

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 10 October 2017 at 6.45 pm

Present: Councillor Neil Prestidge (Chairman)

Councillor Claire Bell
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Andrew McHugh

Also Present: Councillor Richard Mould
Councillor Surinder Dhesi

Apologies for absence: Councillor Jolanta Lis
Councillor David Anderson
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Jason Slaymaker

Officers: Inspector John Batty, Thames Valley Police
Mike Grant, Safer Communities Manager
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

28 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 August 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

30

Anti-Social Behaviour - Attendance of Inspector John Batty

The Chairman welcomed Inspector John Batty, Thames Valley Police, and Mike Grant, Safer Communities Manager for Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils to the meeting, to discuss anti-social behaviour.

The Committee began by asking Inspector Batty if he thought Cherwell District Council was doing enough in relation to instances of anti-social behaviour across the district. Inspector Batty confirmed that the Council had a close working relationship with the police, and that he felt there was enough being done with regards to anti-social behaviour.

Inspector Batty updated the Committee on work that had recently been undertaken, including closure orders for residential properties suspected of being involved with drugs.

Inspector Batty advised that not every instance of reported anti-social behaviour was a crime. Groups of youths congregating were regularly reported to the police, however this on its own was not a crime and therefore the police wouldn't have the power to disperse them.

With regard to an issue concerning a needle being found in the grounds of a pre-school in Bicester, the Safer Communities Manager explained that there were things the Council could do to help if similar circumstances arose again, and the issue was reported to the Council.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding graffiti, the Safer Communities Manager provided clarification. Graffiti was considered criminal damage rather than anti-social behaviour. If it occurred on private property, it was the owners responsibility to clear it. If it occurred on public property, the Council would arrange for its removal via the Environmental Service department, although this could take a few days. Graffiti that was offensive or hate related in nature would be removed by the Council immediately.

The Committee thanked Inspector Batty and the Safer Communities Manager for their attendance.

Resolved

- (1) That the update from Inspector Batty be noted

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Lead Member Attendance - Councillor Richard Mould

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Richard Mould, Lead Member for Performance Management, to the meeting, to give an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the portfolio.

Councillor Mould explained that the portfolio covered programme management, business planning, consultation, complaints and performance management.

With regard to performance management, Councillor Mould explained that the performance and insight team monitored the framework on a monthly basis to see if the performance level of any indicators had changed. Overview and Scrutiny received full performance monitoring information every quarter, and had the opportunity to flag any areas of concern to the Executive.

The performance management objectives were set each year as part of the business planning process. Work on the 2018-2019 business plan would start shortly, and it would be an opportunity to review the performance indicators currently in place and decide if they were still relevant. The exact timetable for the 2018-2019 plan was still to be finalised, but it was anticipated that it would be submitted to the Committee for consideration prior to full Council.

Councillor Mould also explained about the annual Customer Satisfaction survey. 3,500 properties were selected at random every year to receive a copy of the survey, which was sent out in paper form. The most recent set of results in which the overall response rate had increased to 31% showed that the overall level of satisfaction was good, although some service specific areas had seen a drop. The team would be investigating those areas, to try and find out why the satisfaction levels had dropped.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding parking, Councillor Mould advised that the new contract had started on 1 June 2017 and therefore there were still aspects of the new contract to be fully implemented.

The Committee thanked Councillor Mould for the overview.

Resolved

- (1) That the overview be noted

Work Programme 2017-18

The Committee considered the work programme for the Municipal Year.

The Democratic and Elections Officer advised the Committee that officers from the Housing team had requested to attend a future meeting of the Committee, to make Members aware of the Homelessness Reduction Act that was due to come into force in April 2018. The Committee agreed that this would be useful and agreed to add to their work programme.

With regard to the A361 review, the working group had attended a meeting at South Newington Parish Council, to hear about a consultation from Oxfordshire County Council regarding a proposed 7.5 tonne weight limit through Burford. If implemented, the limit would help to reduce LGV traffic through South Newington.

In relation to adding items to the work programme, the Chairman suggested contacting parish councils to ask if there were any issues that they would like the Committee to investigate. The information could be requested via the parish liaison meetings and/or when Councillors attend parish council meetings in their wards.

Following the discussion earlier in the meeting regarding anti-social behaviour, the Chairman mentioned 'The Arson Project', which had been created by Community Albums in conjunction with North Oxfordshire Academy and Banbury Police. The project was created due to an increase in arson incidents next to North Oxfordshire Academy, and the group produced a video that helped reduce incidents by 63%. It was agreed that partners involved in the production of the video should be contacted and invited to attend a future meeting.

With regard to the Mobile Phone Signal review, Councillor McHugh explained about a short online survey that had been put together to gather information relating to signal in Epwell Parish. The format had been very useful and would be easy to circulate to a larger number of respondents. The Committee agreed that it would be a useful survey to include in the mobile signal review.

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In relation to the Executive Forward Plan, the Chairman commented that it wasn't very helpful for the Committee and the public as it did not contain a lot of information, and it was difficult to know exactly what an item related to and what decision Executive would be taking. The Democratic and Elections Officer advised the Committee that if there were any items they wanted to know more about, they should contact the team and ask for further information.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted
- (2) The officers from Housing be invited to attend the November meeting of the Committee to discuss the Homelessness Reduction Act
- (3) That the parish liaison meeting be used as an opportunity to engage with parishes regarding possible items for Scrutiny review

The meeting ended at 8.22 pm

Chairman:

Date: