

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 24 November 2016 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Debby Hallett (Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Vicky Jenkins, Mohinder Kainth, Ben Mabbett, Chris Palmer and Judy Roberts

Officers: Ben Davis, Adrian Duffield, Andrew Maxted, Ron Schrieber and Will Sparling

Also present: Councillor Roger Cox

Sc.25 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alice Badcock and Monica Lovatt.

Sc.26 Minutes and actions arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 21: The Beacon, Wantage

In the recommendation, first bullet point, delete "performance plan" and insert "management plan".

Minute 23: Abingdon moorings policy

In the resolution, fifth bullet point, insert "land covered by the policy" between "some" and "lies".

Sc.27 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.28 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.29 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

None.

Sc.30 Neighbourhood planning district grant funding

The committee considered the head of planning's report which proposed a change to the amount of grant provided by the Council to communities preparing neighbourhood plans.

Councillor Roger Cox, the Cabinet member for planning policy introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Will Sparling, senior planning policy officer (neighbourhood), Andrew Maxted, planning policy project lead and Adrian Duffield, head of planning.

They reported that, at present, the grant provided to any community preparing a neighbourhood plan varied, depending on the size of that community. Following a reduction in Government funding, it was proposed to offer a grant of £2,500 to all constituted neighbourhood planning groups, subject to receiving a costed project plan.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- Most local authorities did not offer any grant funding to town and parish councils preparing neighbourhood plans.
- Once their area had been designated, neighbourhood planning groups would be encouraged and supported to apply for the full £9,000 of available government funding.
- Groups would be encouraged to apply for other sources of funding such as lottery funding.
- Subject to Cabinet's agreement, town and parish councils would be notified well in advance of the changes coming into effect at the start of the new financial year.
- It was not proposed to means test the grants. The cost in staff time of doing so would be disproportionate to the £2,500 grant.

The committee requested that the information on the grant funding should include a diagram setting out the process by which constituted neighbourhood planning groups could access council and other sources of funding.

Subject to the above the committee:

RESOLVED: to support the proposal to provide a £2,500 grant to constituted neighbourhood planning groups once a draft costed project plan has been received, the revised grant funding to take effect at the start of the 2017/18 financial year.

Sc.31 Local Plan 2031: Part 1 review and lessons learned

The committee considered the head of planning's report on the lessons learned from the preparation of the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 (LPP1).

Councillor Roger Cox introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Andrew Maxted and Adrian Duffield.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- The precise costs of preparing the LPP1 were not known but the budget for the policy team, including budgets for evidence studies, was approximately £1m per annum. There would be a more structured approach to resource management for Part 2.

- There would be a more thorough recruitment process for both council and agency staff for Part 2 and a customised staff induction process.
- Whilst there had been problems with the online consultation system during LPP1, alternative options were limited due to the restrictions imposed by government regulations.
- It was the officers' view that the greatest risks to Part 2 were external factors such as changes in government policy.
- The Government's response to the Local Plan Expert Group's report was still awaited.

RESOLVED: to note the lessons learned from the preparation of the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 as detailed in the report.

Sc.32 Consultation and Communication Strategy for Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2

The committee considered the head of planning's report which set out the Council's draft consultation and communication strategy for the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options.

Councillor Roger Cox introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Ben Davis, planning policy officer, Andrew Maxted and Adrian Duffield.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- There had been positive feedback to the regular updates produced for the Local Plan Part 1.
- The preferred options consultation would provide the main opportunity to comment but members were welcome to contact officers at other times.

The committee requested the following changes to the draft timetable for consultation:

- Botley to be added to the locations for manned exhibitions between March and April 2017.
- The location of the market stall event in Wantage to be clarified.

RESOLVED: to request the Cabinet member for planning policy to make the amendments detailed above to the draft consultation and communication strategy for the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

Sc.33 Statement of Community Involvement

At its meeting on 28 July 2016, the committee had considered and commented on the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as part of the public consultation. A further report was submitted to this meeting setting out changes proposed in the light of responses received during the consultation.

Councillor Roger Cox introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Ben Davis and Adrian Duffield.

The committee made the following comments:

- The council's response to Oxfordshire County Council's comments on the pre-application stage had been omitted from the report.

- The glossary of terms should include definitions of major and minor planning applications.
- A website link to details of all town and parish clerks in Part 3 of the SCI needed to be amended.

Members also raised a number of formatting issues and were assured that these would be resolved prior to publication of the final document.

Subject to the above comments, the committee welcomed the revised Statement of Community Involvement which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 2 December 2016.

Sc.34 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee was advised that, since the publication of the work programme, a meeting of the joint scrutiny committee had been scheduled for 30 January 2017. It was also likely that a report on the corporate development plan would be submitted to the scrutiny committee on 26 January.

Further to the discussion at the previous meeting on how the committee could be more actively involved in the budget setting process, it was agreed that Councillors Hallett, Palmer and Roberts should consider this matter further and report back with proposals.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm