

## 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 May 2018

### PRESENT

Councillors: A C Beaney (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), J R Acock, Ms R M Bolger, Mrs L C Carter, J C Cooper, H B Eaglestone, P D Kelland and Mrs M L Mead

#### 4. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 17 April and 16 May 2018 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

#### 5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J M Doughty, E J Fenton, N P Leverton, T N Owen and B J Woodruff and the following resignation and temporary appointment was received and noted:-

Mr J C Cooper for Mr A M Graham.

#### 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr J R Acock indicated that he was a co-founder of the pilot support group for the LGBTIQ+ community referred to at Agenda Item No. 8.

There were no other declarations of interest from Members or Officers in items to be considered at the meeting.

#### 7. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

#### 8. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE REPORT

Mr Beaney welcomed those recently elected to the Council and those Members newly appointed to the Sub-Committee.

The Committee received and noted the Chairman's update report. Mr Beaney suggested that, as the information in the update report was largely a duplication of that to be found in the minutes of the previous meeting or the Committee Work Programme, production of a written report was unnecessary as any matters of significance could be addressed by a verbal update.

It was **AGREED** that, at future meetings, that item of business be confined to Chairman's Announcements and the practice of providing a written report be discontinued.

## 9. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

The Committee received the report of the Head of Democratic Services seeking consideration of a work programme for the committee for 2018/2019.

### 9.1 RAF Brize Norton

The Executive Director (Commissioning) advised that a further meeting with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding the REEMA North housing site was scheduled to take place on 11 June. An update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

### 9.2 Oxfordshire Health Care Transformation Programme

Mr Beaney indicated that there was some confusion as to how the Transformation Programme was to progress. He suggested that Mrs H R Hibbert-Biles, the County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health & Education, and a member of the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board and Health and Wellbeing Board be invited to attend a future meeting to advise Members how this issue was being addressed at County level.

It was **AGREED** that Mrs Hibbert-Biles be invited to attend the next meeting.

### 9.3 Police, Community Safety and CDRP

It was noted that the Local Police Area Commander was to attend the September meeting to provide an update on policing priorities for the area.

Mr Kelland made reference to a reduction in the number of Officers assigned to undertake community policing and suggested that it would be helpful for Members to provide any particular questions they may have for the Area Commander prior to the meeting.

It was **AGREED** that Officers be requested to write to Members inviting them to outline any relevant issues or areas of concern.

### 9.4 Welfare Reform Act - Meeting With Registered Social Landlords

Mr Kelland noted that the terms of tenancy agreements varied between those Registered Social Landlords operating within West Oxfordshire and suggested that it would be helpful to residents if these were standardised. It was explained that each was an independent organisation operating autonomously.

As representatives of Cottsway Housing had attended the last scheduled meeting it was **AGREED** that this item be deleted from the work programme. In response to concerns expressed by Mrs Carter, the Chairman advised that the Committee could consider the matter further should any particular issues arise.

### 9.5 Planning Enforcement

Mr Beaney suggested that the Committee should include consideration of the Council's Planning Enforcement Function, including staffing levels, in its Work Programme. The Executive Director (Commissioning) reminded Members that the Head of Development Control had submitted a report to the September 2017 meeting and suggested that he be requested to provide an update report in the first instance.

Mr Kelland noted that, whilst an enforcement notice could be served relatively quickly, the appeal process open to an alleged transgressor meant that there was often a significant delay in finally resolving a breach of planning control. The Executive Director suggested that an Officer from the Legal Section be also invited to attend to explain the difficulties faced in progressing enforcement action.

It was **AGREED** that this item be added to the Work Programme.

#### 9.6 Affordable Housing and Housing Need

Mr Beaney made reference to recent correspondence received by Members regarding the way in which housing need was calculated when assessing the need for affordable housing for development control purposes.

It was **AGREED** that Officers be requested to attend a future meeting to explain the apparent discrepancy suggested in this correspondence.

#### 9.7 Review of Outside Bodies

Mr Beaney reminded Members that this issue had been raised by Mr Cooper at a previous meeting. He advised that, following discussion as to whether membership of certain organisations represented good value for money, the Cabinet had suggested that a review of all outside bodies would be useful to establish what benefit membership brought to the Council, the residents of West Oxfordshire and the organisation in question and agreed that this Committee be requested to include a review of outside bodies in its Work Programme.

Mr Beaney advised that the Council appointed representatives to almost 50 groups and organisations which could be divided into three broad categories:-

Those such as charitable or educational trusts whose constitutions specify that one or more trustees are appointees of the District Council.

Those established by various tiers of government where membership is comprised of representatives from the public sector and partnership organisations.

Organisations which have invited Council involvement or to which the Council has previously sought nomination rights.

He suggested that a Working Group be established to conduct an initial review concentrating on the latter group, having particular regard to the benefits arising from Membership and to any associated costs.

It was **AGREED** that a Working Group comprised of Mrs Carter, Mr Cooper and Mrs Fenton be established to undertake a review on the basis proposed and that Officers be requested to invite expressions of interest from those Members of the Committee who were not present at the meeting.

9.8 Health Improvement Board – District Council Representation

In response to concerns expressed over the adequacy of district council representation on the Health Improvement Board it was **AGREED** that the question of representation on the Board be kept under review.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the amendments detailed above, the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/2019 be approved.

10. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which gave members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 15 May 2018.

It was noted that the items relating to the approval of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village Area Action Plan preliminary consultation, the West Eynsham Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document preliminary consultation and the Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document preliminary consultation had been rescheduled. The first was to be considered by the Cabinet in June, the West Eynsham Development Framework SPD in August and the Green Infrastructure SPD in September.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION - CHALLENGES OF THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY AND PILOT SUPPORT GROUP

The Committee received and considered the report of the Executive Director (Commissioning) regarding the challenges facing the LGBTIQ+ community and how best to offer support.

Mr Acock indicated that the pilot support group referred to in the report required financial support in order to survive. He noted that the Council had never provided any financial support to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning plus community and felt that it would be a shame if the 6,600 members of that community within West Oxfordshire were to lose the support offered by the group.

Mr Beaney advised that, whilst the Council might be able to consider providing financial assistance once the group was properly constituted, it was difficult for it to do so in the absence of a formally constituted organisation.

In response to a question from Mrs Carter, Mr Acock explained that the principal costs to the group related to the production of publicity leaflets and the hire of suitable premises in which to hold meetings as these took place across the District. Without financial assistance the group would be unable to continue beyond September.

Mr Kelland suggested that current levels of attendance did not represent a significant level of response. Mr Acock disagreed and advised that in London, which was far more heavily populated, attendance at meetings was less than it had been to date in West Oxfordshire. The issue facing the group was a lack of funding and Mr Acock expected that there would be a greater take-up if the group was better able to publicise its meetings.

Mr Kelland also questioned the extent of the LGBTIQ+ community within West Oxfordshire. Mr Acock explained that this was an extrapolated figure and the Executive Director advised that, whilst there was no definitive data, this figure was based upon the formula devised by the Department of Trade and Industry and Stonewall which suggested that between 5% and 7% of the population identified themselves with the LGBTIQ+ community. In West Oxfordshire this would equate to somewhere between 4,500 and 6,500 individuals.

Mr Acock advised that the group did not have a formal membership as meetings were confidential. He emphasised the need for trained people to provide support and advised that he had personally had to help an individual who had become suicidal. A recent survey had indicated that 71% of the LGBTIQ+ community felt uncomfortable to kiss or hold hands in public.

Mr Acock proposed that the Cabinet be requested to recommend that the Council allocates the sum of £5,000 per annum to the pilot support group.

Whilst he was happy to second the proposition in order to generate debate, Mr Cooper indicated that the group had to be properly constituted before any funding was made available.

Mrs Carter acknowledged that it was important that the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community were addressed and questioned whether the group had sought to align itself with the work done already by Citizens Advice or the Police who monitored hate crime. Mrs Carter also suggested that the group negotiate with potential partner organisations such as the Chipping Norton Theatre that might be able to provide accommodation for meetings free of charge or at a reduced cost. Whilst admiring Mr Acock's enthusiasm and passion, Mrs Carter believed that there were other ways in which the group could move forward.

Mr Acock advised that the group had sought help from various organisations but had failed to receive a positive response. Given the need for confidentiality, funding was necessary as the group was unable to hold its meetings in public locations. Mrs Carter suggested that there were premises such as the Old Mill Café which could provide private areas. She believed that there were other ways in which the issue could be addressed and suggested that the group seek advice on potential locations from fellow Councillors. Mr Acock indicated that a previous approach had not been fruitful.

The proposition was then put to the vote and was lost.

Mr Beaney emphasised that this did not suggest that the Council did not want to help but reflected concerns over the absence of a properly constituted organisation. He proposed that the Council be advised that the Committee is of the opinion that assistance be provided by West Oxfordshire District Council by way of support and advice on future governance arrangements and general help including signposting and raising awareness.

Having been duly seconded the proposition was put to the vote and was carried.

**RESOLVED:** that the Council be advised that the Committee is of the opinion that assistance be provided by West Oxfordshire District Council by way of support and advice on future governance arrangements and general help including signposting and raising awareness.

12. START TIME OF MEETINGS

The Committee gave consideration of the start time of meetings for the remainder of the 2018/2019 municipal year and:-

**RESOLVED:** That, meetings of the committee for 2018/2019 commence at 6:30pm.

13. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Mr Kelland noted that the Cabinet had made appointments to the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel and questioned how the scrutiny arrangements were to operate.

In response, the Executive Director (Commissioning) advised that three places had been allocated to each of the partner authorities with the anticipation that its appointments would reflect the Political balance of each individual authority. The Cabinet had appointed Mr Cooper, Mr Cotterill and Mr Harvey to the Scrutiny Panel.

The Growth Board wanted to involve the appointed representatives in developing the scrutiny arrangements and to this end was making arrangements for a meeting to be held in June to provide an update and discuss how the Scrutiny Panel would work.

Mr Cooper accepted that it was not yet clear how the scrutiny arrangements would operate and questions such as whether the Panel would have the ability to 'call-in' Growth Board decisions had yet to be resolved.

Members questioned how Scrutiny Panel meetings would be reported back to the constituent authorities and it was indicated that it was expected that minutes would be produced that could be submitted as appropriate.

The meeting closed at 7:05pm

Chairman