

Cherwell District Council

Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 4 September 2012 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Patrick Cartledge
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies for absence: Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson

Officers: Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement
Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

27 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of

business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

29

Budget Scrutiny 2013/14

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Environmental Services and the Head of Finance and Procurement to the meeting and explained that the Members would receive an overview of the Environmental Services and homelessness and temporary accommodation budgets and frame recommendations to the Executive as part of the budget 2013/14.

Environmental Services

The Head of Environmental Services advised Members that Environmental Services delivered many of the front line services of the Council including Waste Collection, Street Cleansing, Public Conveniences, and Landscape Management. These services were the services that the Council is most well known for amongst its residents and accounted for a significant percentage of overall Council expenditure. The overall revenue budget for Environmental Services for 2012/13 was £5.86 million

The Head of Environmental Services provided an overview of the restricted briefing note on Environmental Services finances which covered revenue and income within the service, future revenue and capital cost pressures and opportunities.

Waste Recycling

In terms of fuel costs for vehicles, Members noted that officers sought to address the rising cost of fuel through various means such as reviewing waste collection and street cleansing routes, purchasing more fuel efficient vehicles and stockpiling fuel.

The Board was advised that vehicle repair costs were kept under control, through better procurement, more robust vehicles and better maintenance practices. Additionally, the replacement cycle for replacing vehicles had increased from six years to seven years reducing capital requirements but repair costs had been kept under control.

In terms of compost gate fees, Members noted that following the introduction of a garden waste/food waste mixture collection in the brown bin, during late 2009/10, this was processed via a contract with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) contract. At present CDC did not receive credits due to the waste/food mix. In the course of the discussion, the Board heard that some other local authorities in Oxfordshire offered a separate weekly food waste collection and received compost credits from OCC. In response to Members comments that regarding the financial viability of a weekly food waste collection in CDC, the Head of Finance and Procurement explained that preliminary calculations had indicated that the cost of implementing such a scheme would greatly outweigh any compost credits received.

Members commented that a potential source of income for the service could be through the collection of commercial waste and agreed that consideration should be given to this.

In response to Members' queries regarding the feasibility of cross county waste collection routes, the Head of Environmental Services explained that there were opportunities for cross county working however there were also many difficulties due to dealing with disposal authorities and collection services being different.

The Board was advised that future capital pressures included the replacement of green residual bins and future vehicle replacement programmes. Various options were currently under consideration.

The Board was advised that there were around 90 recycling banks in Cherwell which accounted for 6% of the overall recycling rate in the district. In response to Members' questions, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that satisfaction with recycling banks was generally high.

At the 10 July 2012 meeting, the Board had received an update on the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) at which time the Head of Environmental Services had provided an overview of the financial arrangements that existed in the OWP, which were developed to encourage collection authorities to invest in collection systems to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. The Board was advised that the payment of landfill credits was currently under debate within the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership as the County Council was seeking to remove these payments. The Board noted that this item was already on the work programme and agreed it should be retained and the Head of Environmental Services be requested to report back to the Board at the appropriate time on the proposed new arrangements to allow Members to consider and provide comments to the Executive/Lead Member.

Street Cleansing

The Head of Environmental Services advised the Board that the budget for street cleansing services had remained relatively consistent in recent years. Consideration was currently being given to shared working opportunities for this service. The Board had received a briefing on street cleansing performance at their 10 July 2012 meeting and had commended the work of the team.

Homelessness Budget

The Head of Finance and Procurement advised the Board that the council's homelessness budget had remained at the same level for the previous two years. The Government had confirmed that the council's homelessness grant would remain the same for the next two years but this was not ring fenced.

It was anticipated that the need for homelessness support would increase as a result of the Government's Local Government Resources Review and Welfare Reforms. This could cause budget pressures for the council and Finance and Housing Officers were currently considering various scenarios. The Board agreed that they should retain a watching brief through the Finance Scrutiny Working Group.

Budget Scrutiny Timetable

The Board noted the budget scrutiny timetable. The September meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and the Finance Scrutiny Working Group would be used to review the capital bids. At the October meeting, Members would consider recommendations to the Executive for consideration on the capital bids and the Environmental Services and Homelessness budgets.

Resolved

- (1) That the briefing on the Environmental Services budget be noted.
- (2) That the update on the Homelessness budget be noted and the Finance Scrutiny Working Group retain a watching brief on the budget.
- (3) That the timetable for the budget scrutiny 2013/14 be noted,

30 **Readmittance of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

31 **Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2012/13**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance which presented the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 for consideration.

Resolved

- (1) That the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chairman:

Date: