

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 6 August 2013 at 6.30 pm

- Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)
Councillor Daniel Sames (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock
- Substitute Members: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (In place of Councillor Rose Stratford)
- Also Present: Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customer
Councillor James Macnamara (for agenda item 8)
- Apologies for absence: Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
- Officers: Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader
Kevin Larnar, Rural Development and Countryside Officer
Louise Tustian, Senior Performance & Improvement Officer
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

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Declarations of Interest

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

8. Work Programme Briefing Note - Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride.

Councillor Alastair Milne Home, Non Statutory Interest, as he had sat on the board of the former BCTA.

Councillor Nigel Randall, Non Statutory Interest, as a trustee of a charity that had also bid for the contract.

16 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

17 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 July 2013 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Performance Monitoring - Q1 2013/14 Exceptions Reporting**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers, the Corporate Performance Manager, the Community Intelligence and Performance Analyst, and the Development Control Team Leader to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers advised that there were currently only two performance indicators reporting red exceptions. These were Processing of minor planning applications within 8 weeks (target 65%; actual 55%) and Planning appeals allowed against decision of Committee (target 30%; actual 33%)

With respect to the processing of minor planning within 8 weeks, the Committee was advised that, in the previous quarter, the indicator had been green at 75%. However, the current slip in performance had occurred due to a general increase in applications and, in particular, an increase in the number of major applications received. These generated additional work and drew resources that would otherwise be used to progress minor applications (there had been a corresponding improvement in the figure for processing major applications within 13 week; target 55%, actual 68.75%).

Measures were in-hand to address the back-log, and it was believed resources were sufficient to maintain the standard, once the back-log had been addressed. The Committee agreed to re-visit the issue at a future meeting and, if felt necessary at that time, recommend that the Lead Member look at additional measures. The Lead Member undertook to report the Committee's comments at the September meeting of the Executive.

Regarding the number of Planning Appeals allowed the Committee acknowledged that due to the small number of appeals, one appeal against a decision made by Planning Committee being allowed would have a significant impact on the performance figure. The Committee considered that this was essentially a matter for the Planning Committee and it was acknowledged that an independent Planning Committee would, on occasion, make decisions against Officer advice. It was also acknowledged that, once adopted, the Local Plan would support decisions of the Planning Committee challenged at appeal.

The Committee was pleased to acknowledge a number of areas of improved performance. These included Households living in temporary accommodation; time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims, and time taken to process a change in circumstances to an existing claim (Housing Benefit). All had previously reported red, but were now showing green.

Responding to a query regarding the amber status, the Lead Member for Performance and Customers undertook to look at the point where an indicator changed from green to amber, as this would help identify where a service was just beginning to drop in performance.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Member for Performance and Customers and Officers for their presentation and advice.

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Business Planning and Service Plan Process 2014/15

The Corporate Performance Manager gave an overview of the Business Planning and Service Plan process.

The Committee was advised that key elements would be the new Medium Term Financial Strategy, outcomes from the Customer Satisfaction and Budget consultation processes, impacts from the census, and any other known impacts on services.

The results of the customer insights feedback would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September, with a draft of both the Business Plan and Service Plan being submitted to the November meeting. Development of the Service Plan would overlap with the Business Plan process and be completed in January.

An important aspect would be reviewing how the delivery of a service plan progressed during the year and, in this respect, a Service Manager could be invited to advise the Committee accordingly.

In light of this and the Committee's previous consideration of the Enforcement Service Plan in January 2013, Members agreed that the Head of Development Management be invited to the November meeting to advise the current position.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers suggested that, in light of the work that would be done by the Budget Planning Committee on the budget, consideration might be given to holding a joint meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Work Programme be amended to reflect that the Head of Development Management would be invited to attend the November meeting of the Committee to advise on the delivery of the Enforcement Service Plan.

20 **Work Programme Briefing Note - Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride**

The Chairman welcomed the CDC Countryside and Communities Manager and the Oxfordshire County Council Transport Coordinator (Community Transport and Concessionary Fares) to the meeting.

