

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 12 June 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 Jon O'Neill
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members: Councillor Rose Stratford (In place of Councillor Margaret Cullip)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Neil Prestidge

Officers: James Doble, Democratic and Elections Manager (for agenda item 5)
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 27 March 2012 and 26 May 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to the Minutes of the meeting of 16 May 2012:

Attendance

Add Councillor Sean Woodcock to Members present

Chairman of the Council's Allowance

The Chairman welcomed the Democratic and Elections Manager to the meeting and explained that at the 16 May 2012 meeting of Council, members consider a report which proposed that the Chairman of the Council be paid an allowance. Council resolved to request the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board to review the proposal and make recommendations to the July meeting of Council.

The Democratic and Elections Manager advised the Board that the purpose of the allowance was to cover out of pocket expenses. At present the Council Chairman was able to claim expenses however this provision was infrequently used as it was time consuming and unclear what could and could not be claimed. The proposed allowance would be payable for the ceremonial role played by the Chairman, as permitted by the Local Government Act 1972. The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had considered the payment of a special responsibility allowance (SRA) to the Council Chairman for the administrative part of the role but determined that it was relatively formulaic and therefore did not warrant an SRA. The IRP would review this again in 2012/13 as part of the annual review of Members' Allowance Scheme.

In considering the proposal to pay an allowance to the Council Chairman, Members agreed that an allowance should be paid and commented that whilst the proposal to the 16 May 2012 Council meeting to pay £2000 was a relatively modest sum, it was important to be transparent about what it would cover. The position of Council Chairman was a position of honour and no member should feel unable to accept the opportunity due to concerns about the potential personal financial cost.

Councillor Rose Stratford, a former Cherwell District Council Chairman, advised the Board that she had claimed travel expenses but not for expenditure at events such as buying raffle tickets. As Mayor of Bicester Town Council, a Mayor's allowance was included in the annual budget to cover all of the Mayor's expenditure excluding tickets for events which were paid for from a civic budget.

The Board noted the comments of the 2011/12 Cherwell District Council Chairman in relation to the proposal to pay a Chairman's allowance. Members agreed that it would be useful to have feedback from the five past Chairmen on the expenses they have claimed, any out of pocket expense they incurred during their term of office and any additional comments to inform the Board's deliberations.

Members noted that information that had been circulated pertaining to allowances paid to Civic Heads at other local authorities and that this varied considerably. Members agreed that it would be useful to have further information from neighbouring district councils detailing what their Chairman's allowance covers and what other civic budgets they have.

In response to Members' questions on the Civic Ceremonial budget, the Democratic and Elections Manager provided clarification on the different elements of the budget and confirmed that he would liaise with Finance

Officers to seek to simplify the terminology which was currently open to misinterpretation.

In terms of the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Chairman under the Members' Allowance Scheme, Members agreed that they should include a recommendation asking the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the payment of a special responsibility allowance to the Council Chairman for the administrative element of the role, i.e. chairing meetings.

In terms of the payment of an allowance to the Council Chairman for the civic element of the role, Members 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.

Members agreed that, in principle, an allowance should be paid to the Council Chairman but resolved to defer framing recommendations to Council to enable further consideration of the matter with supplementary information. It was agreed that the 10 July 2012 meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would be changed to a full Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting to enable timely further consideration of the proposal and recommendations to be submitted to the 16 July 2012 Council meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the 10 July 2012 meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group be changed to a full meeting of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board to allow further consideration of the proposal to pay an allowance to the Chairman of the Council.
- (2) That the following supplementary information be provided to the 10 July 2012 meeting to inform the Board's deliberations: Feedback from the past five Cherwell District Council Chairman; Further information of the allowances claimed by the Council Chairman of neighbouring district councils; Proposals for a scheme of reference for what the Chairman's allowance should cover; and, a comparison of the work undertaken by the Chairman that would fall within a special responsibility allowance and that which would fall in the ceremonial role.

7 Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12

The Chairman advised the Board that consideration of this item would be deferred to the 17 July 2012 meeting.

8 Appointment of Working Group Members

The Board considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance which sought consideration of the appointment of Members to the Finance Scrutiny Working Group and Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

Resolved

- (1) That the following Councillors be appointed to the Performance Scrutiny Working Group for 2012/13: Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Councillor Douglas Webb, Councillor Maurice Billington, Councillor Margaret Cullip, Councillor Neil Prestidge, Councillor Douglas Williamson and Councillor Sean Woodcock.
- (2) That the following Councillors be appointed to the Finance Scrutiny Working Group for 2012/13: Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Councillor Douglas Webb, Councillor Alyas Ahmed, Councillor Patrick Cartledge, Councillor Jon O'Neill, Councillor Nigel Randall and Councillor Lawrie Stratford.

9

Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2012/13

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

The Chairman reminded the Board that one of the conclusions of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board budget scrutiny 2011/12 was that a Concessions Policy for the council should be developed however the budget 2012/13 process has determined that this will now feed into the budget 2013/14 process. The Board agreed that Councillors Lawrie Stratford, Maurice Billington and Nigel Randall be nominated to work with officers to develop the Policy. Councillor Sean Woodcock also expressed an interest in being involved in the policy development and that he be kept informed of progress to enable him to also contribute to the development of the policy.

Members noted that the Head of Finance and Procurement would be attending the 17 July 2012 meeting of the Board to brief Members on the Local Government Resources Review. This would also be an opportunity for Members to give consideration to the 2013/13 budget scrutiny process. The Board commented that they reviewed fees and charges bi-annually and that this was due to be included as part of the budget scrutiny programme this year.

In considering potential work programme items, Members suggested that a review of dial-a-ride and the commissioning of the provision of voluntary services (debt and money advice, services to increase volunteering and voluntary driving services) be reviewed at the appropriate time. The Board noted that this fell within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the Team Leader – Democratic and Elections be requested to advise the Chairman of the Committee of the Board's view.

The Board noted that during consideration of agenda item 5, Chairman of the Council's Allowance, they had resolved that the 10 July 2012 meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would be changed to a full Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting to enable timely further consideration of the proposal and recommendations to be submitted to the 16

July 2012 Council meeting. Members noted that the Head of Environmental Services was due to attend the Performance Scrutiny Working Group meeting to provide an update on the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership and agreed that he be requested to submit this to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting. Additionally, Members agreed that the Head of Environmental Services be requested to also submit an update on the Landscape Maintenance contract and a briefing on street cleansing to this meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Environmental Services be requested to provide an update on the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, the Landscape Maintenance contract and a briefing on street cleansing to the 10 July 2012 Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting.
- (3) That Councillors Lawrie Stratford, Nigel Randall and Maurice Billington be nominated to work with officers on the development of a Concessions Policy for the Council and that Councillor Sean Woodcock be kept informed of the development of the Policy.
- (4) That the proposed work programmes of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and Finance Scrutiny Working Group be noted.
- (5) That the Team leader – Democratic and Elections be requested to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman of the Board's view that a review of dial-a-ride and the commissioning of the provision of voluntary services (debt and money advice, services to increase volunteering and voluntary driving services) be undertaken at the appropriate time as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chairman:

Date: