

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 28 May 2015

PRESENT

Councillors: P J Handley (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), M A Barrett,
J C Cooper, H B Eaglestone, J Haine, Miss G R Hill, H J Howard, Mrs L E C Little,
T N Owen, G Saul and B J Woodruff

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A C Beaney and Mr P D Kelland

The Chief Executive reported the following temporary appointments:

Miss G R Hill attended for Mrs J M Doughty
Mr H J Howard attended for Mrs M J Crossland
Mr G Saul attended for Mrs L C Carter

5. MINUTES

Mr Barrett provided a number of responses to issues that had been raised at the March meeting in respect of South Central Ambulance Trust. Details of the responses would be forwarded to members of the committee for information.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 26 March and 20 May 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

7. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

8. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that he had consented to the consideration of an additional item relating to Right to Move – Allocations Policy and the item would be considered as Item No. 10a.

In addition Mr Handley advised that, with the agreement of the committee, he would be taking Item Nos. 8 and 9 before Item No. 6.

9. MEETING THE NEEDS OF AN AGEING POPULATION

The committee received a presentation from officers of the council and representatives of organisations working with dementia sufferers and their families in the district.

Mr Bill Wragge (Health Policy Officer) introduced Mrs Sue Smith (Alzheimer Society), Mrs Sarah Durrant (Dig and Grow) and Mrs Hannah Cervenka (Arts and Leisure Development Manager).

Mr Wragge gave a brief introduction and explained that dementia was an important issue as the age profile of the district increased. It was emphasised that whilst it was predominantly a disease affecting older people there was an increasing number of people being diagnosed at an earlier age. Mr Wragge highlighted that attitudes were changing and there was increased awareness and lots of research being undertaken.

Mrs Smith outlined her work as a dementia adviser and gave specific examples of work she had undertaken with people living with dementia and their families. Mrs Smith highlighted that a key concern was isolation and that it was important that support and facilities were available to help those living with dementia and offer support to those caring for them.

Mrs Smith highlighted the positive work being undertaken by organisations in the district but there were some gaps in provision and ideally a specialist centre was required.

Mr Howard thanked Mrs Smith for her presentation and highlighted the importance of communication with people living with dementia and their families. Mrs Smith indicated that finding solutions to help individuals was key and that people could live a fulfilling life despite the disease.

Mrs Smith highlighted 'Singing for the Brain' which operated in other areas of the county as a positive initiative. Mr Cooper asked why the scheme was not operating in West Oxfordshire. In response it was explained that the costs were fairly high at £8,000 a year so funding was not easy.

Mr Barrett asked if the Oxfordshire Museum Service was still providing sessions where older people could reminisce and boxes of artefacts were provided to stimulate memories. Mrs Smith advised that such sessions were still available through the libraries and museums service.

Mr Handley suggested that community halls may be available in some parts of the district each week that could provide a base for some of the suggested activities. Mrs Smith indicated that this could be useful but there were still funding issues that needed to be addressed. The committee indicated support for any additional services that could be provided in the area. Mrs Smith highlighted the longer term benefits of respite services as it could delay the need for longer term care thus saving money.

Mrs Durrant gave a presentation, attached to the original copy of these minutes, outlining her work as a Horticultural Therapy Practitioner.

Mrs Little indicated her support for such initiatives and suggested that some land may be available in Carterton for community use which could also incorporate the project. Mr

Woodruff suggested Witney Town Council may have some land and Mr Eaglestone, who had supported Dig and Grow during his time as Mayor of Witney, undertook to look at the situation.

Mrs Durrant encouraged members to visit the project and see the work that was being undertaken.

Mrs Cervenka outlined the work being undertaken by Lights Up that provided sessions in Carterton and Chipping Norton where people living with dementia, families and carers could meet and participate in arts activities. A DVD of a session at Chipping Norton was shown to members.

Mrs Little thanked all those involved in the Carterton sessions which had been very successful and expressed the hope that funding could be found to maintain or even enhance the current provision.

Mr Saul referred to the success of the Chipping Norton scheme and asked if there were any limits on numbers who could attend. Mrs Cervenka advised that people could contact her and invited councillors to attend and see the services being offered.

Mr Howard highlighted the predicted growth in housing being built and suggested it would be beneficial if, as part of the planning process, provision could be made to provide land for gardening projects or other facilities. Mrs Durrant advised that some developers were already coming forward and it was hoped that land could be secured for Dig and Grow. The Policy Planner also advised that some policies in the emerging local plan could also help in this regard.

Mr Wragge summed up the discussion and advised that some key staff were to receive training about dementia awareness and suggested this could be extended to members in some form.

