![South Oxfordshire District Council | Vale of White Horse District Council](logo)

Listening Learning Leading

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 30 January 2017 at 6.30 pm
at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present:
Members:
South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Richard Pullen (Co-Chair), Toby Newman, John Walsh, Ian White.
Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Debby Hallett (Co-Chair, in the Chair), Alice Badcock, Debby Hallett, Mohinder Kainth, Ben Mabbett, Chris Palmer.

Officers: Andrew Down, Susan Harbour and Suzanne Malcolm

Also present: South Oxfordshire District Councillor Lynn Lloyd, Councillor Mike Murray and Councillor Robert Sharp

Sc.38   Notifications of substitutes and apologies for absence

South Oxfordshire District Councillor David Dodds gave his apologies for the meeting.

Sc.39   Minutes and actions arising

The minutes of the meetings held on 31 and 15 November 2016 were agreed as accurate records and were signed by the Chair as such.

Sc.40   Declarations of interest

South Oxfordshire District Councillor Ian White declared a conflict of interest in the Five Councils Partnership item as his partner is the Cabinet member who was in attendance at the committee. He stepped down from the committee for this item.

Sc.41   Urgent business and chair's announcements

None notified.

Sc.42   Statements, petitions, questions from the public relating to matters affecting the scrutiny committee

None.

Sc.43   Five Councils partnership update

South Oxfordshire District Councillor Ian White stood down from the committee for this item.

The Cabinet members, Lynn Lloyd (South) and Robert Sharp (Vale) were in attendance, together with Andrew Down, head of HR, IT and technical services. They introduced the report on the Five Councils partnership update and answered questions from the committee. The committee were invited to note the contents of the report.

The committee discussed this item.

Concern was raised about the recommendation that the committee "note" the contents of this report. Members felt that more specific questions should be asked of the report. However, the joint scrutiny committee does not have any role in the formal governance of the contract: this is the remit of the Five Councils Partnership Scrutiny Committee.

The services of the councils were still in the transition phase and many services were still running as they were previously. HR and IT were the most advanced in the transformation process.

Following the first six months of operation, the Interim Chief Operating Officer is working on reviewing the effectiveness of the five council's partnership governance and confirming boundaries of responsibility between retained services, joint client team and contractors.

Final reports back from the contractors were due by the end of January on three specific performance issues:
- Delay in payment of councillors expenses in December: more detail was needed regarding what measures had been put into place to prevent a recurrence.
- Agresso reporting issues: further information was required from Capita.
- IT network failure: a detailed interim report had been received, but more work needed to be done.

"What we expect from our suppliers and what our suppliers expect from us" is a dynamic which is still being developed and the Cabinet members are confident that this is going in a positive direction.

The Cabinet members reported that officers were undertaking a lot of hard work to ensure the effectiveness of the relationships with the contractors and the success of the contract.

Work undertaken by officers of the council, on matters which are the contractors' responsibility, is recharged to the contractor at full cost as appropriate.

There are some transition and snagging issues which are being addressed.

Where new IT systems are being implemented, such as the successor to Agresso; Windows 10 and other systems, rigorous user acceptance testing will be taking place. These systems are also being used elsewhere.

Capita had issued two profit warnings in 2016. Scrutiny members wanted to know if there was a back up plan if Capita were to fail. The Cabinet members would investigate and respond to the joint Scrutiny committee.

There are robust governance arrangements in place to manage the contracts. A senior management board of the chief executive officers from the partnership councils haw regular formal and informal meetings. There are quarterly meetings of the Five Councils' Partnership Joint Committee and there will also be meetings at least once a year of a Five Council's Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The committee asked what the benefits were of being the first councils in the contract to "go live", where we have the role of smoothing out the path for the other partners. There were no specific benefits of going first other than the savings benefit of a longer partnership.

Most changes to IT and phones are a case of transferring existing systems across to a new network and servers. If there are any risks with changing the accounting system, these will be flagged and implementation will be delayed if the councils are not satisfied that the new systems are demonstrably ready to go live.

Some councillors were unclear on the boundaries of responsibility and asked for clear guidance. All members were asked to use the formal escalation process through the customer services client team for all of the different types of services which are being provided. If the escalation process is not used, then the matter may well not get logged and patterns will be missed.

What is the feedback from the retained staff on how they feel about the effect of the contract?
Frustration over the quality of the HR service and the IT network. There is currently no systematic method of measurement of impact on retained staff.

Why were the issues, raised in paragraph 9 of page 12, of boundaries not resolved in the Heads of Terms agreement? There are different understandings of the agreements; it is also the case that things are sometimes different in operation to how they were envisaged.

The Councils have retained responsibility for setting fees and charges, including car parking charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues for the Five Councils' Joint Committee or Five Council's Joint Scrutiny These to be addressed in the report to the 5CP scrutiny
- Review of the implementation progress against plan
- KPI tracking and monitoring, what's the development process for these… do they give us the information that we need? How do we develop these
- Financial savings against plan
- Lots 1 and 2, how they could deliver savings in the future.
- Clarification of the details of the boundaries of responsibility between the contractors, the client team acting for all five councils and retained services within each of the partners.
- Address the frequency of meetings of Scrutiny 5CP and determine what is appropriate.
- Scrutiny training for members of the 5CP.

Cabinets
- How is the impact on retained staff of the Five Councils Partnership being monitored?
- What is the plan if one of the contractors was to fail as company?

Sc.44   Broadband

The Cabinet member for Vale, Councillor Mike Murray was in attendance, together with Suzanne Malcolm economic development manager. They introduced the report on Broadband.

The committee were invited to:
- comment upon the roll-out of superfast broadband in the districts
- make recommendations to the relevant cabinet member in terms of any further intervention.

The project has broadly been successful, aided by government money. Now looking for what is the scope of what needs to be done to address remaining gaps in coverage. How many premises will still not be served by broadband across South and Vale and what the cost is to deliver to these premises (may depend on location and topography). Average cost per premise in phase one was £844 and in phase two was £2,418. There is a need for cost benefit analysis in addressing the remaining premises, particularly if aiming for 100 per cent connectivity. There may be some more complex solutions for the final premises. BT are currently modelling the remaining premises and these are being modelled in different bands of intervention level and cost per premise.

Point of clarification on the report. Paragraph 10… a further £5.58 million (not £2 million) reflected in appendix one, Oxford LEP added £2 million to the programme. The overall total added in December 2015 was £5.58 million.

A total of £10.68 million investment was made in phase two, following the £25 million investment in phase one to raise the connectivity.

The local economy has a heavy reliance on small and medium sized enterprises many of which are home based and reliant on good broadband speeds. The purpose of this project is to enable these enterprises to work efficiently and effectively and to grow locally.

The project has been delivered by the "Better Broadband" team at Oxfordshire County Council with whom officers have worked closely to ensure effective spend of the councils' investment.

The committee discussed this item.
- disappointment was expressed that the Cabinet member for South, or a substitute was not present
- inclusion of 5G and other types of future proofing
- a question was raised as to whether putting the additional public money in has increased the speed at which BT would have enabled the work to be done. The response was that BT only put the money in because the other partners were at the table, it wouldn't have been commercially viable for them otherwise
- before Phase 2 is launched, the project officers were aware of which areas BT and other providers were planning to service commercially in the following three years
- there has been a take up in excess of 40 per cent in Oxfordshire, which is double the national average. This will entitle Oxfordshire County Council and the district councils to clawback some funds under the gainshare scheme agreed with BT.

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- the purpose of the project is about enabling premises with superfast broadband to support operation and growth of the small and medium sized enterprises sector in the rural economy.
- users have to upgrade their current packages and pay additional costs to their service providers to get the superfast packages.
- the project operates on an open infrastructure which is owned by Openreach but is accessible and can be used by anyone. Openreach also take on the maintenance.
- cashback from any savings from the councils' investment in phase two will come back to the district councils.

There were no further recommendations from Scrutiny on this item.

Sc.45   Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The clerk outlined the upcoming work programme

RESOLVED

- To include a new column explaining what was required for each report.
- To re-instate the action log for all scrutiny meetings.
- To write to the relevant Cabinet members before each Scrutiny committee, on behalf of the Chairman, requesting that they attend the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm