

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee



held at 7.00 pm on Thursday, 21 November 2013
at the Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Jim Halliday (Chairman), Charlotte Dickson (Vice-Chairman), Eric Batts, Tony de Vere, Debby Hallett, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Fiona Roper, Alison Thomson, Dudley Hoddinott and St John Dickson

Other councillors: Councillor Judy Roberts

Officers: Karen Brown, Susan Harbour, Liz Hayden, Graham Hawkins, Matt Prosser, Anna Robinson, Chris Tyson and Chris Webb

Number of members of the public: 25

Sc.57 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jason Fiddaman; his substitute was Councillor St.John Dickson.

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Webber; his substitute was Councillor Dudley Hoddinott.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Elaine Ware, the Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property; her items were represented by Councillor Matthew Barber, leader of the council.

Sc.58 Minutes

None for consideration at this meeting.

Sc.59 Declarations of interest

Item	Councillor	Reason
West Way Botley	Eric Batts	Adviser to Cabinet on the scheme
Community Safety Partnership	Charlotte Dickson	Father is the council's representative on the CSP board
Community Safety Partnership	St.John Dickson	Father-in-law is the council's representative on the CSP board

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Sc.1

Abingdon open air pool	Sandy Lovatt	Leader of Abingdon Town Council which also funds the pool
Abingdon open air pool	Julie Mayhew-Archer	Member of Abingdon Town Council which also funds the pool

Sc.60 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.61 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

The following members of the public spoke objecting to the proposed development at West Way Botley:

Mary Gill
Lorna Ferret
John Clements
Rev Graham Sykes

Peter Harbour from Friends of Abbey Meadow Outdoor Pool spoke in relation to the item about the outdoor pool.

Sc.62 West Way development, Botley

Councillor Eric Batts stepped down from the Scrutiny Committee for this item, and joined the Leader of the council, Councillor Matthew Barber, chief Executive David Buckle, and Strategic Director Matt Prosser, to answer questions on this item.

The points raised by members of the public and by members of the committee, and the responses to these, are addressed in the summary below: (Councillor Matthew Barber has undertaken to give full written responses to the points raised)

- This is a land deal for the council and full legal advice was taken on the processes;
- The vicarage and Field House are not proposed as part of the development by the council, they were put forward by Doric, the developer. They are not subject to compulsory purchase and it will be up to each land owner if they wish to sell;
- The developer will need to submit a planning application for this site. When this is submitted the council, as the local planning authority, will consult on the application;
- There is a clear distinction between the Cabinet as the land owner and the council as the local planning authority. The planning authority acts independently of the Cabinet and makes decisions based on planning merit in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Vale's planning policies;
- The council has dual responsibilities to both maximise its assets as a public body and also to cater for the needs of its local population;
- Of the options which Cabinet had before it for consideration, it needed to choose an option which it concluded would deliver community benefit and which also would be financially viable and deliverable;
- Councillor Eric Batts explained that his role was to advise the Cabinet in relation to community facilities especially Seacourt Hall and the library and to liaise between the parish and the Vale;

- The decision taken by Cabinet in December 2012 was one of land sale. The concerns which were now being raised were largely around Doric's planning proposals. Doric is expected to carry out further consultations as the developer and the council will consult as part of the planning process.

The scrutiny committee requested the following:

- Councillor Matthew Barber to clarify the site 1/2 map: when it was drawn up who it was presented to etc;
- Planning officers and planning committee to ensure that there is total separation between the strategic functions of the council, as exercised by Cabinet, and its role as the planning authority;
- Cabinet to inform the public and councillors about significant interaction with Doric;
- Cabinet to keep members properly and fully informed about this development, subject to the usual confidentiality rules;
- Cabinet to keep local members, and the public and the parish council involved where appropriate.

Sc.63 Community Safety Partnership

Liz Hayden, Service Manager Legal, Licensing and Community Safety, Karen Brown, Acting Community Safety Team Leader, Superintendent, Andy Boyd, (South and Vale Local Police Area Commander) and Councillor Bill Jones, Vale Council's appointee to the CSP attended committee for this item.

