

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 8 March 2011 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Daniel Sames (Chairman)

Councillor Ann Bonner
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Andrew Fulljames
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Leslie F Sibley
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford

Apologies for absence: Councillor Chris Smithson
Councillor Trevor Stevens
Councillor Keith Strangwood

Also Present: Tan Lea, Strategic Lead for Youth; Children, Young People and Families Directorate, Oxfordshire County Council
Anthony Sayles, Area Service Manager Northern, Integrated Youth Support Service, Oxfordshire County Council

Officers: Ian Davies, Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
Paul Marston-Weston, Head of Recreation & Health
Philip Rolls, Recreation & Health Improvement Manager
James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Ian Davies, Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

44 Appointment of Vice Chairman

It was agreed that as this was the last meeting of the Committee in the current municipal year there was no need to appoint a vice-chairman.

45 Declarations of Interest

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

6. Youth Services in Oxfordshire.

Councillor Ann Bonner, Personal, as a member of Oxfordshire County Council.

6. Youth Services in Oxfordshire.

Councillor Lawrie Stratford, Personal, as a member of Oxfordshire County Council.

46 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

47 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment and point of clarification:

Page 4 Item 43 Secondary School Education Attainment Levels, paragraph 2, sentence 1

Delete Oxfordshire and replace with Cherwell

Page 5 Item 43 Executive consideration of the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Car Parking Charges Call-in

Members of the Committee who had not been present at the meeting on 25 January 2011 sought clarification on the decision to review the Call-in procedure. The Chairman said that in general he believed that most people involved in the Call-in held on 10 January 2011 had been satisfied with the process. This view was endorsed by other members of the Committee. The Chairman went on to explain that it was not intended to conduct a full review of the whole Call-in procedure but that some concerns had been expressed regarding the rules on public speaking at a Call-in and this would be the only issue to be reviewed.

48 Youth Services in Oxfordshire

The Chairman welcomed Oxfordshire County Council officers Tan Lea (Strategic Lead for Youth; Children, Young People and Families Directorate) and Anthony Sayles (Area Service Manager Northern, Integrated Youth Support Service) to the meeting to discuss the proposals for youth services in the county. The Chairman explained that the discussion would be in two parts: firstly a briefing on the county council's proposals for youth services and secondly consideration of what impact this would have on the district council's youth work.

Oxfordshire County Council youth services

The County Council officers began by setting the overall context for the provision of youth services. They explained that the budget constraints would result in a £10M reduction in funding for youth services in 2011/12. Statutory

services would be safeguarded and this meant that the non-statutory activities would be more vulnerable to funding cuts. They referred the Committee to the county council's consultation document which set out the proposals for the provision of services to children, young people and families. They emphasised that although the service model looked very different the council retained its firm commitment to early intervention and to partnership working with community groups and other service providers like Connexions and the probation service.

The Committee learnt that the proposals for the youth service centred on local delivery from "hubs" across the county. Two of the hubs would be within Cherwell, at Woodgreen Young Peoples Centre in Banbury and The Courtyard in Bicester. The range of services provided would vary according to local need. In Banbury there would be close liaison with the work of the Banbury Brighter Futures project.

In response to questions from the Committee County Council officers confirmed that there would inevitably be some loss of services across the county as a whole but that it was not possible to quantify the change or identify specific services at present.

The Head of Recreation & Health told the Committee that the value for money review of youth services had been deferred until the outcome of the county council consultation was known and that the Cherwell District Council youth budget had not been cut in 2011/12. Nevertheless the service was actively seeking to provide improved services to residents and to safeguard activities against the changes that might result from the county council proposals.

The Committee recognised that the county council's proposals were as a direct result of the economic climate and that the options available were limited but they expressed reservations about the high level of dependency on the voluntary sector and parents and other volunteers. They were also concerned about the potential loss of professional expertise from within the youth service. The Committee was also concerned that the focus on the more vulnerable members of the community might result in a large number of other young people losing out because they did not meet any of the priority indicators. The Committee also commented on the importance of managing public perception of this fundamental change in the provision of youth services.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010 - 2011

The Committee considered the report on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/11.

Forward Plan

The Committee agreed that there were no items on the Forward Plan for March to June 2011 that they wished to include on their work programme in 2010/11.

Built Environment Conservation Area Policy

The Committee noted that the Chairman had presented their report on the review of the Council's Built Environment Conservation Area Policy to the Executive on 7 February 2011. They were pleased to note that all of their recommendations had been accepted without amendment. The Committee reflected that this piece of work was an excellent example of good scrutiny which had resulted in a tangible outcome (the publication of the Planning and Design Guidance: Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Use). They commended Mrs Rand for her work in preparing this document and asked that it should be circulated to all council members.

Strategic review of car parking issues

The Committee had previously agreed to include on its work programme further investigation of the following parking issues:

1. The balance and location of long stay/ short stay parking in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington
2. The wider economic impact of parking policy on the district's urban centres
3. The cost benefit of alternative management arrangements for car parks, including pay on exit

The Interim Chief Executive advised the Committee that he had discussed the structure, timing and resourcing of such an important and strategic scrutiny review with the Chairman and lead officers in the council. He suggested that the Committee should conduct the review in two stages. Firstly a select committee style discussion at the June meeting based on a detailed officer report addressing the issues raised at items 1 and 3 above which were essentially concerned with practical, operational arrangements for existing car parks. Secondly the Committee could commission a separate study into the wider economic impact of the council's parking policy. Such a study would need to be very thoroughly scoped and supported by detailed planning and clear objectives.

The Committee gave careful consideration to these these suggestions. They agreed that the review should be conducted in two stages and confirmed that officers should bring a detailed report to the June meeting which addressed issues around the balance and location of long stay/ short stay parking in the district and the cost benefit of alternative management arrangements for car parks. They asked that the report be supported by statistical information from the council's records, the background information provided to the call-in on car parking and should also include consideration of motorbikes and disabled parking requirements. In addition Bicester members of the Committee suggested that the findings of the Bicester Chamber of Commerce traffic survey should be brought to the meeting for the Committee's consideration.

The Committee agreed that consideration of whether or not to proceed with a wider economic impact of parking policy on the district's urban centres should be deferred until after the discussions at the June meeting.

Secondary School Education Attainment Levels

Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that the review of secondary school education attainment levels should proceed in 2011/12.

They agreed that the initial briefing discussion with Councillor Waine, Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement, should be scheduled for the meeting on 19 July 2011.

Councillor L Stratford and Councillor Mrs R Stratford asked that their objection to the decision to proceed with this scrutiny review be recorded.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12 April 2011

The Committee agreed to cancel this meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the current Overview and Scrutiny Committee element of the work programme for 2010/11 be noted.
- (2) That there were no items of interest in the current version of the Forward Plan (March - June 2011) to be included on the future work programme.
- (3) That the Executive's endorsement of the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Built Environment Conservation Area Policy scrutiny review be noted; and that Mrs Rand be thanked for her work on the production of the Planning and Design Guidance: Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Use; and that this document be circulated to all council members.
- (4) That the agenda for the June meeting of the Committee would include a select committee style consideration of an officer report on the issues around the balance and location of long stay/ short stay parking in the district and the cost benefit of alternative management arrangements for car parks.
- (5) That an initial briefing for the review of Secondary School Education Attainment Levels should be scheduled for the meeting on 19 July 2011.
- (6) That the meeting scheduled for 12 April 2011 be cancelled.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman:

Date: