

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Tuesday, 9 March 2021 at 6.00 pm



This was a virtual meeting

View the recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Nathan Boyd (Chair), Jerry Avery, Ron Batstone, Cheryl Briggs, Hayleigh Gascoigne, David Grant and Max Thompson

Officers: Pat Connell, Adrian Duffield, Simon Hewings, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Lucy Murfett, Adrianna Partridge, Margaret Reed and Melanie Smans

Also present: Cabinet members: Councillors Andrew Crawford, Helen Pighills, Emily Smith and Catherine Webber.
David Hutton QC – Bevan Brittan LLP

Sc.104 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Debby Hallett, who was due to present. Councillor Emily Smith was in attendance to present the item on a Joint Local Plan.

Committee member, Councillor Jerry Avery, informed the committee that he had a clash with a Parish Council, so he attended for part of the meeting only.

Sc.105 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.106 Urgent business and chair's announcements

Chair had no urgent business but ran through the usual meeting housekeeping.

Sc.107 Public participation

None.

Sc.108 A joint local plan

Councillor Emily Smith introduced the report on a joint local plan.

Also present to answer questions was Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning, and Lucy Murfett, Planning Policy Manager.

This was a paper regarding the principle of have a joint local plan, not a discussion on the governance.

A joint local plan would be worked on over the next 4 years, whilst the current local plan is in place. The plan would cover 2021 to 2041. However, there was housing allocation already planned up until 2031. The housing allocation for the joint local plan would be for long term.

Both Vale of White Horse (VOWH) and South Oxfordshire (SODC) district councils have Corporate Plan similarities and shared boundaries. Both councils had already worked jointly, so are already set up for joint working in the future. This will be simpler for policy and would save money.

Neighbourhood plans would remain an important aspect of planning and community involvement.

A joint plan may have the perception of being less democratic. However, under a Section 28 arrangement, both councils retain their decision-making powers for respective districts.

The Local development scheme timeline needed approving. A key public consultation will be in summer 2022.

Councils would expect to see savings, especially at the examination of the joint plan, as the examination costs can be cut by sharing.

To date, around £1 million per year was spent on local plan preparation.

Committee were asked for their views on the principle, and the cabinet member would consider them.

Chair highlighted that the confidential advice provided previously could not be discussed at this meeting.

The following comments and clarifications were made:

- The difference between a section 28 and a section 29 arrangement was explained. Section 28 enabled both councils to have separate planning committees. The downside was potential delays. A section 29 arrangement would require formation of a new committee, including Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). This would likely be a faster process but would require relinquishing some power.
- It was confirmed that the Local Development Scheme timetable could be subject to delays, especially relating to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and confidence was unknown at this stage.
- Section 28 arrangement would mean there would be separate planning committees.
- The committee enquired about whether a joint plan can be split in the future – was there a point of no return? Officers responded that there was opportunity to split the plan up to the Regulation 19, but once submitted it would be harder to do so. This would also cause delays and increased costs for examination.
- If one council decided to withdraw from the joint plan, they would be without a plan, and the other council could continue with the plan.
- SODC judicial review - it was hard to anticipate the impact. However, any delay would not impact on creating a joint local plan.
- Concerns of residents regarding localness – there was opportunity to create sub areas, district specific policies to reassure.
- There are national examples of success – West Country, North Devon/Torridge, Plymouth / SW Devon, Greater Cambridgeshire. All used a section 28 agreement. Some in Lincolnshire used Section 29.
- Use of neighbourhood plans and localised policies can't be in conflict with the local plan / strategic policy.
- There will be a live issues and risk register – with monthly updates and flags to the steering group and relevant cabinet members.
- The Arc's spatial framework was new ground – the government have started engagement on a vision.

- Committee want to ensure no erosion of democracy – tied to the Government White Paper. This would have no bearing on having a joint plan.
- Confirmed that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 needed to move forward.
- Officers added that the new Corporate Plan is a trigger for scoping a Joint Local Plan, the timing was ideal.

The committee felt that a section 28 arrangement was less complicated. It was confirmed by officers that supplementary planning documents (SPD's) can still be separate but must hang off the Joint Local Plan policies.

The committee offered no recommendations but provided the cabinet member with the views above.

Sc.109 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

Chair reminded the committee that a new version had been published and circulated. There was a delay to the A34 item and it was hoped to see the item by the end of the year. If there were any queries or ideas for the plan, please contact the chair.

Sc.110 Exclusion of the public

The committee had to consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Resolved: to

Exclude the press and public to consider agenda items 8 and 9 in confidential session.

Sc.111 Leisure management overview

The committee considered the report on leisure management overview.

Sc.112 Covid-19 leisure support package

The committee considered the report on Covid-19 leisure support package.

The meeting closed at 7.17 pm