form the county, so it has taken some time to agree on a joint application.

The three recommendations are:

- a) To support Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) putting in the application on behalf of three districts.
- b) Feasibility study - OCC to run the scheme, economies of scale, not as cost effective to do it ourselves. The next phase is to make agreements about the level of service expected from OCC.
- c) Release funds to do this - £60,000 to OCC, as an agreed one-off payment which is capped.

It was asked what the cost is to residents. Cabinet informed that resident's parking is beyond the scope of this work. Discussions on residents parking will come after this.

It was confirmed by the Cabinet member that if Cherwell chose not to go ahead, the project would be delayed. It would be difficult, but South Oxfordshire would be prepared to go ahead, and we believe the Cherwell's concerns will be addressed.

The cabinet member and officers were thanked for their work.

The committee motioned to fully support the report and the three recommendations in the report.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chairman

Date