The Countryside and Communities Manager advised on the operation of the 'Dial-a-Ride' service, the development of Community transport, and the operation of the Oxfordshire Community Transport Advisory Group (OCTAG).

The Committee noted that the Dial-a-Ride service was well used across the district, and that the top-up provided by the Council for the years 2012/13 and 2013/14 was helping to maintain the service at the level required by users. However, following advice from the Transport Coordinator that, during the autumn, the County Council would be reviewing the future of the service as part of its overall budget setting process, concern was expressed that any future additional contribution by the district council could only be considered if it was known the service as a whole was to continue.

The Chairman thanked the Countryside and Communities Manager and the Transport Coordinator for their advice, and requested that they attend a future meeting of the Committee to advise on the outcome of the County Council's review.

Resolved

- (1) That the item be retained on the Work Programme, and that the CDC Countryside and Communities Manager and the Transport Coordinator (Oxfordshire County Council) be invited to attend a future meeting to advise on the future of the scheme.

21 **Concessions Policy - Scoping Document**

The Committee considered a scoping document prepared by Councillor Randall proposing a Scrutiny Review with respect to the value or otherwise of the Council adopting a formal concessions policy.

In presenting the scoping document Councillor Randall commented that, in light of the relatively small sums involved, the first question to address would be whether a policy was actually required. If deemed desirable, then having a single clear policy would be of benefit to residents accessing services.

The Democratic and Elections Team Leader advised that, following advice from the Corporate Finance Manager, it would be appropriate for the recommendations of any Scrutiny Review to be subsequently referred to the Budget Planning Committee when it considered Fees and Charges.

Resolved

- (1) That an informal working group comprising Councillors Jon O'Neill, Nigel Randall and Lawrie Stratford, together with appropriate officers,

undertake a Scrutiny Review regarding the introduction of a Concessions Policy.

- (2) That the findings and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review be submitted to the Budget Planning Committee for consideration as part of that Committee's deliberations regarding fees and charges.
- (3) That progress be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the regular Work Programme report.

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Wind Turbines - Scoping Document

The Committee considered a scoping document prepared by Councillor O'Neill proposing a Scrutiny Review with respect to the introduction of a robust policy regarding the future development of wind farms in the district.

In presenting the scoping document, Councillor O'Neill advised that it was vital that the Council had a policy that would stand up to the planning appeals process, and thus protect communities throughout the district.

The Democratic and Elections Team Leader advised that the revised Local Plan was due to be considered by the Executive and then Council in October. It would then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for final adoption. This would set the framework for any subsequent revised policy regarding wind turbines. A Scrutiny Review would take into consideration what other authorities had in the way of policy guidance and, with input from appropriate officers, a draft revised policy could be subsequently put before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

At the discretion of the Chairman Councillor Macnamara addressed the Committee and reminded Members that the Council had been one of the first authorities to address the issue of wind turbines when the current policy had been adopted in February 2011. However, there had been considerable policy change since that time and a revised document was now needed. He hoped the Committee would undertake a Scrutiny Review, and that this would produce a new policy that was both reasonable in terms of guidance, and sat with and complimented the adopted Local Plan.

Some Members suggested that no action should be taken until after the Local Plan had been adopted, and there was some evidence that a revised policy specific to wind turbines was required. It was however agreed that action was required and there should be a Scrutiny Review on the issue.

Resolved

- (1) That a Scrutiny Review be undertaken to review the Council's current policy in respect of wind turbine developments, with a view to developing and subsequently introducing an updated policy.

- (2) That the Scrutiny Review be undertaken by Councillors Ann Bonner and Jon O'Neill supported by other Members, Planning and other officers as appropriate.
- (3) That progress be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the regular Work Programme report.

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Law and Governance, which presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14.

Executive Work Programme

The Committee agreed that there were no items in the Executive Work Programme for August to November, 2013 that they wished to include on their Work Programme in 2013/14.

Potential Work Programme Items

The Committee noted that the Work Programme would be updated to reflect the decisions earlier in the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.
- (2) That no items in the current version of the Executive Work Programme (August to November 2013) be included on the Work Programme for 2013/14

The meeting ended at 8.33 pm

Chairman:

Date: