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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 21 July 2009 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Colin Clarke (Chairman)

Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Devena Rae
Councillor Carol Steward
Councillor Patricia Tompson
Councillor Martin Weir

Substitute Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford (In place of Councillor Douglas Webb)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Victoria Irvine
Councillor Keith Strangwood
Councillor Douglas Webb

Officers: Julie Evans, Strategic Director - Customer Service & Resources
Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance
Grahame Helm, Head of Safer Communities & Community Development
Chris Rothwell, Head of Urban & Rural Services
Craig Forsyth, Communications Officer
Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Natasha Clark, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

8 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

9 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

10 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11 **Fees and Charges Update Report**

The Board considered a report which detailed the progress on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Fees and Charges scrutiny review in December 2008. The Head of Finance confirmed that the majority of recommendations relating to the increase of fees had been implemented by 1 April 2009 in order to support the 2009/10 budget.

The Board noted that there were some exceptions, for example fees relating to taxi licences and in Legal and Democratic Services, which were currently the subject of value for money reviews. The original scrutiny recommendations would be reviewed, and where appropriate implemented, once the outcomes of the value for money reviews were available.

The Head of Finance explained that it was still too early in the year to identify any clear patterns from the activity and income profiles. In some areas, such as Excess Parking Charge Notices, income had increased but in others, for example season tickets there had been a decrease. It was not possible to determine if this was the impact of the recession or merely a seasonal variation.

The Head of Finance agreed to bring a further report to the Board which would contain details of the financial position at Quarter 3 in January 2010. The Board asked that details of the activity cost and transaction volumes for these fees and charges should be included in the report.

In advance of that update report the Board asked officers to provide supplementary information on the following:

- A breakdown of Excess Charge Notice income to show the proportion paid in the initial discount period.
- The take up of the Ring Go service
- Incident rates for abandoned vehicles
- Details on the experience of neighbouring authorities regarding activity levels in pay and display car parks

The Head of Finance explained that officers had carried out research into the charging, discount and concession policies of other local authorities and that they were now ready to work with members of the Board to formulate similar policies for Cherwell District Council ahead of the 2011/12 budget process. A report setting out the draft policies would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2) That the Head of Finance be invited to bring a further progress report on the Quarter 3 position relating to fees and charges to a future meeting.
- 3) That Councillors Rae, Steward and Weir be nominated to work with officers on the formulation of charging, discount and concession

policies for Cherwell District Council ahead of the 2011/12 budget process.

- 4) That the Head of Finance be invited to bring a report setting out the proposed charging, discount and concession policies to a future meeting of the Board.

12 **Budget Scrutiny 2010/2011**

The Strategic Director Customer Service and Resources and the Head of Finance were present to brief Members on the current status of the 2010/2011 budget process.

The Head of Finance informed the Board that in view of the current economic climate the 2010/2011 budget would focus on savings and efficiencies and that there would obviously be no real scope to look at capital projects or growth items. The Strategic Director Customer Service reminded the Board that the Council had made a public promise to residents to save £1million in 2010/2011.

The Head of Finance advised the Board that as part of the 2010/11 budget exercise the Portfolio Holder Resources and Organisational Development would be undertaking a root and branch review of the Council's income and expenditure, including a detailed analysis of what the statutory and discretionary services of a Local Authority were. She suggested that this might be an area where the Board could scrutinise aspects of the budget in much the same way as they had looked at fees and charges the previous year.

Members of the Board agreed with this proposal. They also indicated that they wanted to look at the scope to offer savings and efficiencies from the "Member Services" budget.

It was agreed that the Head of Finance would bring more detailed proposals for the Board's scrutiny of the 2010/11 budget to the September meeting.

Resolved

That the Head of Finance be invited to bring more detailed proposals for the Board's scrutiny of the 2010/11 budget to the September meeting.

13 **Monitoring the Performance of Cherwell District Council Key Contracts**

The Head of Improvement joined the Committee for a discussion on the role the Board could play in monitoring the performance of the Council's key contracts.

The Chairman said that he believed that scrutiny should concentrate on post project evaluation of large capital contracts as this was where they could make the most effective contribution. The Board also felt that they had a role to play in reviewing large value service contracts, such as the contract for the

provision of agency staff, prior to re-tendering. Members of the Board commented on the difficulty in drawing firm conclusions from the information presented and asked for additional detail on a number of the specific contracts listed and more generally on the Council's policies for contract negotiation, management and review.

