

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 19 January 2017

PRESENT

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

Also in attendance: Mrs J C Baker and Mr P Emery

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M J Crossland and Mr T N Owen and the Head of Paid Service reported receipt of the following resignation and temporary appointment:-

Mr G Saul for Mrs L C Carter

61. MINUTES

Mr Cooper advised that the new train between Bicester and Oxford referred to in the second paragraph of Minute No. 59 ran from Bicester Village Station, not from Bicester North.

Mr Beaney indicated that it was he, not Mr Cooper, who had suggested that the response to question 15 in the consultation relating to transport should be strengthened and expressed concern that, as drafted, the minutes failed to capture the depth of Members' consideration of the call in request. Mr Kelland indicated that comments that he had made had not been recorded and Members considered it would be preferable to see a more expansive style to be employed in future.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendments detailed above, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

63. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

64. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE REPORT

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

65. 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.

65.1 RAF Brize Norton

The Chairman of the Committee advised Members that a letter had been received by the local Member of Parliament from Mark Lancaster TD VR MP, the Parliamentary under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel, which indicated that, following a re-prioritisation of infrastructure projects, the Brize Norton Service Family Accommodation project had been deferred until 2022. A review of the impact of the deferral of these projects had concluded that the redevelopment of REEMA North would satisfy the defence requirement through building 200 new Service Family Accommodation homes on this area of the Brize Norton Site. Other options were being explored to access funding to deliver the project before 2022.

The majority of the REEMA Central site was to be released back to Annington Homes Limited for redevelopment and the provision of new housing for the community.

The Strategic Director advised that arrangements had been made for a further meeting to be held with representatives of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to be held shortly to discuss future development in Carterton.

65.2 Welfare Reform Act – Meeting with Registered Social Landlords

Members acknowledged that, in order to enable the Committee to give priority to consideration of the proposals for changes to health service provision being brought forward in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West five year Sustainability and Transformation Plan, it was likely that this item of business would be deferred until later in the year.

65.3 Integration of Public Transport – Establishment of a Local Transport Co-Operative

Mrs Little reiterated the concerns she had raised with regard to the loss of the 64 service's link between Carterton and Swindon and expressed her disappointment that, despite Ms Leffman's suggestion that representatives of the Town Council could meet with the company to discuss the future possibilities to apply the arrangements developing in Witney elsewhere in the District, she had not been invited to attend such a meeting.

Given that the Council had made initial funding available to the project on the understanding that it would develop services throughout the District, Mr Handley expressed the wish to see the project progress accordingly.

65.4 Leisure Management Contract Working Party

Mr Beaney indicated that it had been agreed that Members of the Working Party would be provided with relevant sections of the contract specification and advised that these had not been received. He requested that they be made available to Members.

65.5 Deer Park Medical Practice.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs Brenda Churchill, the Chairman of the Patient's Forum, provided Members with an update on the efforts being made by the group to oppose the closure of the practice.

Mrs Churchill advised that the Forum had secured Legal Aid to pursue a Judicial Review. An attempt to secure an injunction preventing the Clinical Commissioning Group from writing to officially inform patients of the impending closure had been unsuccessful as application had not been made in sufficient time.

Mrs Churchill indicated that she had been given to understand that the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's toolkit meeting held on 12 December 2016 had voted to the effect that it considered the proposed closure to constitute a substantial change in service provision. However, she was concerned that the position could be reversed when the matter was considered by the full Committee on 2 February.

Mrs Churchill noted that the Deer Park Surgery Working Party had invited representatives of the three remaining GP practices in Witney to attend a meeting to discuss their capacity to absorb the Deer Park patient list but the surgeries had declined. She wished to see the Working Party reconvened to reassert its opinion that the closure represented a substantial change in service provision and suggested that it meet with representatives of those surgeries' patients' forum as all were concerned as to the ability to absorb additional patients displaced from the Deer Park practice. In particular, there was concern that any patients allocated to the Cogges practice to the west of the town would find it difficult to access following the withdrawal of the 223 bus service.

Mrs Churchill advised that it was envisaged that some 1,500 of the 4,000 currently on the Deer Park practice list would be transferred to the Cogges surgery; a similar number to the Nuffield practice and some 700 to the Windrush surgery. This left some 700 patients without GP cover, primarily those living in more rural areas. This situation had not been acknowledged in the risk assessment.

Mrs Churchill indicated that the Patient's Forum had presented information to the Clinical Commissioning Group, all of which could be verified and substantiated. The closure of the Deer Park practice would have an impact upon the whole town; whilst current waiting times for appointments were some three to four weeks, this would be increased to four or five weeks if the closure went ahead.

Mr Kelland suggested that waiting times for GP appointments were now so long that some individuals had taken to booking appointments on a precautionary basis, cancelling them if not required.

In conclusion, Mrs Churchill advised that a public meeting was to be held in the Corn Exchange at 7:00pm on Tuesday 24 January at which all Members would be welcome.

Mrs Baker advised that she had attended the previous meetings of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be present on 2 February.

Mr Beaney suggested that it would not be possible to arrange a meeting between the Working Party and representatives of the Patient's Forum prior to that date but indicated that the Working Party could meet to consider reiterating its views.

Officers advised that the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already been made aware of the Working Party's conclusion that closure would constitute a substantial change in service provision and suggested that, rather than convene a further meeting, of the Working Party, the Committee could resolve to reiterate that view.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be advised that the Committee supports the conclusion of the Deer Park Surgery Working Party previously conveyed that the proposed closure of the Deer Park Medical Practice represents a substantial change in the level of service provision which should be treated as such.
- (b) That progress with regard to the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/2017 be noted.

66. 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 13 December 2016 was received.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 13 December 2016 be noted.

67. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE AND BERKSHIRE WEST SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN

The Committee received and considered the report of the Strategic Director advising Members of the publication by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group of a summary document setting out how it proposed to approach the development of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

The Strategic Director explained that the report, which had been submitted for information only, set out the process by which consultation on the Sustainability and Transformation would be conducted. She advised that the first stage of the consultation had been published earlier in the week and further information was available on both the CCG website at

<https://consult.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/consult.ti/BigconsultationPhaseI/consultationHome>

and the Council's website at <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/residents/leisure/health>

The Strategic Director emphasised the importance of drawing attention to the consultation exercise and encouraging widespread public engagement and attendance at the forthcoming consultation events.

Given the significance of the consultation exercise, the Strategic Director indicated that it was important for Members to have the opportunity to give detailed consideration to the proposals. In order to do so, she suggested that a special meeting of the Committee be held on 9 March at which Members could give consideration to a draft response.

Mrs Baker advised that she had attended an introductory event at the Kassam Stadium earlier in the day at which the atmosphere had been generally constructive. The first phase of the consultation sought feedback on specific proposals for changes to the way hospital beds are used and increasing care closer to home, planned care services at the Horton General Hospital, acute stroke services, critical care and maternity services.

Mrs Baker advised that arrangements had been made for David Smith and Stuart Bell to meet with Members and Officers shortly and emphasised the importance of commencing a dialogue so as to have an input into the consultation process. However, Mrs Baker acknowledged that it would be difficult to draw ideas together.

The Healthy Communities Manager stressed that it was important that the Council made its views known as local residents had concerns over the proposals. The Health Service was facing increasing demands from an increasing population whilst its budget remained broadly fixed. In consequence, it needed to examine the services it provided and consider how to address this situation. There were challenges ahead for the NHS as an organisation and for the Council in ensuring that the voices of residents throughout the District were heard.

The Healthy Communities Manager reiterated that it was important that Members encouraged widespread engagement with the transformation process and explained that the information provided at the meeting and through the CCG's website had to be considered in the round. She explained that the consultation had been split into two phases, the first dealing with those issues identified earlier by Mrs Baker, whilst the second phase would focus on acute hospital services and community hospitals. As yet, the timescale for the second phase of the process remained unknown.

Mrs Baker indicated that this was a complex area but the CCG wanted to progress quickly. The Council needed to be as involved in the consultation process as it possibly could. It was particularly important for the CCG to work closely with local authorities with regard to the question of preventative care given councils' involvement in this sphere. In conclusion, Mrs Baker expressed concern at the CCG's failure in terms of effective communication.

In response to a question from Mr Handley, the Healthy Communities Manager explained that the documentation on the CCG's website built upon that circulated with the agenda and should be read as a whole. Mr Handley expressed concern that the consultation was being carried out in two phases as the services under consideration at each stage could impact upon each other. He noted that General Practitioners were concerned by the absence of 'joined up thinking' and questioned whether the transformation programme would impact upon the way in which GP surgeries operated. Mr Handley indicated that it was important that GP's views were taken into account.

The Healthy Communities Manager advised that, whilst primary care did not form part of the review, given that it served as a point of access to more specialist services, it was important for GP's to have a voice. Mr Handley questioned whether the Council should seek the views of General Practitioners in formulating its response. In response, the Strategic Director suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Council and GP's to respond to the consultation on an individual basis, however, should it so wish, the Council could emphasise the importance of ensuring that the views of Primary Care Practitioners were taken into account in its own response.

Mr Kelland suggested that it was important for GP's to be aware of impending residential development through the planning process. In response, the Healthy Communities Manager advised that a paper emphasising this had recently been submitted to the Locality Group.

Mr Barrett advised that the Oxfordshire Universities Hospital Trust had also expressed the wish to see GP's to be consultees on planning matters.

Mr Kelland also enquired how private health provision would fit into the new structure and how charitable donations were employed. The Strategic Director advised that these issues could be addressed in the report to the special meeting.

Mr Cooper expressed his concern at the suggested approach, indicating that the Committee should express its opposition to proposals to downgrade services at the Horton Hospital in Banbury at this stage. Officers indicated that the recommendation in the report as drafted had been overtaken by events and the suggestion that a special meeting be held at which a comprehensive response to the consultation could be considered. Mr Cooper maintained that the Committee should voice its opposition to the proposals regarding the Horton without further deliberation. Mr Handley suggested that the Committee should avoid what could be perceived as a 'knee jerk' reaction, and seek to formulate a comprehensive response at a special meeting.

It was proposed by Mr Woodruff and seconded by Mrs Little that further consideration of the matter be deferred to a special meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 March during which full and detailed consideration could be given to both the proposals and the serious concerns already expressed.

Whilst he considered the concept of 'transformation and sustainability' to be something of a non-sequitur, Mr Beaney expressed his support for the proposition. He made reference to the proposals regarding the Horton Hospital and the loss of maternity services at Chipping Norton and advised that Members and Officers were in discussion with Cherwell District Council over the issue. The Healthy Communities Manager advised that options for Midwife Led Units in North Oxfordshire were outlined at page 41 of the consultation document.

Mrs Baker advised that she intended to raise these issues at the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was meeting with the local County Councillor and the Council's representative to HOSC the following week.

RESOLVED: That further consideration of the matter be deferred to a special meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 March during which full and detailed consideration could be given to the serious concerns already expressed.

(Mr Cooper requested that his vote against the foregoing resolution and his serious concern in relation to proposals regarding the Horton Hospital be so recorded)

68. BLenheim PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE- REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 - 2027

The Committee received and considered the report of the Strategic Director regarding the Council's response to the review of the Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan, together with the notes of the meeting of the Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan Working Party, copies of which had been circulated.

In proposing the recommendations of the Working Party, Mr Cooper wished to put on record his appreciation of the work undertaken by Mr John Hoy during his time as Chief Executive of the Blenheim Estate.

Having been duly seconded the proposition was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the comments set out in Appendix 2 of the report be submitted to Historic Landscape Management in response to the consultation on the revised Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- (b) That the Blenheim Estate be encouraged to seek to improve communication with the surrounding parishes.

69. HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Group Manager for Revenues and Housing Support which provided Members with an update in relation to homelessness in the District and associated future challenges.

In response to a question from Mrs Doughty, Mr Dearing advised that, at present, the Council had placed six families or individuals in accommodation with Travelodge. Being located outside the District, this form of accommodation was not considered to offer the optimum solution for either those involved or for the Council and efforts were made to minimise its use. Guidance from the Local Government Ombudsman suggested that the length of stay should be kept to a maximum period of six weeks. West Oxfordshire managed to adhere to these guidelines with the average length of stay being some four weeks. In response to a further question, Mr Dearing advised that such accommodation cost some £80 to £90 a night, the Council having spent some £50,000 during the previous year.

Mr Woodruff suggested that it would be preferable to construct some form of homeless accommodation within the District. Mr Dearing advised that this option was being discussed with Cottsway Housing and, whilst the housing company was reluctant to become directly involved in the management of hostel accommodation, it was possible that this service could be provided by a third party organisation.

In response to a question from Mr Kelland, Mr Dearing advised that other local hotel chains with premises within the District were unwilling to accommodate homeless persons.

Mr Beaney expressed his appreciation of the work carried out by the Council's Officers to minimise and address instances of homelessness. He noted that there were seasonal variations in demand with a particular peak during the third quarter. In response, Mr Dearing advised that there was often an increase in demand following the Christmas period.

Mr Kelland indicated that there was often reluctance on the part of homeless single men to make use of hostel accommodation due to fears over their personal safety. Mr Dearing acknowledged that this reluctance was certainly an issue that had manifested itself within the District.

Mr Cooper paid tribute to the work of the Council's Officers in responding to stressful and difficult situations. He suggested that pressure should be brought to bear on the Ministry of Defence to replace RAF quarters in Carterton so as to release existing rental accommodation.

Mr Cooper also stressed that homelessness and rough sleeping were not issues confined to the major cities.

Mr Handley suggested that the redevelopment of the Kings Caravan site in Carterton offered the opportunity to provide accommodation which would enable those with a local connection to remain within the District. Mr Kelland suggested the use of park homes as a potential solution, dependent upon planning constraints.

Members noted the proposed arrangements to secure additional complex needs provision in conjunction with Oxford City Council and, in response to a question from Mr Saul, Mr Dearing confirmed that the existing complex needs provision was generally fully utilised. In addition to the six beds provided in Chipping Norton, references from West Oxfordshire accounted for about 10% of the available complex needs beds in Oxford City (10 or so from a total of 106) and, in response to a question from Mr Beaney, confirmed that the proposed funding arrangements reflected this requirement. However, Mr Dearing cautioned that funding for this project was only secured for the next three years.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be noted.

70. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

70.1 Leisure Management Contract Working Party

Mr Beaney expressed concern that the specification documentation requested by the Leisure Management Contract Working Party had not been received. Officers undertook to address the request.

70.2 Superfast Broadband Project

Mr Beaney expressed his disappointment over the delay in delivery of the Superfast Broadband project, highlighting the concerns expressed by several residents in his ward. In particular, Mr Beaney considered that the lack of information made available to the public had been prejudicial to the Council's reputation.

In response, Mrs Baker explained that contractual relationships between third parties had made it impossible for the Council to provide information at an earlier stage.

Mr Beaney suggested that representatives of the organisations involved be invited to meet with the Committee to discuss the matter further. Officers advised that it was the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, not this Committee that was responsible for overseeing the project and a report was to be considered at its next meeting.

The Chairman of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee invited Mr Beaney to attend that meeting at which local residents would also have the opportunity to make their views known.

The meeting closed at 7:50pm

Chairman