

# Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee



held on Thursday, 18 December 2014 at 7.00 pm  
at the Lockinge, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY

**Open to the public, including the press**

## **Present:**

Members: Councillors Jim Halliday (Chairman), Charlotte Dickson (Vice-Chairman), Tony de Vere, Debby Hallett, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Fiona Roper, Alison Thomson, Richard Webber and St John Dickson (In place of Jason Fiddaman)

Officers: David Buckle, Steven Corrigan, Adrian Duffield, Liz Fay, Susan Harbour, Anna Robinson and Chris Webb

Also present: Councillor Roger Cox (Cabinet member for planning) and Councillor Elaine Ware (Cabinet member for Economy, Leisure and Property)

Number of members of the public: 0

## **Sc.181 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Jason Fiddaman and Eric Batts. Councillor StJohn Dickson substituted for Councillor Fiddaman.

## **Sc.182 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 September, 25 September and 27 November 2014 were all accepted as an accurate record of those meetings and were signed by the chairman as such.

## **Sc.183 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Sc.184 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

There were no urgent items.

## **Sc.185 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee**

None.

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**Sc.1**

## **Sc.186 Action List**

Noted.

## **Sc.187 Preparation for the 2015 district, parish and parliamentary elections and progress on the elections action plan**

David Buckle, Chief Executive and also Returning Officer, and Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager attended the committee to present this item for scrutiny and to answer questions.

The purpose of the report presented was to review elections since 2012 and to prepare for the 2015 elections. Key points raised by the presenting officers were:

- The outsourced printing had created difficulties at previous elections, and a new print company had now been contracted to undertake the work. The new contractor had significant experience in this area of work.
- A project manager, based in Corporate Strategy, had been brought in to assist with the management of the elections.
- An external adviser had been contracted.
- All counts, for both councils, parishes and national elections would take place at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre in Abingdon.

In response to committee questions, officers made the following comments:

There were no systematic problems with postal votes but there had been some issues with the Royal Mail: processes were now in place to address these difficulties.

There were some glitches on the register which meant that a small number of electors had been allocated to incorrect wards: these were being updated.

The Committee:

- i. heard that the elections task group (consisting of Cllrs Halliday, Crawford, Tilley and Batts) which had been formed in Autumn 2012 had held meetings in 2012/early 2013 before reporting its conclusions to Leader and the leader of the opposition;
- ii. welcomed the actions taken to date by the elections team, and noted that these had addressed the issues highlighted by the task group;
- iii. noted that it was planned to check the new ward boundaries against the Geographic Information System (GIS) data and so ensure that individual houses were assigned to the correct ward;
- iv. noted that it was hoped to issue the new registers in February;
- v. noted that in future when letters were being prepared for mass circulation, the council's communications team would be asked to review the text to ensure that the meaning was clearly and simply explained;
- vi. noted that it was planned to use Capita to field election queries, and that Capita staff would pass the more complex inquiries to the elections team;
- vii. noted that "In Focus" would be used to keep councillors informed;
- viii. requested that a post-election report be brought to the September 2015 scrutiny meeting.

## **Sc.188 Abbey Meadows outdoor pool - review of 2014 season**

Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property and Chris Webb, Facilities Development Officer (Leisure) attended the committee to present this item for scrutiny and to answer questions.

It was noted that this facility would form part of the contract with the new contractors: GLL Leisure. In future, the Abbey Meadows outdoor pool would be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee as part of its review of the leisure contract.

The Committee was keen to identify issues which should be raised with the new leisure contractor before the start of the 2015 season. These included:

- i. the importance of the pre-season preparation phase;
- ii. the desirability of maintaining a stock of important consumables/parts;
- iii. the need for the contractor to monitor use of the water feature, to identify any instances of over-crowding, and to take appropriate action;
- iv. the need for the council to monitor advertising, cleanliness, monitoring arrangements, comments/complaints, user numbers, the availability of contact details - particularly during the 2015 season.

The Committee also asked the officers to facilitate meetings between the new operators and the Friends of the Outdoor Pool.

### **Sc.189 S106 Planning Obligations Monitoring Report 2014**

Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning development, Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning and Liz Fay, a planning policy officer, attended the committee to present this item for scrutiny and to answer questions.

The Committee welcomed the report and made the following points:

- i. there was a need to ensure that parish and town councils are clearly informed what unspent s106 funds were available for them to spend, and of any restrictions on particular s106 funds;
- ii. the term "secured" was not easy to understand, and urged the officers to find a more appropriate word - perhaps "identified";
- iii. it would be helpful to insert an additional column in the tables for Appendix 3 to identify the funds that were due to be received;
- iv. noted that section 106 and CIL will be included in the member training programme to be launched after the 2015 elections
- v. an updated monitoring report to be brought to a Scrutiny Committee meeting in autumn 2015.

### **Sc.190 Indicative Scrutiny work programme**

Noted.

### **Sc.191 Dates of meetings**

Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm