

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 6.30pm on Thursday 26 March 2015

PRESENT

Councillors: P J Handley (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), A C Beaney, R A Courts, Mrs M J Crossland, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, P D Kelland, T N Owen and D A Snow

Also Present: M A Barrett

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L C Carter, Mr J Haine, Mrs L E C Little and Mr B J Woodruff

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers relating to matters to be considered at the meeting.

46. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

No submissions were received from the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

47. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE REPORT

The Chairman advised that he would take Item No. 8 – Health Scrutiny Update before Item No. 6.

The Committee then received and noted the Chairman's update report.

48. HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report updating the committee in respect of the work of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

Mr Barrett, the Council representative on HOSC, introduced the report and explained the structure of health services and scrutiny at a national, regional and local level. Mr Barrett highlighted performance statistics relating to the South Central Ambulance Trust and

advised that he was awaiting further information as the current figures did not appear accurate. It was emphasised that concerns regarding the ambulance service were not unique to West Oxfordshire and it was a major issue being considered by HOSC.

The Health Policy Officer advised that similar problems were being experienced with other trusts and better use of minor injury units by people could help reduce unnecessary calls to the ambulance service. The committee noted that increased availability of defibrillators and training of volunteers had also proved effective.

(Mr Beaney joined the meeting at this juncture)

Mrs Crossland thanked Mr Barrett for his report and highlighted the need for more paramedics to be recruited and suggested that vacancies should be better advertised. Mrs Crossland further questioned the efficiency of the triage system as she understood that if an ambulance did not arrive in response to an initial call then any subsequent call was treated as a new incident. Mr Barrett undertook to clarify the situation.

Mr Kelland indicated that a major problem was delays in the handover of patients at the hospitals and suggested that a response was needed from the hospital trust. Mr Kelland also sought clarification regarding access to defibrillators. The Health Policy Officer advised that the units were controlled via a keypad and an access code was given by the ambulance call centre when a call was made and it was considered appropriate for the unit to be used. Mr Barrett also reported that a phone app was also available which gave users the location of the nearest defibrillator.

Mrs Doughty reported that she had been appointed as a governor for West Oxfordshire on the Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) Trust. Mrs Doughty advised that a new Chief Executive was in place at the trust and targets needed to be met if foundation status was to be achieved. It was acknowledged that ambulance crews were in a difficult position if they were delayed at hospitals waiting to transfer patients and was an issue that needed to be resolved.

Mr Handley indicated that the situation regarding response times had been ongoing for a long time and there seemed to be little improvement. Mr Handley highlighted that the committee had previously offered to work with the ambulance trust to try and improve matters in the district. It was suggested that it may be positive to invite the trust, together with representatives of OUH, to attend a meeting later in the year to discuss the concerns further. The committee concurred with this approach and supported the need for more detailed statistics to be provided.

In respect of paramedics it was noted that often candidates needed to gain additional qualifications and this was something they currently had to pay for themselves.

The committee thanked Mr Barrett for his work on HOSC and for providing such a comprehensive update report.

Mr Eaglestone referred to previous discussions at the committee regarding health provision on Deer Park, Witney and suggested it would be useful to receive an update regarding the local GP surgery.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update report be noted;
- (b) That representatives of the Ambulance Trust and Oxford University Hospitals be invited to attend a future meeting; and
- (c) That an update be provided regarding Deer Park GP Surgery.

49. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

The Committee received the report of the Strategic Director providing an update on the work programme for the committee for 2014/2015.

RAF Brize Norton

The Strategic Director confirmed that officers had held discussions with RAF representatives and a full meeting of the liaison group was planned for May/June 2015.

Police, Community Safety and CDRP

The committee noted that the annual update from Thames Valley Police would be received later in the year and a new Area Commander was now in place.

Local Development Framework

The Strategic Director, in response to Mr Kelland, clarified that the six week consultation would commence on 27 March 2015 and the draft document together with any responses received would then be submitted to government for consideration.

Leisure Contract

Mrs Crossland referred to the review of leisure centres that had been undertaken by the committee and advised that concerns had been raised with her regarding issues at Carterton Leisure Centre. As a result Mrs Crossland together with an officer had undertaken a visit to the centre. Mrs Crossland advised that a rectification plan had been agreed with the contractors to undertake certain works and she thanked all involved for the positive response to the concerns. It was suggested that councillors had an important role in monitoring the centres and responding to concerns that may be raised.

Mr Beaney asked about the timetable for the letting of the new leisure contract and in response the Strategic Director advised that it would be later in 2016. The committee was reminded that information from the contractor had previously been received and further updates would be provided as necessary. The Strategic Director highlighted that user numbers at the centres were above target.

Integration of Public Transport

Mrs Doughty, whilst acknowledging it was not directly in the control of the council, expressed concern at bus service access to hospitals in Oxford and that it was not convenient for many users due to the timing of services. Mrs Crossland advised that many

people in Carterton had conveyed similar worries. The Strategic Director acknowledged the concern and suggested that the council could have an influencing role in such matters. Mr Courts concurred and highlighted concern regarding rural bus services and the need for them to be better integrated. Mr Beaney suggested it was important that developer contributions were used towards transport improvements in the district.

Welfare Reform Act

Mr Handley drew attention to the fact that the registered social landlords would be invited to attend a meeting to discuss issues including the impact of welfare changes. Mr Handley suggested that it would be beneficial if officers could prepare a paper covering this and other housing issues to put any discussions in to context.

Mr Kelland emphasised the importance of parishes identifying sites to allow small scale affordable housing to be developed in those communities. The Strategic Director confirmed that regular liaison was undertaken with parishes with a view to identifying suitable sites. Mr Beaney highlighted specific issues in Kingham and the Strategic Director advised that such matters could be picked up in any report.

RESOLVED: That progress on the Work Programme be noted subject to the issues raised at the meeting.

50. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive giving an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 17 March 2015 was received.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 17 March 2015 be noted.

51. AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING PARTY

The Committee received the report of the Head of Democratic Services regarding a request from the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee to participate in a review being established to give consideration to alternative methods by which new affordable housing developments could be financed.

Mr Handley advised that he and Mr Kelland had attended an informal meeting of the group that had been held the previous week. It was reported that the focus of the review appeared to relate to investment models to provide income for the council. It was acknowledged that affordable housing could be forthcoming as a result.

After discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial to appoint a representative to serve on the group and they could report back to the committee. In the meantime this committee could continue its own work on affordable housing provision and if issues arose from the working party they could be taken account of in any discussions.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Doughty be appointed to serve as a representative on the working group.

52. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER THREE 2014/2015

The report of the Shared Head of Business Information and Change providing information on the Council's performance at the end of the third quarter of year 2014/2015 was considered.

Mr Handley highlighted the red indicator regarding the number of households living in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Strategic Director advised that whilst it was outside of target the figure of 11 households was low compared to many other councils. It was noted that the year-end performance figures would be presented at the next meeting and if the committee wanted to undertake any further work on this matter it would seem appropriate to instigate it then.

The Strategic Director acknowledged a number of red indicators regarding planning and advised that this was mainly due to the introduction of the new planning IT system and it was anticipated that performance would improve now that the system had been operational for a while.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

Mr Handley reminded the committee that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and thanked members and officers for their input to the work of the committee during the year.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm

Chairman