

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2015

FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Present:

David Turner (Chairman)

Joan Bland, Steve Connel, Kristina Crabbe, Pat Dawe, Tony Harbour, Eleanor Hards,
Paul Harrison, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Margaret Turner

Apologies:

Celia Collett, MBE tendered apologies.

Officers:

Katharine Doherty, Adrian Duffield, Phil Ealey, Liz Hayden, William Jacobs, Debbie
McLatch, Nicola Meurer, Anna Robinson and Bob Watson

Also present:

Councillors Will Hall, Neville Harris, Judith Nimmo-Smith and Angie Paterson.

51 Venue and Maps

52 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

53 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2
December 2014 as a correct record and to agree that the Chairman
sign them as such.

54 Review of the Action Log

There is no up-to-date action log following the fire at the Crowmarsh Gifford offices.
A new action log will be drafted following the meeting of 17 February 2015.

55 South and Vale Community Safety Partnership Performance Report

Liz Hayden, Licensing and Community Safety Manager, Katharine Doherty, Community Safety Team Leader, Graham Wharton, Chief Inspector/Deputy Local Police Area Commander South and Vale and Councillor Judith Nimmo-Smith attended the committee to present the report and answer questions.

In response to questions, the officers reported that:

- The vacant Crime Reduction Adviser post will be recruited as soon as possible following uncertainty of the funding streams available; a review of the responsibilities of this post has been done and a copy will be provided to committee members;
- The Sanctuary Scheme is funded by the Community Safety Partnership and delivered by Mears;
- The first community trigger was received in December from a Didcot resident, a second one is about to start. The process has been publicised through joint working with the police, SOHA, Sovereign/Vale and the County Council with a joint press release in various local publications;
- From April to December 2014, 84 cases of ASB had been reported directly to the Community Safety team, however the vast majority are reported to the police. The District Council is responsible for Community Protection Notices, of which there have been two successfully resolved since October;
- The Community Safety team work closely with Licensing as well as the police, to deliver the Nightsafe Project, meeting once a week to review every incident;
- There has been a reduction in rural crime, working together with landowners and the rural community. However, this has not had an impact on the resources available to deal with urban crime;
- The Community Safety team have submitted two growth bids to retain two funded posts. The partnership cannot sustain its current project levels with only the current CSP projected income for 2015/16 (£117k);
- The reduction in crime recorded by Thames Valley Police is consistent with the British Crime Survey. More work is being done next year to encourage victims of domestic violence and hate crime to report; and
- Residents can go to their local police station for a Smartwater kit or contact their Neighbourhood Police team. The subsidised cost of the kits will be provided to the committee.

The committee agreed on the proposed change in direction for the Community Safety team (with more of an emphasis on vulnerable victims of crime) and thanked the officers for their report.

56 Revenue budget 2015/16 and capital programme to 2019/20

Councillor Will Hall, William Jacobs, Head of Finance and Bob Watson, Accountancy Manager, attended the committee to present the report and answer questions.

In response to questions, the officers reported that:

- The alternative to using the reserves is cuts to services, which is not the preferred option;
- The business continuity plan worked well following the fire at the Crowmarsh Gifford offices;
- The accountancy team speaks with Heads of Service quarterly to glean year end outturn projections and these are collated into the budget monitoring report. Delayed projects will appear as in-year underspend although these do not result in a long term saving to the council as the expenditure is only deferred rather than cancelled altogether;
- Planning manage all section 106 contributions until there is a project to pass them onto;
- By making the Deep Street Clean project a longer term contract, there will be more certainty for the contractor which should result in a reduction in overall cost (subject to negotiations); and
- It is proposed that Council Tax is reduced by 3%, which still allows for investment including £100,000 being invested in key services.

The committee thanked the officers for their report.

57 Draft Homelessness Strategy

Phil Ealey, Housing Needs Manager and Debbie McLatch, Head of Development and Housing attended the committee to present the report and answer questions.

In response to questions, the officers reported that:

- The new IT system will be more tailored to the needs of those needing help, enabling more of a focus on the most vulnerable;
- They are currently looking to develop the service with the wider community – voluntary, faith and charity groups – also through more contact with town and parish councils;
- An increase in the development of units is helping with the strain on availability of properties as well as the investment in our districts;
- The team have preferred landlord partners who are offered incentives to provide affordable housing although there is a challenge in finding new landlords;
- The districts are preventing 91% of homelessness, where the Oxfordshire wide target is 80%, however the number of people asking for help is increasing;
- Projections of the numbers of affordable units coming through will be circulated for members, however the number of developments still falls short of demand;
- The practice of capturing people before they become homeless is working, bucking the national trend – the strategy reinforces this;
- The objectives and actions within the strategy have identified and budgeted resources against them. Additional expenditure will be in the enhanced IT system.

The committee thanked the officers for their report and supported the draft homelessness strategy.

58 Community infrastructure levy draft charging schedule

Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning and Councillor Angie Paterson attended the committee to present the report and answer questions.

In response to questions, the officers reported that:

- Having a separate AONB/Greenbelt CIL is not defined by parish and would require further study by the consultants, which would result in a delay in the process of introducing the CILs. The impact on capturing money for strategic infrastructure is small in the AONB; and
- Amendments will be made to the reports:
 - p254 – to include timescales;
 - Discrepancies between the two maps;
 - Ladygrove Site, Didcot should be referred to as Ladygrove East; and
 - Greater clarity on p198 on Sub areas F and G categorisations.

The committee agreed that a delay in the CIL to recategorise the AONB and greenbelt was not advisable and that a review in 2 years would be an opportunity to look at categories.

The committee thanked the officers for their report.

59 Science Vale Area Action Plan

Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning, Carolyn Organ, Planning Policy Project Lead and Councillor Angie Paterson attended the committee to present the report and answer questions.

Officers reported that this item had been brought as an urgent item due to the need to launch the consultation ahead of the forthcoming purdah period so that it can support both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plans.

In response to questions, the officers reported that:

- The purpose of the consultation is to identify the scope of the plan, hear feedback on issues and the proposed boundary of Science Vale;
- In response to why the river crossing was now proposed it was explained that it is not the AAP that is proposing this. However, stakeholders including the County Council now believe that the growth in South Oxfordshire coupled with that in the emerging Vale Local Plan makes it a more reasonable option that could be delivered over the plan period.;
- Changes would be made to the report with regard to the following:
 - Change “people and investors” to “residents and investors” on p9 issue 1;
 - Clarify “centre and edges” of Didcot on p10 issue 2;
 - There is a word missing in issue 3;
 - Change “Help positively transform Didcot” to “improve”; and
 - Amend “b class land” on p24 to “business class land”.

The committee thanked the officers for their report.

60 Work Programme

The committee noted the 2015 work programme.

Members expressed disappointment that the 'future burial ground capacity in the district' report had not yet come to the committee; they were advised that having been transferred to the Planning remit, much of the work had been lost in the fire at Crowmarsh Gifford office fire. As Planning are working to about 50% capacity, this item is not currently being prioritised.

It was recommended that cabinet member names be removed from the work programme from May 2015.

61 Call-in of Cabinet member decision - Didcot Orchard Centre Phase 2 extension

The individual cabinet member decision made regarding the Didcot Orchard Centre Phase 2 extension has not been implemented subject to changes. It has been recommended that the decision be postponed until the March 2015 work programme, when it can once again be subject to the call-in procedure.

There is no Scrutiny Committee scheduled until June 2015; should a call-in be required, a special meeting may be convened.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chairman

Date