Mr Handley thanked all those involved for the presentation to the committee and highlighted the positive work being undertaken. It was suggested and agreed that a report be presented to a future meeting bringing together the issues discussed so that the committee could consider how best to progress the issues.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information provided at the meeting be noted; and
- (b) That a further report on the issues raised be considered at a future meeting.

10. LOCAL PLAN MONITORING REPORT 2013/2014

The report of Andrew Tucker, Strategic Director, seeking consideration of the Council's Local Plan monitoring report for 2013/14 prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 was received.

The Policy Planner introduced the report and outlined the main areas for consideration shown in the Executive Summary.

Mr Handley sought further information regarding Neighbourhood Plans and progress with developing plans in smaller communities. The Policy Planner advised that many parishes were keen to deliver some housing and they understood that Neighbourhood Plans were not a way of stopping development and needed to adhere to the district wide local plan. It was noted that if a plan was in place the local community could access 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that was achieved compared to the usual 15%.

Mr Woodruff asked about the timetable for consideration of the draft local plan. In response it was explained that the draft would be submitted to government in the coming weeks. It was further explained that there was a possibility that if a major issue arose the plan could be sent back to the council for further consideration.

Mr Howard highlighted the slower delivery rate of housing in recent times and asked if there were any particular reasons for this. The Policy Planner advised that there could be a number of reasons including shortage of materials and tradesmen. It was clarified that the main reason in the district was delays in legal agreements and generally developers were not land banking.

Mr Howard, in acknowledging that reference was made to the CIL charging schedule, suggested that it was important that members were kept advised of all aspects of CIL.

Mr Owen referred to responses that had been received to the latest consultation on the local plan and asked whether the plan would be changed in light of comments received. The Planning Officer advised that responses were submitted as received to the inspector alongside the draft plan.

In response to Mr Eaglestone and Mr Woodruff an update was given regarding the completion of the legal agreement and financial contributions associated with the North Curbridge development.

Mr Woodruff asked if the council was in a position to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The Planning Officer drew attention to the tables included in the report outlining the proportion of dwellings that were deliverable. The Policy Planner reminded members that the methodologies used were likely to be challenged during the inspection process.

Mr Howard referred to recent press coverage regarding predictions of likely population growth in Oxfordshire and asked if there was any relationship to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The Policy Planner indicated that he was not aware of the detailed figures but that high rates of house building in Oxfordshire would have implications for future population growth.

Mr Handley thanked officers for the report and suggested that development throughout the district was required to meet housing need.

RESOLVED: That, the content of the 2013/2014 Local Plan monitoring report is noted for information.

11. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016

The Committee received the report of the Strategic Director seeking consideration of a work programme for the committee for 2015/2016.

RAF Brize Norton

Mr Handley advised that a liaison group meeting was being arranged for July.

Quality of Care in Hospitals

It was considered that it would be preferable to receive an update from the ambulance service at the meeting in November and then schedule discussions with the Oxford University Hospital Trust and Commissioning Group at later meetings depending on issues that arose.

Integration of Public Transport

Mr Handley indicated that Oxfordshire County Council were looking at a number of options associated with public transport and suggested it would be beneficial if the committee had an input to any consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme for 2015/2016 be approved subject to the additions/amendments agreed at the meeting.

12. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive giving an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 19 May 2015 was received.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 19 May 2015 be noted.

13. START TIME OF MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services regarding the start time of meetings for the remainder of the 2015/2016 municipal year.

Members considered that it was positive to retain the current start time as it allowed members who worked during the day the opportunity to attend.

RESOLVED: That, meetings for the remainder of the municipal year commence at 6.30pm.

14. RIGHT TO MOVE – ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Committee received the report of the Joint Head of Revenues and Housing Support that had been considered at Cabinet on 27 May. It was noted that the Cabinet had supported the recommendations in the report.

Mr Cooper advised that he had asked for the report to be considered by the committee. Mr Cooper highlighted the strength of the current points system that the council operated and suggested that the alternative option outlined in the report needed to be more fully considered by Cabinet.

The Strategic Director outlined the legislation and advised that the Cabinet decision was in line with the requirements of the guidance. It was clarified that the recommendation was for 1% of housing, which equated to just four properties, to be allocated for this purpose. The Strategic Director suggested that using the points based system could still mean the applicant was some way down the housing list and the legislation would not be met.

Mr Howard suggested the proposals could be divisive and be seen as giving preferential treatment. The Strategic Director reminded the committee that local connection was already included as part of the nominations process and other safeguards were in place to ensure probity of the system.

After further discussion the committee agreed that the Cabinet decision should be supported as the best approach for meeting the new legislative requirements.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet decision in respect of the Allocations Policy be supported.

15. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Chairman