Role of Scrutiny Committee and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

- The relevance of Scrutiny Committee's input was queried. Comments can be taken back to the CSP for consideration. The Scrutiny Committee would, in this way, be able to have some influence on the next CSP plan;
- Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires the council to have a committee which scrutinises the CSP;
- The council's representative on the CSP is Councillor Bill Jones, and comments or suggestions from councillors concerning the partnership can be sent to him.

Questions, responses and issues raised during the course of the discussion

- Anti social behaviour incidents have increased by 27 percent over the last year, unclear whether this is due to better reporting or an increase in this kind of incident, however, all the issues have been resolved;
- All crime figures are now publicly available, it was requested that the CSP quarterly performance reports are published in the Vale Information Sheet and the parish newsletters;
- Crime in South and Vale is down by 40 percent in the last 10 years;
- The last government introduced significantly more offences to the statute books such as online harassment, cyber bullying and internet fraud;
- There had been a shift in resources towards dealing with cyber crime and similar and away from police on the beat;
- The Police and Crime Commissioner has agreed a three year funding formula with the CSPs;
- A significant proportion of personal impact crimes are committed by chaotic users of Class A drugs. A reduction in addiction levels is responsible for the fall in such crimes.

Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

- To publish the CSP quarterly performance report in the Vale Information Sheet and in parish information sheets;

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- To ask Councillor Bill Jones to strongly advocate early intervention work;
- To note the good work of the partnership;
- Support the CSP growth bid for two full-time equivalent officers to the Cabinet;
- To note the high quality of the report.

Sc.64 Interim leisure contract review (SOLL leisure)

Chris Tyson, Head of Economy, Leisure And Property, Chris Webb, Facilities Development Officer (Leisure) and Adrian Bidwell from Soll Leisure came to the table for this debate.

The committee wished to know whether its concerns raised in the annual review had been addressed.

- Both council officers and Soll Leisure were able to reassure the committee that communications between the two parties were improved and were more candid;
- Soll had not yet evidenced that their assessment should move from fair to good, however, Soll feel that they have a fairer chance of achieving a “good” score at the end of the year.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed regular meeting which were taking place between the council and Soll.

Sc.65 Abbey Meadows outdoor swimming pool and associated facilities

Chris Tyson, Head of Economy, Leisure And Property, Chris Webb, Facilities Development Officer (Leisure) and Adrian Bidwell from Soll Leisure came to the table for this debate.

Peter Harbour, from Friends of Abbey Meadows Outdoor Pool, spoke to the committee about the benefits of the pool and the role of the Friends group.

The committee discussed this item.

- Abingdon Town Council has paid some £43,000 towards the management and upkeep of the pool and associated facilities in 2013/14;
- It costs the Vale of White Horse District Council some £5,000 - 6,000 per annum towards the management of the contract and the upkeep of the pool and associated facilities;
- The condition of the pool surrounds and buildings is deteriorating, partly due to it being such an exposed site. The tank structure and finish is deteriorating at a faster rate than the buildings;
- This is a completely separate contract and is not part of the existing leisure contract;
- Lessons learnt from this summer’s operation will be carried forward to next year, such as ways of managing business on the busiest days.

Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

- Officers maintain contact with the Friends of Abingdon Outdoor Pool and with Abingdon Town Council;
- This item comes as an annual report to Scrutiny;
- Signage is erected with details of who to contact if there is a problem;
- Overcrowding issues on the interactive water feature are monitored.

Sc.66 Action List

To be discussed at next meeting on 28 November 2013.

Sc.67 Scrutiny work programme

To be discussed at next meeting on 28 November 2013.

Sc.68 Dates of meetings

To be discussed at next meeting on 28 November 2013.

Sc.69 Exclusion of the public, including the press

RESOLVED: that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(l) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

Abbey Meadow Outdoor Pool

(Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

West Way development, Botley

(Category 3)

Sc.70 Abbey Meadows outdoor pool and associated facilities (exempt)

The committee agreed to continue until 10.00 pm, the latest time allowed by the Vale's constitution.

This item was further discussed as a confidential item.

Sc.71 West Way development, Botley (exempt)

Councillor Judy Roberts asked questions of the Scrutiny Committee and the committee discussed this item.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet member and officers involve local members, providing confidential regular briefings for them.

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm