

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held in Committee Room I, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney,
at 6.30pm on Thursday 24 November 2016

PRESENT

Councillors: : P J Handley (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), M A Barrett, J C Cooper, Mrs M J Crossland, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, D S T Enright, P D Kelland, T N Owen and Mrs L E C Little

Also in attendance: P Emery, Ms E P R Leffman and T J Morris

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A C Beaney and Mrs J C Baker and the Head of Paid Service reported receipt of the following resignation and temporary appointment:-

Mr D S T Enright for Mrs L C Carter

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

41. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, Mr Sharone Parnes addressed the meeting in relation to agenda item nos. 12 and 13 (Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site). A summary of his submission is attached as an appendix to the original copy of these minutes.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked Mr Parnes for his contribution and indicated that it would be taken into account by Members when considering the relevant items of business.

42. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received and noted the Chairman's update report. The Chairman advised that, as Mrs Doughty, the Council's representative to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, would have to leave the meeting early, he intended to ask her for an update on the proposed closure of the Deer Park Medical Practice prior to dealing with the remainder of the evening's business.

Mrs Doughty advised that The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed GP surgery closures at their meeting held on 17 November and thanked Mr Cooper for his contribution to that meeting. At the meeting Members had expressed particular concern about the sustainability of primary care in light of the proposals to move more care into the community as part of the health and care transformation plans.

The Committee had also briefly discussed the closure of Deer Park Medical Centre as a part of this item and agreed that a substantial change toolkit meeting would take place with the CCG, using the toolkit assessment as the basis for discussion about whether it is a substantial change. That meeting, which would not be open to members of the public, was to take place on 12 December.

Mrs Doughty advised that the Working Party established by the Committee on 6 October had met on two occasions, meeting with representatives of the CCG and the Deer Park Patient Participation Group. The Working Party had advised the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it considered the proposed closure to represent a substantial change in the level of service provision and that it should be treated as such. The Working Party had also invited representatives of the three remaining GP practices in Witney to attend its next meeting to discuss their capacity to absorb the Deer Park patient list but the surgeries had declined.

In conclusion, Mrs Doughty suggested that there was little the Working Party could do until such time as the substantial change toolkit meeting had taken place as it was for the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, not the District Council, to determine whether or not the proposals constituted a substantial change.

Mr Cooper enquired why the substantial change toolkit meeting was not open to the public and it was explained that, with regard to public access and the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the Joint Committee and its sub-groups were subject to the same legislative requirements and constraints as the District Council.

43. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY HOSPITALS/OXFORDSHIRE-WIDE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

At the request of the Committee, Mr Dominic Hardisty, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive of the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Mr Pete McGrane, Clinical Director, Older People's Directorate, attended the meeting.

The Trust representatives introduced themselves to Members and gave a brief outline of their experience within the NHS.

Mr Hardisty advised that the NHS was undergoing a fundamental change at both local and national level. Sustainability and Transformation Plans were being produced and the Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire Board was managing the Oxfordshire Transformation Programme.

Public consultation on proposals for changes to health services in Oxfordshire was set to start at the end of December / beginning of January 2017 and Mr Hardisty assured Members that no decisions on the future shape of services had been taken prior to the consultation process.

Mr Hardisty explained that the consultation would take the form of a two stage, sequential process. The first stage, which was scheduled to commence in January 2017, would revolve around the provision of acute services at the Horton Hospital in Banbury and the number of beds at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. This would run until March with the second stage of the process beginning after the County Council elections in May.

The second phase of the consultation would be concerned with future options for community hospitals, including the hospital in Witney. As this would be informed by the outcome of the initial consultation, Mr Hardisty indicated that he was unable to provide any detail as it was not yet clear which options would be brought forward or if a preferred option would be identified.

However, a number of objectives had been identified in relation to community hospitals. There was a wish to see a greater degree of consistency of access to services across Oxfordshire. Achieving this would require the amalgamation of some existing facilities and the addition of others to provide residents with one day access to primary care.

It would be necessary to consider the best pathway for those having suffered a stroke. At present, there was no countywide early supportive discharge service offering patients care at home. This was envisaged as operating on a countywide basis as experience in other parts of the country had shown it to be the best model for patients. Over time, the development of this service would have an impact upon the number of beds required in community hospitals such as Witney where 10 stroke beds were currently provided.

There was a need for more balanced intermediate care and rehabilitation, offering both home and in-patient bed based care. Those with more complex needs would be treated as in-patients whilst more simple cases could be treated at home or in nursing homes.

There was no intention to reduce levels of expenditure overall and funding to cover the current cost base was assured through to 2020. However, it was expected that demand on the service would increase by 10% during that timeframe and the challenge to be faced was how to address this additional demand through the provision of truly community based facilities.

Mr Hardisty advised that no detailed proposals had been worked up and assured Members that, once they had, they would be shared and the views expressed by others taken into account. In conclusion, he reiterated that no decisions had been taken in the background.

In response to a question from Mrs Doughty regarding arrangements at Chipping Norton, Mr McGrane advised that nursing staff had transferred to the Order of St John. The Trust continued to provide out-patient care at the hospital and retained a role in managing medical staffing. Although it did not provide in-patient facilities, the Trust worked closely with the Order of St John in providing in-reach therapy support. Mr McGrane accepted that this position had given rise to expressions of local concern and, in response to a further question from Mrs Doughty, explained that it would not be appropriate for the Trust to comment upon the possibility of staff returning to NHS control.

Mrs Doughty concluded by expressing her recognition and appreciation of the excellent level of service provided at Witney Hospital.

Mr Cooper enquired whether the Trust would take account of the undertaking previously given by the Health Authority on the closure of the Burford Hospital. In response, Mr McGrane advised that any undertaking pre-dated his time in Oxfordshire and reiterated that any decisions taken would seek to provide the right clinical services and correct clinical model within the available level of resources and needs analysis of the population. He suggested that would make it difficult to relate those objectives back to an earlier undertaking.

Given that travel to the John Radcliffe hospital could be difficult, Mr Enright expressed his support for the concept of providing care as close as possible to home. He questioned

whether community hospitals could care for those with long term conditions through out-patients clinics and rehabilitation services by bringing experts out into the community.

(Mrs Doughty left the meeting at this juncture)

In response, Mr Hardisty advised that elective pathways involved a trade-off between efficiency and effectiveness and proximity. Whilst it was unlikely that the provision of complex on-site diagnostics would be sustainable, it would be easier and more desirable for long term conditions to be managed locally. Bicester Community Hospital provided care for those with diabetes and other long term conditions as well as those suffering from general frailty. Whilst this was only a pilot project and no promises could be made for similar provision elsewhere, the facility represented the current direction of travel.

Mr Kelland questioned whether the transformation programme was care based or intended as a cost cutting exercise. In response, Mr Hardisty reiterated that funding levels were secure to 2020 but that it was envisaged that the service would be faced with a 10% increase in patient numbers. The challenge was how to absorb this increased demand.

Mr McGrane explained that exercises had taken place to explore how this could be accomplished. Whilst a 10% increase in demand was significant in overall terms, at an individual surgical level it was not difficult to achieve. However, to do so would require greater integration so as to maximise the input of clinicians at all stages.

Mr Kelland noted that it was difficult to recruit staff. Mr McGrane agreed but explained that the Board had already looked into the areas concerned. Previous service reviews had concentrated on discrete areas and, whilst individual services had been improved, this approach failed to take account of negative impacts upon other services. The current transformation process had adopted a holistic approach in order to develop cohesive proposals for the service as a whole. Mr McGrane indicated that he was confident that this co-ordinated approach would prove more successful than those in the past.

Mr Handley questioned whether the intensive use of resources to care for persons at home were truly cost-effective and expressed concern that arrangements for NHS funding in Oxfordshire and the allocation of funding to the Universities for research led to an imbalance of service provision in the more rural areas.

In response to a question from Mr Kelland, Mr Hardisty explained that, whilst social care was means tested, NHS services remained free at the point of contact hence NHS clinicians treated and prescribed to patients in private care homes.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hardisty and Mr McGrane for their attendance and invited them to return to a subsequent meeting once the consultation was underway.

44. ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL TRANSPORT CO-OPERATIVE - UPDATE

At the request of the Committee Ms E P R Leffman attended the meeting to provide an update on progress to establish a co-operative to commission local public transport services across the District.

Ms Leffman advised that, on the recommendation of the Committee, the Cabinet had agreed to provide financial assistance in the sum of £800 to meet the initial set up costs of establishing a co-operative to commission local public transport services across the District. A bank account had been opened and the funds transferred. The group had applied to the Financial Conduct Authority for Community Benefit Society Status and to HMRC for tax exemption. A timetable for the X9 service from Kingham station had been produced and a further meeting was to be held the following week.

Mr Enright then spoke about developments in the Witney area. He advised that set-up arrangements continued apace in order to meet the deadline for the Witney services. Directors had been appointed and the requisite documentation put in place. A bid for financial assistance had been submitted to the County Council as there was a danger that the service would be lost unless a new provider could be found. The group was seeking to be the service operator with the assistance of Go-Ride which would continue to operate the service until February.

The group intended to obtain an Operator's Licence and the Council Members involved were proposing to step back shortly. The group contained an experienced bus operator and was to meet the following week. A method by which it could purchase a vehicle had been identified and an operational plan was being devised. Design and marketing services were being provided at no cost and a business plan was also under development. The group would need a float to cover the first month's operation but would become self-sufficient financially thereafter. Mr Enright indicated that the group was aware of problems with services elsewhere in the District and could have the opportunity to step in. In conclusion, he emphasised that the relationship with the District Council remained crucial and expressed thanks on behalf of the group for the continued support.

Mr Handley noted that the Town Council provided financial support to the Go-Ride service and questioned how the new operation would be able to be self-funding. Mr Enright explained that this was primarily due to the fact that a not for profit organisation could achieve lower operating costs. He stressed the importance of community buy-in to give access and promotion. Ms Leffman explained that members would be able to buy shares to support a community company.

Mrs Little thanked Ms Leffman for launching this initiative. She noted that Carterton had lost the 64 service's link to Swindon and advised that the Town Council was seeking support from the relevant parishes and the local Member of Parliament to secure its reinstatement. The Town Council had met with the previous service provider to obtain further information. Mrs Little advised that people had lost jobs due to the withdrawal of this service and indicated that Carterton Town Council would be happy to co-operate with the community company.

Ms Leffman advised that the arrangements developing in Witney offered a great model that could possibly be applied elsewhere. Whilst the concept began with the service between Chipping Norton and Kingham, the intention had always been for it to extend district wide. However, whilst the Witney service was aiming to commence in February, the timescale for further expansion was uncertain.

Mrs Crossland offered her congratulations to those involved in the project and expressed the hope that it would develop further services. Ms Leffman confirmed that this had always been the intention and suggested that representatives of the Town Council could meet with the company to discuss the future possibilities.

Mr Owen added his congratulations but questioned whether the proposals would duplicate the Villager service. In response, Ms Leffman advised that the two would be complementary, there was cross-membership between the two organisations and the intention was to work together, not to undermine the Villager service. Mr Enright advised that the community company was more suited to operating in the urban areas using salaried drivers whilst the Villager served more rural areas and was reliant upon volunteers.

Mr Kelland suggested that the I8 service ought to be used as a feeder service to Oxford via Eynsham rather than completing the full route itself.

RESOLVED: that the information provided be noted.

45. BUDGET 2017/2018

The Committee received and considered the report of Frank Wilson, Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service, setting out the initial draft base budgets for 2017/18, draft fees and charges for 2017/18 and the latest Capital Programme for 2016/17 revised and future years.

The Go Shared Service Head of Finance introduced the report and drew attention to the levels of external funding summarised at Appendix A. He advised that the Council was to remain in the Business Rates Pool and explained that a re-valuation of business rates on solar farms would result in a £50,000 reduction in income for the Authority. Business rates appeals could account for a further £900,000 giving rise to an estimated deficit of some £375,000 for this Council. However, provision had been made to address this through previous surpluses and this sum had not been incorporated within the budget. Revenue Support Grant had been reduced from £1,000,000 to £636,000 but, as the Council had agreed to a four year settlement, this reduction had been anticipated and built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

New Homes Bonus had been reduced from £1,800,000 to £1,300,000 but Officers were still awaiting information on its distribution and this figure remained an estimate. Overall, the Council could expect a reduction of some £800,000 in external funding.

