

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 10 July 2012 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Patrick Cartledge
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies
for
absence: Councillor Jon O'Neill

Officers: Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services (for agenda items 6 and 7)
Paul Almond, Street Scene & Landscape Manager (for agenda item 7)
Brendan Bodger, Cleansing Services Manager (for agenda item 6)
James Doble, Democratic and Elections Manager (for agenda item 5)
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

10 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interests in the following agenda item:

5. Chairman of the Council's Allowance.

Councillor Lawrie Stratford, Personal, as Vice-Chairman of the Council to whom the Chairman's allowance may apply in due course.

11 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

12 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman of the Council's Allowance

The Chairman began by providing an overview of the consideration that had been given to the proposal to pay an allowance to the Chairman of the Council at the 12 June 2012 Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting.

At this meeting, the Board had agreed, in principle that an allowance should be paid to the Council Chairman as this would help ensure no Member felt precluded from accepting the position of honour due to concerns about potential personal financial cost. Members also agreed that it was extremely important that a Scheme of Reference be developed to ensure transparency to the public about what was and was not covered by the allowance. The Scheme would also provide clarity for the Council Chairman.

At the Board's request, consideration of the content of the Scheme of Reference had been deferred to this meeting to enable consideration of supplementary information including feedback from former Council Chairmen, detailed information from neighbouring authorities detailing their provisions for Chairman's allowances and civic budgets and a draft Council Chairman Scheme of Reference.

In considering what the Chairman's allowance should cover, Members agreed that it should cover the expenses of office, e.g. clothing; subsistence; sundry donations including collections and raffle tickets; drinks at official events.

The Board noted that in addition to the allowance, there was also a Chairman's budget, the purpose of which was to support the following activities as Chairman (within the available budget as set annually) with certain caveats, in particular in relation to travel arrangements and the purchase of tickets for events:

- Mileage for attendance at official events to which the Chairman has been invited in his/her official capacity as Chairman of the Council (any queries as to what constitutes an official event are to be determined by the Head of Law and Governance)
 - Claims are to be submitted on the Chairman's claim form within two months of the expense being incurred and paid at the standard rate for Members mileage.
- Tickets for the Chairman and consort to attend events within the United Kingdom to which the Chairman has been invited in his/her official capacity as Chairman of Cherwell District Council
 - The Chairman's Personal Assistant is authorised to purchase tickets to events to the value of £50 per ticket. The purchase of tickets for events costing more than £50 must be authorised by the Head of Law and Governance.
- Travel (e.g. train/taxi) within the United Kingdom for attendance of the Chairman and Consort in his/her official capacity as Chairman of Cherwell District Council.
 - The Chairman's PA will be responsible for making travel arrangements.
 - If the Chairman arranges his/her own travel, this will come out of the Chairman's allowance. However, in exceptional

circumstances at the discretion of the Head of Law and Governance, the Chairman may submit and receive payment for a travel claim.

- Any requests not included in this Scheme of Reference for the official representation of the Chairman of Cherwell District Council (and his/her consort), including attendance at any events outside the United Kingdom should be submitted to the Executive for consideration and approval
- Arranging events for the Chairman
 - The Chairman's Personal Assistant will be responsible for arranging events in consultation with the Chairman and the Head of Law and Governance.
- Associated expenditure for Annual Council
- Training
- Gifts at the end of the Chairman's term of office
- Refreshments for events hosted by the Chairman
- Maintenance of the Chairman's Chain

Having considered the items that should be covered by the Chairman's allowance and those by the Chairman's budget, the Board concluded to recommend to Council that an allowance of £2000 per year of office be paid to the Chairman and that it be paid annually as a lump sum upon appointment as Chairman. This was to cover initial expenditure anticipated upon taking office.

The Board agreed that it was important that the Scheme of Reference included a provision should the Chairman of the Council cease to hold office during their term of appointment. Members considered that the Head of Law and Governance will be responsible for determining the appropriate consequential arrangements in light of the circumstances.

As part of the review, the Board also considered the budget provision and arrangements for the Chairman's/Civic budget and agreed that officers be requested to review the Chairman's budget so that it is aligned with the municipal year.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board, to finalise the Chairman's Allowance Scheme of Reference to reflect the decisions of the Board prior to submission to Council.
- (2) That Council be recommended to agree:
 - (1) That an allowance of £2000 be paid to the Chairman of Cherwell District Council for the municipal year 2012/13 with immediate effect.
 - (2) That a scheme of reference for the Chairman's allowance be adopted.

- (3) That officers be requested to review the Chairman's budget operating period so that it is aligned in terms of with the municipal year as opposed to the financial year.

(Councillor Lawrie Stratford requested that his abstention from the vote be recorded)

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Briefing on Street Cleansing Performance

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Environmental Services and the Cleansing Services Manager to the meeting and explained that Members had requested a briefing on the council's street cleansing performance in light of the 2011/12 Quarter 3 Performance Management Framework which had indicated a reduction in customer satisfaction with street cleansing.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that the Street Cleansing service carried out a wide range of activities including litter picking, litter bin emptying, sweeping of roads and pavements, fly tip removal & emptying dog bins in villages and in the three urban centres. To keep the district clean a combination of operational performance, education and enforcement was employed. The team was made up of a Street Cleansing Manager, two Street Cleansing supervisors and around 26 staff operating from the two depots.

In terms of performance, the Board was advised that until 2011 the annual customer satisfaction survey had shown consistent rises in satisfaction levels. The Head of Environmental Services reported that the fall in customer satisfaction in 2011 had been difficult to understand as there appeared to be no fall in Street Cleansing standards and in some areas standards were still increasing.

The Board was advised that to test out standards, Cherwell had entered the Clean Britain awards. This involved a days unannounced independent inspection at some point during July or August. The result of this award will be known in mid- September and a report will be received.

Additionally, since the survey the profile of the service had been increased through increased press releases, through more articles in Cherwell Link and ensuring the few areas which can get dirty get attended to quickly. In addition Neighbourhood blitz events had been broadened to try and involve more organisations and individuals.

The Head of Environmental Services advised Members that the results of the 2012 Customer satisfaction survey would be known in September 2012 and it would then be evident if the 2011 results were a blip.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Environmental Services and the Cleansing Services Manager reported that there were increasing numbers of fly tipping cases involving tyres and confirmed that several successful prosecutions for fly tipping were achieved each year.

Members commended the work of the team and made particular reference to the litter blitzes which were welcomed by residents. The Head of

Environmental Services explained that the teams activities were largely restricted to adopted highways and resources were generally not committed to private estates or sites although the enforcement team does investigate where appropriate and work with housing associations and private landlords to address issues that are reported.

The Board thanked the Head of Environmental Services and the Cleansing Services Manager for attending the meeting. Members commended the work of the street cleansing team and requested that they be advised of the outcome of the 2012 customer satisfaction survey in relation to street cleansing when this information was available.

Resolved

- (1) That officers be requested to submit a further update once the 2012 customer satisfaction results are available.

15 Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2012/13

The Board considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance presented the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 for consideration. Members noted that the Finance Scrutiny Working Group had met on 3 July 2012 and reviewed the 2011/12 year end finance monitoring report. The notes of this meeting would be considered at the 17 July Board meeting.

Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) Update

The Chairman explained that the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board had scrutinised the council's role in the OWP in 2010/11 and agreed to retain the item on the work programme to monitor in light of uncertainty about the financial arrangements.

The Head of Environmental Services 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. In 2011/12, collection rates had surpassed the targets resulting in payments by the County Council to the collections authorities of around £1m per year, which was less than if the County Council had had to pay for waste to go to landfill.

The Board was advised that the County Council had stated it wished to reduce payments to collection authorities but is unable to unilaterally implement changes as these need to be agreed by all partners. Any changes could potentially have significant financial implications on partners and discussions were ongoing between OWP partners. A paper on the issue is being taken forward to the Chief Executives in mid- July before going forward to the Leaders group. It was expected that the issue would come back to the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership after responses from the Chief Executives and Leaders have been considered.

Members noted the update and requested that the Head of Environmental Services report back to the Board at the appropriate time on the proposed

arrangements to allow Members to consider and provide comments to the Executive/Lead Member.

Contract Review: Landscape Maintenance Contract

The Street Scene and Landscape Manager provided an overview of the council's landscape maintenance contract covering the history of the contract, the service level, agency and contract agreements, the officer time allocated to contract management, the contract management methods, the financial deductions that had been imposed where performance had not been up to the contract standard, the contractor performance and the three year contract extension until 2015 which had been agreed by the Executive in December 2010.

The Board was advised that the landscape maintenance contract was generally well performing although there were issues from time to time. Monitoring/managing of the performance of the contract to ensure the contract standards were met was ongoing and officers continued to look for more efficient ways to provide the Landscape Service.

Some Members raised concerns about the performance of the contractor and highlighted some issues that had arisen across the district. Members also commented that it was important to provide assurance that areas of low performance were being addressed and that the council was adequately resourced to do this. Members who were also Bicester Town Council councillors highlighted some of the concerns of the Town Council and agreed that a meeting between officers and the Town Council would be useful to consider these concerns.

The Board agreed that they wanted to be involved in the contract renewal process. Members noted that the contract would commence in 2015 but the process would be in spring 2013 and agreed that this should be added to the work programme for consideration in April 2013.

Resolved

- (1) That the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 be noted.
- (2) That feedback from the 3 July 2012 Finance Scrutiny Working Group meeting be considered at the 17 July 2012 Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting.
- (3) That the update on the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership be noted and that officers be requested to submit a further update, when available, advising the Board on the proposals for the revised financial arrangements.
- (4) That the update of the Landscape Maintenance Contract be noted and that this be retained on the work programme for Members to be briefed on the contract renewal process and timetable in April 2013.

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The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: