

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 28 March 2019**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Hilary Fenton (Vice-Chairman), Laetisia Carter, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Michele Mead, Neil Owen and Harry St John.

Also in Attendance: Councillor Norman MacRae MBE

74. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Jake Acock and the following resignations and temporary appointments were received and noted:-

Councillor Duncan Enright for Councillor Rosa Bolger, Councillor Liz Leffman for Councillor Graham and Councillor Harry St John for Councillor Ted Fenton

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

77. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

78. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Members for their work and support during the course of the year. Members expressed their appreciation of Councillor Beaney's Chairmanship of the Committee.

79. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that in order to avoid detaining the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety unduly he intended to take Agenda Item No. 10 (Domestic Abuse Services) as the next substantive item of business.

80. DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Executive Director (Commissioning), copies of which had been circulated, which outlined the results of the meeting of the Member group established at the January meeting to address this matter and identify the role of the Council in relation to Domestic Abuse.

The Executive Director confirmed that it was intended to submit a further report on Domestic Abuse services to the next meeting and that arrangements were in hand to offer briefing sessions to Members as part of the overall member training package to be delivered following the elections in May.

Councillor Doughty thanked the Executive Director and her colleagues for the work they had carried out and indicated that the Member group was a good example of cross party working.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Councillor MacRae left the meeting at this juncture)

81. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services which gave an update on progress in relation to its Work Programme for 2018/2019.

81.1 RAF Brize Norton

The Executive Director advised Members that the update regarding the REEMA housing sites in Carterton promised by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation referred to in the report had been received earlier that day. This raised two principal issues; the Defence Infrastructure Organisation was investigating the possibility of increasing the density of development on the sites beyond that of the extant planning consents and was also in the process of designing a financial model. An updated site plan had been prepared and the DIO was awaiting its consultant's report on the new proposals. In parallel, the DIO had opened discussions with housing associations and other social housing providers to gauge their interest in participating in the development scheme.

A further meeting had taken place with representatives of Homes England and it was clear that they were keen to assist in helping development to proceed. In addition, the Leader of the Council had written to the Treasury in accordance with the Notice of Motion on the matter passed by the Council at its last meeting (Minute C/76/2018/2019 refers).

The Executive Director indicated that she hoped to be able to provide a further update at the next meeting when the DIO was in receipt of the consultant's report.

(Councillor Leffman joined the meeting at this juncture)

Councillor Leverton enquired whether RAF Married Quarters were classified as social housing for the purpose of calculating the Council's housing targets. The Executive Director advised that this was something of a moot point and informed Members that, when the original permissions had been granted, the Council had been generous in terms of seeking Section 106 contributions, in recognition of the importance of the development.

Councillor Leverton noted that, as a result of the United States Air Force's decision to re-activate RAF Fairford, even more accommodation would be required at Carterton to provide for those RAF personnel displaced from that station. The Executive Director noted that this had been a long standing issue and that the re-activation of RAF Fairford would exacerbate the problem. This had been drawn to the attention of the DIO and MoD.

(Councillor Enright joined the meeting at this juncture)

Councillor St John asked why the DIO had to develop a financial model and it was explained that they lacked the necessary Central Government funding to enable redevelopment to proceed.

Councillor St John questioned why the DIO did not dispose of their interest in the land and it was explained that it was disadvantageous in accounting terms if accommodation was constructed by the private sector and rented back to the DIO/MoD for service personnel.

81.2 Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Councillor Enright noted that the Council had engaged GARAS - Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers – to assist in the operation of the scheme and asked if a representative of that organisation could be invited to attend the meeting in July. The Executive Director undertook to raise this suggestion with the service manager.

82. 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 19 March 2019.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

83. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 3 2018/2019

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Corporate Support, which provided information on the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 3 2018/2019.

The Executive Director drew attention to indicator RHSI I (Number of households in emergency accommodation for over 28 days) and reminded Members that the figures provided were a snapshot in time as at 31 December 2018. She was pleased to be able to advise Members that the emergency accommodation for the homeless at 6 Horsefair, Chipping Norton, had been opened earlier that day.

(Councillor Carter joined the meeting at this juncture)

With regard to indicator PSH6 (Claimant Rate) Councillor Leverton indicated that the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit would be the same across all districts and questioned when the Council would return to being amongst the best performing 25% in the South East. In response, the Executive Director advised that the impact would continue for some time but assured Members that the Council's performance would improve to return it to its former position.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

84. REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, together with the notes of the meeting of the Review of Outside Bodies Working Party held on 6 March 2019.

Councillor Beaney thanked the Members of the Working Party for their report and recommendations.

Councillor Leffman noted the concern expressed by the Working Party that some of the Council's nominees failed to attend meetings of those bodies to which they had been appointed and asked whether Members' attendance was monitored.

It was explained that, as these were external organisations, it was difficult to monitor attendance centrally and the Council was effectively reliant upon the organisations advising Officers of persistent non-attendance.

Councillor Leffman questioned whether failure to attend could cause difficulties for these organisations or deny the Council benefits. It was explained that there were a variety of organisations operating in different ways. Some required Council representation under the terms of their trust deeds or constitutions and such organisations were more likely to notify Officers of any issues surrounding attendance. Others were of predominantly local interest whilst some appointments were largely historic having been made at a time when the Council provided significant levels of financial assistance.

Councillor Leffman suggested that attendance should be monitored in some way with those failing to attend being replaced by more diligent representatives. Officers advised that there was little evidence to suggest that non-attendance was widespread and the Working Party's concerns were largely based upon anecdotal evidence.

Councillor Mead suggested that representatives could be requested to submit periodic reports as evidence of their attendance. Councillor Doughty suggested that this issue could be considered after the elections in May and it was agreed that the Cabinet be requested to consider ways in which to encourage attendance.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet be recommended to:-

- (a) note that the Oxfordshire Design Partnership was now defunct;
- (b) note that, following revision of its governance arrangements, appointments to the Wychwood Project Board are no longer required;
- (c) agree that no further appointments be made to the Oxford Museums Council and the River Thames Alliance;
- (d) agree that no further appointments be made to the Age UK (Oxfordshire) Older Peoples Forum and that liaison with Age UK Oxfordshire be conducted through the Council's Older Persons Champion;
- (e) agree that the Working Party's concern that some of the Council's nominees failed to attend meetings of those bodies to which they had been appointed be conveyed to all Members and
- (f) agree that, in order to enable potential nominees to familiarise themselves with the outside bodies to which appointments were made, website details be included when nominations are invited in the future.

85. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions from Members relating to the work of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 6:50pm

Chairman