The Board accepted the Head of Improvement's offer to bring additional information on the Council's contract policy and procedures and a revised contract register to the September meeting. The Board requested that the Strategic Procurement Manager also be invited to the September meeting for this discussion.

Resolved

That the Head of Improvement and the Strategic Procurement Manager be invited to bring a report on the Council's contract policies and procedures and a more detailed version of the contract register to the September meeting.

14

Improving Partnership Working

The Head of Improvement presented the brief for the 'Improving Partnership Working' project he was leading. The project had emerged following consideration of the Working in Partnership Annual Report by the Executive in March 2009.

The Board noted that the outcomes of the project would be very important, particularly in light of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment which would judge the performance of both the Council and its partners.

The Board commented on the inadequacy of the information and apparent false entries in the Partnership Register which they had considered at their March meeting and suggested that this should also be updated and improved as part of the Improving Partnership Working project brief. Members of the Board commented that it would be useful to understand what a partnership is, why and how the Council becomes involved in a partnership, the benefits and outcomes for Cherwell and how the Council ensures that the partnership is delivering. Members also commented that many partnerships did not have elected member representation.

The Board agreed that in view of their constitutional responsibility to scrutinise the Council's partnership arrangements they should maintain an active interest and involvement in this improvement project. They accepted the Head of Improvement's offer to attend the meeting in September to provide additional information on the Council's partnership arrangements and the initial findings of the Improving Partnership Working project.

Resolved

That the Head of Improvement be invited to submit a report to the September meeting of the Board to provide additional information on the Council's partnership arrangements and the initial findings of the Improving Partnership Working project.

15 **Partnership Scrutiny - Oxfordshire Rural Community Council Briefing**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the proposed scope and project plan for the scrutiny of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

The Head of Urban and Rural Services and the Head of Safer Communities and Community Development were present and briefed Members on the work of Rural Community Councils and the structure and organisation of the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

The Head of Urban and Rural Services presented the rural and countryside perspective. He advised the Board that Oxfordshire Rural Community Council was one of 38 Rural Community Councils in England. It had been founded in 1920 and is a registered charity that works to improve the quality of life for those who live or work in rural Oxfordshire.

The Head of Urban and Rural Services commented that the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council offered a good resource for the Council and brought a wider skill and experience base to help the Council deliver services to rural communities, in particular with regard to village halls, village shops and parish planning. The Head of Urban and Rural Services advised the Board that some recent achievements would not have been possible without the expertise of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council staff and a similar service could not be provided in-house for the same funding.

The Head of Urban and Rural Services advised the Board that Cherwell District Council did not have a formal agreement with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council for funding and service delivery. At present only Oxfordshire County Council had a contractual arrangement with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. The Head of Urban and Rural Services noted the need for Cherwell to develop a more focused and structured arrangement with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, for example, through a service level agreement which would incorporate clear aims and targets and maintain greater flexibility to adapt to service requirements than a formal contract.

The Head of Safer Communities and Community Development briefed the Board on the Council's involvement with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council from a community transport perspective. The Oxfordshire Community Transport and Accessibility Partnership (formerly Oxfordshire Rural Transport Partnership) aimed to promote and support improved transport and other means of accessing services for people in rural and other marginalised/isolated communities.

The Head of Safer Communities and Community Development commented that historically funding for Oxfordshire Rural Community Partnership had been built into the service budget and remained at the same level. It was felt that the grant had represented low value for money for the Council in the past in contrast to what the Partnership delivers to other districts.

The Head of Safer Communities and Community Development informed the Committee that in light of recent national developments, the service had now identified a real need for some research and advice (e.g. concessionary travel and volunteer car schemes) from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. He also suggested the need to set clear targets and outcomes expected from the partnership in the future through a formal funding agreement. In this respect, he recommended that the Council make a single payment to ORCC and negotiate a single agreement to cover all the services provided.

Members of the Board commented that the funding arrangements seemed to be determined by other organisations (particularly Oxfordshire County Council in the case of community transport) and were not subject to a full review by the Council. Members noted that the role of elected Members with the Partnership was not clear and should be explored further.

Members discussed how public satisfaction with the services delivered by the Partnership could be measured and agreed that it was important to visit villages across the district to see for themselves the work that had been achieved with the support of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and speak with residents. The Board agreed that the Scrutiny Officer and Rural Development and Countryside Manager would arrange dates and locations for visits during August.

Following the Officers' presentation and discussion, the Board agreed the scoping document and project review for the partnership scrutiny review of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council with the amendment that Cherwell District Council's Member Representative be added to the witness list.

Resolved

- 1) That the scoping document for the partnership scrutiny review of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes be agreed.
- 2) That the project grid for the partnership scrutiny review of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council as set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes be agreed.
- 3) That the Scrutiny Officer and Rural Development and Countryside Manager should arrange visits during August to villages in the district for Members to see the work undertaken with the support of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and speak with residents.

Work Programme 2009/2010 Update

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the overview and scrutiny work programme 2009/2010.

Bicester Vision Partnership

The Vice-Chairman, who had been a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, when it had carried out a review of the Bicester Vision Partnership

gave the Board an overview of the review and explained the thinking behind the recommendations. He said that the Bicester Vision had accepted the recommendations regarding communications and that as a result there had been an improvement in the dissemination of information about the work of Bicester Vision.

The Board agreed that they should review the Council's involvement in the Bicester Vision Partnership in the spring of 2010 and asked the Vice-Chairman and Scrutiny Officer to bring proposals for the conduct of that review to the November meeting.

Performance Scrutiny Working Group

The Board noted that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had reviewed the year end performance data and would be monitoring trends in a number of areas, including processing planning applications which was still rated red. At the next meeting they had asked to speak to officers about the Council's failure to meet its CO₂ emission reduction targets and to a representative from the Mobile Camera Unit regarding fly-tipping.

Resolved

- 1) That the Vice-Chairman and Scrutiny Officer be invited to bring proposals for the review of the Bicester Vision Partnership to the November meeting.
- 2) That the work of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group be noted.
- 3) That the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board element of the work programme for 2009/10 as set out in Appendix 3 to these minutes be agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC)

<p>Purpose of Review Specify exactly what the Scrutiny Review should achieve and refer where possible to VFM issues of service cost, service performance and/or customer satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish an understanding of the work of Rural Community Councils • To receive information on the structure and organisation of ORCC • To establish a better understanding of the relationship between CDC and ORCC • To review and understand the funding arrangements • To determine whether the partnership provides value for money for Cherwell and meets the goals of both partners • To determine the extent to which the partnership meets the needs of the residents, businesses and parish councils in the rural areas
<p>Indicators of Success What factors/outcomes will demonstrate that this Scrutiny Review has been a success.</p>	<p>Improved service delivery from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the roles/relationships within the partnership • a clear statement of objectives and goals for delivery in 2010 (and beyond) • Clarity on the funding arrangements • Understand any contra indicators for partnership working and resolve a way forward • Produce a final report and agreed actions.
<p>Methodology/ Approach What types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee based Q&A sessions to interview CDC officers and ORCC staff • Site visits/public meetings to villages to seek views of rural communities • Briefing sessions on specific topics (e.g. funding) • Desk top review and interviews to identify alternative approaches and possible best practice
<p>Target body for Recommendations Executive, Council, Other/Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive/Council • ORCC
<p>Key dates Identify key meeting dates and any deadlines for reports or decisions</p>	<p>21 July ~ initial briefing from CDC (Grahame Helm re transport) and Chris Rothwell (re villages) Aug/Sept ~ visits to villages with Kevin Lerner & ORCC staff ~ topic based briefing sessions ~ interviews/meetings with other councils / groups using</p>

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	<p>ORCC services</p> <p>22 Sept ~ follow up briefing to review findings, financial data</p> <p>20 October ~ witness Q&A session with ORCC Chief Executive and CDC PfH and Strategic Director.</p> <p>November ~ report & recommendations to Executive/ORCC</p>
<p>Risks Identify any weaknesses and barriers to success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource constraints in CDC• Resource constraints within ORCC• Manage expectations and concerns of ORCC and public
<p>Witnesses/ Experts/ Site Visits Who, why and when</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CDC: PfH, Member Representative on ORCC, Strategic Director, Service Heads & Team Leaders, Finance• ORCC: Chief Executive and operational staff• Cherwell village representatives &/or public• Other councils / users of ORCC services• Other local authorities
<p>Publicity & Media Do we need to publicise the review to encourage community involvement? what sort of media coverage do we want? Fliers, leaflets, radio broadcast, press-release, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will this review be subject to a press embargo? No• CDC press contact: Craig Forsyth• Spokesperson for Scrutiny Review: Cllr Clarke
<p>Resources & Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• specialist staff• external support• consultation• research	<p>Expect to manage within existing CDC resources.</p>

<p>Completed by:</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>Approved by Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

ORCC Partnership Scrutiny – DRAFT PROJECT GRID

Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board: Cllrs Clarke, Ahmed, Billington, Cullip, Irvine, Mawer, Rae, Stratford, Strangwood, Tompson, Webb, Weir.

Timescale: July – October 2009

Scrutiny support: Catherine Phythian & Natasha Clark

Service area support: Chris Rothwell, Grahame Helm, Kevin Larner

No.	Key Task	Outcome	Milestones	Resources
To establish an understanding of the work of the ORCC				
To gain a better understanding of the relationship between CDC and ORCC				
To receive information on the structure and organisation of ORCC				
1.1	Initial briefing from CDC Officers	Good understanding of the work of ORCC and what it delivers for CDC	21 July	All members
1.2	Visit to ORCC offices & staff		August	Members Scrutiny Officer Kevin Larner ORCC staff
To review and understand the funding arrangements				
1.3	Detailed consideration of CDC funding support to ORCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of CDC funding to ORCC for last 5 years Details of comparative funding from OCC and other Councils 	Briefing meeting in Aug/Sept	Members Scrutiny Officer Finance Officer Rothwell/Helm/Larner
To determine the extent to which the partnership meets the needs of the residents, businesses and parish councils in the rural areas				
1.4	Detailed consideration of CDC rural issues as identified in Rural Strategy and Sustainable Communities Strategy	Identify key issues and concerns and the extent to which they are matched by the work of ORCC	Briefing meeting in August	Members Scrutiny Officer Community Planning Officer Rothwell/Helm/Larner

ORCC Partnership Scrutiny – DRAFT PROJECT GRID

1.5	Informal site visits to villages (3 or 4) from across the district <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve ward councillor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct evidence from members of public and rural residents regarding needs and experience of ORCC / CDC services 	17 August – 4 Sept	Members Scrutiny Officer Kevin Larner ORCC staff
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve Parish Council reps Speak to ordinary residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the issues of concern to the user groups in the district. 		
To determine whether the partnership provides value for money for Cherwell and meets the goals of both partners				
1.6	Review best practice, successful schemes in other areas.	Identify potential for replication of best practice at Cherwell.	Desk top survey July/August Briefing meeting in Aug/Sept	Scrutiny Officer Members Rothwell/Helm/Larner
1.7	Review the experience of other Oxfordshire Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison of CDC arrangements Identify areas for improvement / change 	Meetings in Aug/Sept	Members Scrutiny Officer Rothwell/Helm/Larner
1.8	Q&A session with ORCC Chief Executive, Pfh and Strategic Director	To discuss initial conclusions and draft report/recommendations	20 October	All Members

Meeting date	21 July	Aug	Aug	Aug/Sept	Sept	22 Sept	Early Oct	20 Oct
Topic	1.1 and 1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.7	All		1.8
Witnesses	Helm & Rothwell	Finance staff	Community Planning Manager	Public	Other Councils	N/A		ORCC Ch Exec Pfh Strategic Director
Present/ Expected	R&PSB					R&PSB		R&PSB



Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10 ~ as @ 22/07/09

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 13 October Invite PfH (Customer Service & ICT) to attend Head of Service has confirmed this as preferred date		✓			

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 5 January meeting PfH to attend and brief on progress on recommendations and developments on government consultation				✓	

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
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 15 September To note current position	✓				
RAF Bicester	OSC	Work programme item for 15 September Chairman to brief on current position	✓				

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

R&PSB: Resources & Performance Board

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