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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 22 September 2009 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Colin Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Victoria Irvine
Councillor Devena Rae
Councillor Carol Steward
Councillor Keith Strangwood
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Martin Weir

Apologies for absence: Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Patricia Tompson

Officers: Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance
Claire Taylor, Community Planning Manager
Kevin Larnar, Rural Development and Countryside Officer
Tony Ecclestone, Communications Officer
Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Natasha Clark, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Michael Sands, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

17 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interest with regard to the following agenda item:

7. Partnership Scrutiny - Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

Councillor Victoria Irvine, Personal, as Cherwell District Council's outside body representative to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

18 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

19 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Budget 2010/11

The Head of Finance briefed the Board on the context and background to the 2010/11 Budget.

The Head of Finance informed the Board that there had been a recent public consultation exercise to prioritise the Council's services. Overall there had been little movement from previous years although economic development had increased in priority as a result of the recession.

The Council was on target to deliver a balanced budget for 2010/11 but the challenge for this budget exercise would be the need to deliver continued cost reductions and improved service delivery in 2011/12 and subsequent years.

It was suggested that scrutiny should focus on the following four areas:

- 1) Review the costs of services which had not been the subject of the public consultation priority ranking
- 2) The cost and delivery of services for old and young people
- 3) The ways in which services can reduce deprivation
- 4) The administration and processing of grants

In response to Members questions, the Head of Finance explained that these topics had been put forward as they had not been the subject of value for money reviews or other scrutiny in recent years. The Board expressed concern about maintaining service standards and staff morale in the face of continued budget cuts. The Head of Finance agreed that this was an area of concern which would be kept under review. The Council was looking at workforce planning for the future and would also be considering the statutory/discretionary split of services.

The Head of Finance agreed to bring more detailed proposals for the scrutiny of the 2010/11 Budget to the Board's next meeting.

Resolved

That the Head of Finance be invited to bring more detailed proposals for the scrutiny of the 2010/11 Budget to the next meeting.

Improving Partnership Working - Progress Report

The Head of Improvement presented a progress report on the 'Improving Partnership Working Project'. He explained that the project was about establishing how the Council could derive value for money from its partnerships. The basic principles of the project were that the Council should apply the same standards to its partnerships as it does to its own services, and that the performance of significant partnerships should be monitored through the Council's performance management system.

The Community and Corporate Planning Manager informed the Board of the growing importance of partnerships in local government in the context of Local Area Agreement funding.

The Board requested clarification on the distinction between a partnership, an outside body and a contractual working relationship. Members asked for a list containing current partnerships to be brought to the next meeting. The Board stressed the importance of setting clear aims and objectives for all partnerships and reviewing performance against these. Members of the Board also requested clarification and guidance on the appropriate expression for declarations of interest by Member representatives on outside bodies at Council and partnership meetings.

The Board noted that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would monitor significant partnerships and refer concerns to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted
- 2) That a list of current partnerships be brought to the Board's next meeting
- 3) That it be noted that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would monitor the Council's significant partnerships and refer concerns to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board.

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Partnership Scrutiny - Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

The Board considered a report which gave an update on the progress to date of the scrutiny review of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

The Chairman reported on the visit to Cropredy which took place on 24 August 2009. He informed the Board that Cropredy Parish Council had been positive about the work of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and Cherwell District Council. Further visits to Upper Heyford and Bloxham were scheduled for early October and the Chairman encouraged Members of the Board to participate.

The Community and Corporate Planning Manager briefed the Board on issues emerging from the work on the Sustainable Community Strategy which were relevant to the Council's partnership work with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. The main issues were rural access and transportation, rural communities as pockets of hidden deprivation, challenges facing an ageing population and the viability of schools.

The Board discussed the issue of isolation in rural areas and the effects that this has on access to various services. It was suggested that deprivation in rural locations can often occur, presenting difficulties in assessing the needs of the rural community as one. Members discussed ways to improve service delivery to rural communities in the district.

The Board asked Officers to provide details of the number of Parishes that had previously been involved with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

Members queried the finance and funding of the partnership with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, noting that the £46,300 spent in 2009/10 was solely for staff and support costs at Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and did not include what the Council spends on grants to Parishes. Elements of Cherwell's contribution for 2005/06 to 2007/08 were not shown in the agenda papers. The Rural Development and Countryside Manager agreed to obtain the missing figures and provide them at the Board's next meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Board that a question and answer session with the Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural and the Strategic Director Environment and Community would be held at the October meeting. Members were asked to forward any questions or issues they wanted to raise to the Scrutiny Officer in advance of the meeting.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted
- 2) That the Rural Development and Countryside Manager be requested to present further information on Cherwell District Council's finance and funding to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council from the rural services perspective.
- 3) That the issues arising from the Sustainable Community Strategy, that impact on the Councils partnership with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, be noted.
- 4) That the issues Members wish to raise at the question and answer session with the Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural and the Strategic Director Environment and Community at the October meeting, be forwarded to the Scrutiny Officer in advance of the meeting.

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Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09

The Board considered a report containing information relating to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board and various Task and Finish Group reviews.

The Board noted that the production of an annual report was a constitutional requirement and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to refer the Annual Report 2008/09 to Council without amendment.

Resolved

That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2008/09 be noted.

24 **The Councillor Call for Action**

The Board considered a report advising Members of the introduction of a Councillor Call for Action as determined by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Board noted that this piece of legislation would result in little or no change to the current working practices of Cherwell ward councillors and the operation of the scrutiny committees. They agreed that it would be of value to circulate the draft guidance note on the Councillor Call for Action to all members of the Council.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted.

25 **Work Programme**

The Board considered a report which updated Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2009/10.

The Board agreed to use the 24 November meeting date and the November meetings of the Finance Scrutiny Working Group and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group for their work on the scrutiny of the 2010/11 budget.

The Head of Finance briefed the Board on the latest position in relation to excess charge notices, abandoned vehicles, Ringo and car parking. Members of the Board commented on a number of issues relating to car parking, for example, residents complaints that the machines do not offer change. They also asked for more detail on the comparative parking figures for Cherwell District Council and other local authorities. The Head of Finance agreed to bring further information on car parking to the Board's next meeting.

The Board noted that the Finance Scrutiny Working Group and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had met during the summer and that there were no issues to report.

Resolved

- 1) That the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board element of the work programme for 2009/10 as noted above and set out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes be agreed.
- 2) That the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting on 24 November and the November meetings of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups should be used as a private working sessions on the 2010/11 budget.
- 3) That the update on the elements of the 2009/10 budget scrutiny (fees and charges) be noted and that the Head of Finance be invited to bring further information on car parking to the Board's next meeting.

- 4) That the update from the Finance Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chairman:

Date:



Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10 ~ as @ 01/09/09

Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Meeting				
			Sept	Oct	Nov	Jan	Later
Scheduling – to identify and agree potential topics for scrutiny							
Preparations for an ageing population	OSC	Cllr R Stratford to monitor developments Invite representatives of Oxfordshire Health & Well-Being Board to attend future meeting		?	?		
Youth Facility Provision	OSC	Work programme item for 15 September Possible joint scrutiny with other Oxfordshire authorities; to note developments.	✓				
Engaging with young people	OSC	Agenda item for 15 September Consider draft scoping document for possible review	✓				
Young People’s VFM review	OSC	To consider the outcomes and conclusions of the VFM review into young people’s services				✓	
Registered Social Landlords’ Management Partnership and related standards	R&PSB	Work programme item for 20 October To consider as possible topic for partnership scrutiny		✓			
Scrutiny – agreed topics for consideration at committee meetings							
Sustainable Communities Strategy	OSC	Agenda item for 10 November Claire Taylor to present consultation outcomes, draft service delivery plan and leadership plans			✓		
Preparation for the 2012 Olympics tourism potential in the district	OSC	Agenda item for October or November meeting Invite Pfh (Customer Service & ICT) to attend. Executive report scheduled for November.		✓	✓		

OSC: Overview & Scrutiny Committee
T&FG: Task & Finish Group

R&PSB: Resources & Performance Board

FSWG: Finance Scrutiny Working Group
PSWG: Performance Scrutiny Working Group

Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Sept	Oct	Nov	Jan	Later
2010/2011 Budget	R&PSB	Agenda item for 22 September To agree approach/topic for budget scrutiny.	✓				
Partnerships: ORCC	R&PSB	Agenda item for Sept/Oct To review effectiveness of partnership with ORCC.	✓	✓			
Partnerships: Cherwell Safer Communities	R&PSB	Work programme item for 20 October To agree scoping document and project plan.		✓			
Improving Partnership Working	R&PSB	Agenda item for 22 September To consider the improvements proposals identified by the Improving Partnership Working project team.	✓				
Contracts review	R&PSB	Agenda item for 22 September To consider and agree an approach for contract scrutiny	✓				
Task & Finish Groups – agreed topics for review outside committee meetings							
Private Sector Housing Strategy	Cllr Rose Stratford (Ch) Cllr Stevens (VC) Cllr Smithson Cllr Tompson	Cllr Rae Cllr Sibley	Policy development work on the private sector housing strategy.				✓
Crime & Anti-social behaviour	Cllr Irvine Cllr Billington Cllr Tompson Cllr Smithson Cllr Sibley	Cllr Ahmed Cllr Cullip	Active – final report scheduled for Executive in autumn 2009 Chairman of T&FG to attend OSC meeting in Sept to brief on progress	✓			
Monitoring – to examine responses to scrutiny reports and to check on progress on implementation of recommendations							
Concessionary Fares	OSC	Work programme item for early 2010 meeting PfH to attend and brief on progress on recommendations and developments on government consultation					✓

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Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Sept	Oct	Nov	Jan	Later
Affordable Housing & Rural Exception Sites	OSC	Agenda item for 10 November meeting PfH to attend and brief on progress on recommendations			✓		
Markets in Cherwell	OSC	Agenda item for 13 October meeting PfH to attend and brief on progress		✓			
Partnerships: Bicester Vision	R&PSB	Work programme item for 24 November To agree scope and project plan for review in early 2010.			✓		✓
Fees and Charges	R&PSB	Agenda item for 12 January meeting Review of progress against recommendations and in advance of next budget round				✓	
Food Waste Processing	R&PSB/PSWG	Review autumn 2010 6 months after final stage of roll-out programme.					✓
Sports Centre Modernisation	FSWG	Refurbished centres due to open summer 2009; new Spiceball due to open winter 2009. FSWG to review at July 2009 meeting.	✓				
Residents' Parking Schemes	OSC	Work programme item for November To note current position			✓		
RAF Bicester	OSC	Work programme item for 15 September Chairman to brief on current position	✓				

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