The Budget outlined operational expenditure of some £11,000,000. Growth had been built into the budget funded through income derived from the purchase of Des Roches square and the introduction of charges for collection and disposal of green waste

The Council had little control over items such as Business Rates, fees for school swimming from the County Council, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and the cost of the new waste collection contract.

The existing grants budget would be maintained with requests from the Cotswolds Conservation Board and the Citizens Advice Housing Project going forward for consideration as part of the budget process.

Investment income had fallen from £657,000 to £607,000 and the Council would need to borrow to fund any future capital investment. However, interest rates remained low for short term borrowing. In conclusion, the Go Shared Service Head of Finance advised that the use of General Fund balances for 2017/18 was estimated at some £290,000.

The Chairman thanked those involved for their work in the preparation of the budget and the Go Shared Service Head of Finance for the clarity of the report.

Mr Kelland noted that it was intended that the new leisure management contract would pass on capital costs to the contractor with a consequent reduction in cost to the Council. He enquired whether this had been factored into the budget. In response, the Go Shared Service Head of Finance advised that, whilst it was assumed that the Council would achieve savings, the extent of these was uncertain but a prudent estimate had been included within the budget.

Mr Owen noted the continued reliance upon the use of balances, considering this to be a regrettable reflection of changing times. The Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service

advised that the judicious use of balances was envisaged in the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy and reminded Members of the Council's previous decision to realign its investments from cash to property.

Mr Cooper questioned whether there had been an opportunity to assess the impact of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. In response, the Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service advised that there had been no significant reference to local government in the Statement. In response to a further question, he advised that the consultation on the New Homes Bonus had occurred earlier in the year and, whilst it was expected that the outcome would be revealed in the local government settlement, the Statement had been silent on the issue. Mr Cooper also enquired whether it would be preferable to lease rather than purchase refuse vehicles for the new contract and it was explained that, with interest rates low, leasing was not the preferred option.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their report and confirmed that a £5.00 rise in Council Tax was proposed in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the current budget proposals be endorsed.

46. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

The Committee received and considered the report of the Strategic Director which gave an update on progress in relation to its Work Programme for 2016/2017.

46.1 Review of Community Hospitals

Members noted that updates on the consultation on the transformation process would be provided as appropriate.

46.2 Police, Community Safety and CDRP

Mrs Crossland expressed concern over the recently published crime detection figures for the Thames Valley. It was explained that this item was only considered as completed in terms of the annual update from the Local Police Area Commander regarding policing priorities for the area.

46.3 Welfare Reform Act – Meeting with Registered Social Landlords

It was noted that the proposed meeting with RSL's had been postponed until the New Year.

Mr Enright indicated that changes in the Council's housing support function, together with the impact of reduced funding by the County Council and the introduction of Choice Based Lettings had had a significant impact upon the provision of Housing Support. He called for a report to assess how the support system was working.

It was noted that, when the introduction of the digital nominations scheme was approved by the Cabinet in December 2015, it had been agreed that a review of the operation of the system would be carried out. The Chairman suggested that the relevant portfolio holder could be invited to attend a future meeting to respond to Members' questions. On further consideration it was **AGREED** that a report on the operation of the choice based lettings system and for housing support arrangements be submitted to the Committee.

46.4 Leisure Management Contract Working Party

It was noted that a further meeting of the Leisure Management Contract Working Party had been held on 23 November at which Members had given consideration to the Performance Indicators that would underpin the new contract. Members of the Working

Party had been reassured that appropriate steps were being taken to ensure that the new contract would deliver a high quality service. The Working Party had also considered the question of public consultation but had concluded that it would be inappropriate to initiate a survey during the course of the procurement process.

46.5 Operation of the Ambulance Service

It was noted that, following the attendance of representatives of the South Central Ambulance Service Trust at the September meeting, no specific issues had been raised by Members of the Committee. In consequence, it was recommended that this item be deleted from the Work Programme. Members debated whether to retain this as a regular item, inviting representatives of the Trust to attend with the Police and Fire Service. On reflection, Members concluded that it would be sufficient for the Committee to receive performance information from the Trust and to invite their attendance should any particular concerns arise from this. It was **AGREED** that the item would be deleted from the Work Programme but that the Trust be requested to provide regular updates on performance.

46.6 Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan

It was noted that the Working Party had made representations on the review of the Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan and **AGREED** that the item be deleted from the Work Programme.

46.7 Deer Park Medical Centre

In view of the information provided by Mrs Doughty earlier in the meeting it was **AGREED** that the Working Party could not proceed further until the outcome of the HOSC Toolkit Meeting was known.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendments detailed above, progress with regard to the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/2017 be noted.

47. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Head of Paid Service giving an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 15 November 2016 was received.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 15 November 2016 be noted.

48. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 2 2016/2017

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Communities providing information on the Council's performance at the end of the second quarter of year 2016/2017.

Members were pleased to note that, with one exception, performance targets for the period had been met and expressed their thanks to Officers for their efforts in this respect.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

49. BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE – DESIGNATION OF A BUFFER ZONE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Strategic Director regarding the need for the creation of a buffer zone to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.

In response to comments made by Mr Parnes earlier in the meeting, Mr Cooper enquired whether it was the Council's responsibility to publicise the recent consultation on the review of the Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan.

In response, the Strategic Director confirmed that it was not the Council's role to fulfil this function as its involvement in the process was as a consultee.

Mr Cooper thanked Officers for the report and enquired, should the Committee decide to support the designation of a Buffer Zone, in which document it would carry the greatest weight. The Strategic Director confirmed that the Local Plan would be the appropriate document.

Mr Enright suggested that, given that the Palace was enclosed within its own grounds, a buffer zone would be unnecessary. Mrs Crossland noted that English Heritage concurred with this view and the consensus amongst Members was that there was adequate protection provided by other means and that a formal 'buffer zone' for the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site was not required.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that no further action be taken thereon.

50. BLENHHEIM WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKING PARTY

The Committee received the reports of the meetings of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Management Plan Working Party held on 12 and 31 October 2016.

Mr Cooper thanked the Members of the Working Party for their contributions and the Blenheim Estate for enabling Members to tour the site. He drew attention to the recommendations made by the Working Party which had been incorporated in the Council's response to the consultation.

51. DEER PARK SURGERY WORKING PARTY

The notes of the meetings of the Deer Park Surgery Working Party held on 26 October and 9 November 2016 were received and noted.

52. OXFORD CITY'S UNMET HOUSING NEED

It was noted that Mr J C Cooper had requested that an item be placed on the agenda regarding Oxford City's unmet housing need with specific reference to the number of counter claims made against the City to reduce the numbers claimed by them.

Mr Cooper enquired as to the number of counter-claims made against the City Council with regard to the City's ability to incorporate further development on sites within its boundaries and the acceptance of the level of unmet demand claimed.

In response, the Strategic Director explained that the conclusions reached by the Growth Board had been underpinned by a great deal of work carried out by Officers of all authorities prior to those meetings. She undertook to provide Members with further information regarding the process in writing.

53. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

53.1 Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities.

Mr Emery enquired whether any announcement regarding the Council's expression of interest in the development of a new garden village had been made during the Chancellors autumn statement and how such information would be disseminated to Members.

The Strategic Director advised that, whilst it had been anticipated that the Government's decision would be communicated through the statement, no announcement had been made. There was no indication as to when a decision would be made and the Council was in the Government's hands.

Mr Emery questioned whether a delay would impact upon the finalisation of the Local Plan. The Strategic Director advised that this was not the case as the question of a garden village would be addressed independent of the Local Plan.

Mr Kelland indicated that there had been significant interest in the initiative with a large number of authorities expressing an interest. He also noted that the concept had been initiated during the previous Government administration and questioned whether the present regime retained the same degree of enthusiasm. The Strategic Director advised that the Government viewed the project as a key element of its housing strategy and it was thought that it would continue on a rolling programme.

53.2 Car Parking Strategy

Mr Cooper enquired what was been taken into account in respect of the car parking survey and the local plan. In response, the Strategic Director advised that a report on the adoption of the Car Parking Strategy was to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm

Chairman