

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 28 May 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present: Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Apologies for absence: Councillor Daniel Sames
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill

Officers: Mark Harmon, Environmental Protection Manager
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Sean Gregory, Environmental Protection Officer
Louise Tustian, Senior Performance & Improvement Officer
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

1 Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Ann Bonner be appointed Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14.
- (2) That Councillor Daniel Sames be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

4 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 April 2013 and the Minutes of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board held on 16 April 2013 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Overview and Scrutiny - Changed Arrangements**

The Team Leader, Democratic and Elections, gave a short briefing on how the Scrutiny function would work, and gave guidance on how the Committee could decide which areas to focus on.

The briefing advised on:

- What is Scrutiny?
- An engagement map, detailing the wide range of possible stakeholders for any given Scrutiny Review.
- Deciding when to scrutinise – Prioritisation checklist – 8 key 'yes' or 'no' questions, designed to act as a quick indication whether or not a scrutiny review would be useful.
- Planning a Scrutiny Review template document – 9 more detailed questions to be answered if the prioritisation checklist has a positive outcome

The Team Leader, Democratic and Elections emphasised that, where a potential subject for review was suggested, a scoping document would always be prepared for subsequent consideration by the Committee. Where a review was agreed, a Select Committee format would be adopted and, in this respect, arrangements were in-hand for a visit to the Houses of Parliament with Scrutiny members from South Northamptonshire Council to see a Select Committee in session.

Noting the new arrangements, the Committee agreed that there would still be some subjects/topics where a general briefing would be the best way of keeping both the Committee and members generally informed.

6 **Air Quality across the District**

The Committee received a presentation from the Environmental Protection Officer on local air quality management across the District, and progress made since the last report to the Committee in October 2012.

The Committee was advised that detailed assessments completed in respect of Oxford Road to Southam Road, Banbury, Kings End to Field Street, Bicester and Bicester Road, Kidlington. The results from monitoring showed a declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was required in each case which had been submitted to Defra for comment.

Further assessment had been undertaken in respect of the Hennef Way AQMA and it was proposed to develop and finalise an Air Quality Action Plan.

An update was provided in relation to actions arising from the October 2012 presentation on means for Members to identify and report air quality concerns; powers to deal with taxi emissions; Environmental Permitted Process Inspection frequency; Air Quality Strategy and use of the Planning process to secure air quality requirements.

Committee Members raised concern that, even after detailed assessment, the declaration of an AQMA, and even the implementation of an Air Quality Action Plan, it appeared there was little the Council could do itself to ensure improvements were achieved. The Environmental Protection Manager advised that, where an AQMA was declared, a Steering Group was established to look at the issues, formulate measures to secure an improvement and then produce an Action Plan. Steering Groups comprised all parties with an input, such as the Highways Authority, the Planning Authority and local District Councillors.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their presentation

Resolved

- (1) That officers be requested to ensure that an Air Quality Action Plan be produced as soon as possible in respect of Hennef Way and that Members be advised of its publication via a Briefing Note.
- (2) That, six months after the publication of the Air Quality Action Plan, a further report be submitted to the Committee advising on how the objectives are being met.

7 Annual Performance Report

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers and Councillor Wood, Leader of the Council and the Senior Performance & Improvement Officer to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers presented the Annual Performance report and quarter four performance report which gave a comprehensive overview of the Council's performance in 2012/13, and highlighted areas of significant strength together with areas where improvement was required.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers advised the Committee that current priorities and targets would be reviewed to ensure they were still appropriate and sufficiently robust. Whilst there were areas for improvement, he reported that 93% of the Council's targets had been met, whilst still

delivering over £800k in secure savings to help meet the medium term financial deficit.

In considering the report, members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the delay in completing the adoption of the Local Plan, which was reporting amber. The Committee suggested that once the Plan had been formally adopted, a review of the process should be undertaken to consider factors that had caused the delay to ensure they were addressed in the future.

In relation to the delivery of 500 new homes (reporting red) and the number of households living in temporary accommodation (reporting red), the Committee linked the two indicators and questioned whether there might be measures the Council could take to secure the provision of a greater number of 1 or 2 bedroom properties; possibly through the use of S.106 monies, or where the Council could progress matters without being reliant on other parties. It was agreed that the Lead Member for Housing be invited to a future meeting when consideration would be given to these indicators.

In considering the processing of major applications within 13 weeks (reporting red) and percentage of planning appeals allowed against refusal decision (reporting red), whilst acknowledging that a few delayed applications could have a disproportionate effect on the overall processing completion rate, Members agreed that the methods used by other authorities (e.g. South Northamptonshire Council) which resulted in green indicators should be investigated. It was therefore agreed the Chairman and/or the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, together with the Lead Member for Planning, be invited to a future meeting when consideration would be given to these indicators.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers referred to the performance indicator percentage of telephone calls abandoned compared to same period last year which was reporting red. The Committee was advised that this was chiefly attributable to the recent introduction of major welfare reforms, coupled with a reduced staffing resource. The situation was being monitored and a review of targets undertaken if required.

In relation to the performance indicator, number of stage 2/3 complaints which was reporting red, the Committee noted that whilst the number of complaints had increased, this was largely due to the car parking issue from 2012 and, as such, it was anticipated that the figures would improve during 2013/14.

Concluding the debate, and notwithstanding the areas of concern, the Chairman emphasised that the Council's overall performance was extremely good, despite the tough decisions that had been made, and resources having been reduced.

Resolved

- (1) That officers and Lead Members responsible for indicators reporting red be invited to attend the August meeting of the Committee when the 2013/14 Quarter One Performance Monitoring report would be considered.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2012/13

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Law and Governance detailing potential items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14. The below comments were made in respect of the following topics:

- **National Benefit Changes** – Retain on work programme; for consideration at September meeting.
- **Commissioning of services to Banbury CAB** – Retain on work programme; for consideration at September meeting.
- **RAF Bicester** – Remove from work programme; Members to be advised on progress via the Members Bulletin.
- **Banbury Brighter Futures** – Retain on work programme; for consideration at July meeting.
- **Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride** – Retain on work programme; briefing note to be appended to report to July meeting.
- **Update on Empty Homes** - Retain on work programme; no requirement for report, but regular briefing notes to be appended to future work programme reports.
- **Housing Strategy** - Retain on work programme; no requirement for report, but regular briefing notes to be appended to future work programme reports.
- **Presentation on Service Plans** - Retain on work programme; for consideration at September meeting.
- **Planning and Building Control Enforcement Service** - Retain on work programme; no requirement for report, but briefing note to be appended to future work programme report.
- **Wind Turbines and their locations** – Scoping document to be prepared for subsequent consideration by Committee.
- **CDC Employment Initiatives** – Scoping document to be prepared for subsequent consideration by Committee.
- **Concessions Policy** – Scoping document to be prepared for subsequent consideration by Committee.
- **Contract Scrutiny: Landscape Maintenance Contract** – Retain on work programme. Councillors Lawrie Stratford, Douglas Williamson and Sean Woodcock nominated to observe the procurement process, and subsequently report to the Committee as appropriate.
- **Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM)** – Retain on work programme. Report on outcome of pilot to September meeting.
- **Air Quality** - Retain on work programme; for consideration at November meeting.
- **Performance Monitoring** - Retain on work programme. Regular monitoring.

Executive Work Programme

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

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.
- (2) That no items in the current version of the Forward Plan (June to September, 2013) be included on the Work Programme for 2013/14.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chairman:

Date: