

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 9 July 2015

PRESENT

Councillors: P J Handley (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), M A Barrett, Mrs L C Carter, J C Cooper, Mrs M J Crossland, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, J Haine, P D Kelland and B J Woodruff

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A C Beaney, Mrs L E C Little and Mr T N Owen

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

19. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE REPORT

The Chairman advised that he would be taking Agenda Item No. 8 – Leisure Contract Monitoring before Agenda Item No. 6.

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

21. LEISURE CONTRACT MONITORING

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Leisure and Communities providing an update on progress against recommendations relating to the leisure management contract.

The Leisure Services Manager outlined the report and explained that the contract was due for renewal in 2016 and a report regarding the tender process would be presented to Cabinet in the autumn. The Leisure Services Manager introduced John Amatt, Operations Director and Robert Wood, Partnership Manager with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) the leisure contractors.

Mr Amatt reported that GLL had reorganised in to regional divisions and highlighted recent successful contract bids the company had made. It was explained that the company was diversifying in to other areas including libraries and provision of extreme sports for young people.

Mr Kelland asked about the financial and governance arrangements particularly in light of increased expansion. Mr Amatt responded that GLL looked to target a 2.5% profit that could then be reinvested in to facilities and services whilst maintaining a three month reserve of operating funds. It was suggested and agreed that a copy of the accounts, presented to the West Oxfordshire Advisory Board (WOAB), could be made available to members for information. In respect of the Management Board members were selected from society members and a small number of co-opted representatives.

Mr Wood gave an update in respect of specific issues in West Oxfordshire and work that had been undertaken with regard to recommendations agreed by the committee in respect of leisure centres in the district.

Mr Wood reported that there had been a significant increase in membership of the centres and annual surveys and external audits were used to ensure that the quality of service was maintained. The committee noted that the centres had achieved accredited status. Mr Wood outlined that both GLL and WODC had exceeded their contractual commitment to invest back into the facilities. GLL's contractual commitment was circa £260,000 and they had invested over £470,000 to date and this total investment exceeded the total surplus generated from the leisure contract to date.

Mr Wood acknowledged that programming of activities was challenging as it was not possible to cater for everybody. In respect of swimming the committee was advised that Oxfordshire County Council was withdrawing its swimming programme but GLL would be taking over and would work with local schools to redesign the programme and make best use of the facilities.

In respect of catering facilities it was advised that the café at the Windrush Leisure Centre had been contracted to Yellow Submarine which was a charity that gave employment opportunities to people with learning disabilities. Mr Wood highlighted the importance of community engagement and support for initiatives that allowed hard to reach groups to take up leisure activities.

Mr Wood outlined that redecoration and other works were being undertaken to improve the centres together with a more comprehensive cleaning regime during the day.

Mr Wood, in acknowledging that staff recruitment had been an issue, advised that GLL were looking to recruit people who could be trained to undertake duties and also seek to develop existing staff so they could take on management roles. It was noted that GLL also had a volunteer scheme in place.

Mr Handley suggested that many of the initiatives appeared to be Witney focussed and it was important that other areas of the district were not forgotten.

Mrs Crossland expressed concern that increased expansion needed to be managed carefully to ensure that the quality of service did not suffer. Mrs Crossland referred to

staffing and indicated she was uneasy at unqualified staff being employed, safeguarding issues and the need to retain existing staff.

Mrs Crossland highlighted improvement works at Carterton Leisure Centre and the good work of council officers but there was however continued concern regarding the cleanliness of the centre. Mrs Crossland suggested that more provision could be made for disabled and elderly users and echoed the views of Mr Handley that resources needed to be allocated evenly across the district.

Mrs Doughty highlighted concerns regarding the Windrush Leisure Centre including the cleanliness of the showers and changing rooms, the withdrawal of squash courts and cancellation of some activities. Mrs Doughty advised that some constituents had cancelled their membership as a result and suggested that GLL should concentrate on improving the current service before expanding further.

Mr Cooper referred to the new contract and asked if, as a result of the new collaborative working in the 2020 Vision, an 'in house' bid was possible. The Strategic Director reminded members that the process was at an early stage and clarified that all the partner authorities had outsourced their contracts. It was therefore unlikely that such a bid would be forthcoming but the leisure market was very competitive and therefore it was probable there would be a lot of interest from bidders.

Mrs Carter indicated there appeared to be diverging views from the public and a key issue being reported from constituents was cleanliness of the facilities. Mrs Carter further suggested that it was often difficult to contact the centre and make a booking. Mr Handley concurred and suggested that management on site was an issue that needed to be addressed.

Mr Woodruff suggested that staff training was key and whilst it was acknowledged that training younger staff was positive and the situation had improved in Witney it may also benefit GLL if they could employ older people who could act as mentors. Mr Woodruff, whilst acknowledging that there was little that could be done, highlighted the car parking problems at the Windrush Leisure Centre. Mr Wood agreed that there were parking problems and restrictions would be enforced in the car park.

Mr Wood then responded to the issues raised and clarified that no member of staff was allowed on duty until they were fully qualified. It was confirmed that relevant staff were fully DBS checked and it was important that staff and customers were not put at risk.

In respect of cleaning Mr Wood advised that existing contracts were being terminated and the service bought back 'in house' so that managers had greater control over the type and frequency of cleaning. Mr Wood indicated that there would be increased cleaning during the day with a more obvious staff presence. Mr Wood further advised that deep cleaning of facilities was also being undertaken.

In response to Mrs Carter it was confirmed that GLL paid a minimum wage of £7.14 an hour and were working towards paying the living wage. It was confirmed that there were no apprentices employed in West Oxfordshire. The committee noted that the council had previously agreed to pay the living wage to directly employed staff but this did not extend to contractors.

Mrs Carter suggested that visible logs of when cleaning had been undertaken would be beneficial to customers. Mr Wood advised that staff did complete a checklist which also included a number of other work areas and these were regularly audited. In respect of safeguarding it was reiterated that frontline staff undertook a DBS check and regular training was in place.

Mr Amatt in response to questions reiterated that investment in West Oxfordshire facilities had been more than contracted and the current operating surplus was around 2%. It was noted that GLL were not precluded from capital investment in facilities and equipment.

The Chairman thanked Mr Amatt and Mr Wood for attending the meeting, summarised the debate and indicated that members were looking for significant improvements for the remainder of the contract.

After further discussion it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, the update be noted;
- (2) That, a further update be provided for members including details of accounts, staffing and cleaning protocols at the facilities; and
- (3) That, councillors Mrs Carter, Mrs Crossland, Mrs Doughty and Mr Woodruff act as member liaison with officers and GLL in respect of the leisure centres including visiting the sites as appropriate.

22. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016

The Committee received the report of the Strategic Director providing an update on the work programme for the committee for 2015/2016.

RAF Brize Norton

It was noted that the liaison meeting scheduled for 14 July had been postponed and would be rescheduled for September.

Mrs Crossland highlighted an issue with the base regarding civic protocol and this had been raised by the Chairman of the Council and it was hoped that the base would adhere to the protocol in future.

Quality of Care in Hospitals

Mrs Carter advised that there was concern in Chipping Norton at proposed changes to staffing of intermediate care beds at Chipping Norton hospital. Mrs Carter highlighted that there had been an agreement regarding the contractual position of staff and this could now be changed thus meaning the closure of beds.

Mr Handley acknowledged the concern and advised that the council was aware of the situation and the trust did appear to be changing its position significantly. The committee was advised that the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the matter and the proposals would now be subject to public consultation.

Mr Cooper highlighted that the Council had taken out an injunction when a similar situation arose at Witney hospital and asked if such action was being considered. The Strategic Director advised that the consultation process needed to be undertaken and then decisions could be made depending on the outcome.

It was **Agreed** that the Council should request to be a consultee in respect of the changes and that members be kept advised of progress on the matter.

Police, Community Safety and CDRP

The Chairman reminded members that the Area Commander was due to attend the next meeting to provide an update. The Chief Executive advised that questions from members would be sought ahead of the meeting to allow for full responses to be given.

During discussion members indicated that information regarding the number of cautions issued, detection rates, policing the night time economy and success of CCTV in detecting crime should be provided.

(Mr Haine left the meeting at this juncture)

Local Development Framework

Mr Cooper asked what assessment process was being undertaken for reviewing what legal obligations the District Council had under the duty to cooperate to take any under provision of housing numbers in the Oxford City area.

The Strategic Director suggested a briefing paper could be provided at the next meeting. The committee was advised that the situation was linked to Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and an exercise to look at options for addressing any unmet housing need arising from Oxford need was being undertaken collectively by all the Oxfordshire councils through the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

The Strategic Director clarified that the duty to co-operate had to be demonstrated as part of the Local Plan process but this did not mean that there had to be agreement. It was noted that any outcomes would be reflected in local plan reviews.

Integration of Public Transport

The committee noted that the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) consultation paper on bus subsidies would be considered at the next meeting. It was suggested and agreed that representatives of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, who were co-ordinating the consultation, and/or OCC should be invited to the meeting to provide background information.

RESOLVED: That progress on the Committee Work Programme for 2015/2016 be noted subject to the issues raised at the meeting.

23. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive giving an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 23 June 2015 was received. The committee noted that some items had been deferred until later in the year.

Approval of Leisure Management Contractor Procurement

Mr Handley expressed the hope that the extension of Carterton Leisure Centre would be included as part of the consideration of the new contract arrangements and this was supported by the committee. The Strategic Director advised that there were some years left before the developer contributions set aside for the project needed to be used.

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

24. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – YEAR END 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 fourth quarter of year 2014/2015 was considered.

The Strategic Director acknowledged that there were several red indicators relating to planning matters and explained that this was mainly due to the implementation of a new computer system. It was indicated that the issues were now resolved and performance should improve in the coming year.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

25. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Chairman