

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 24 July 2014 at 7.00 pm

at The Lockinge, The Beacon (formerly Wantage Civic Hall), Portway,  
Wantage, OX12 9BY



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

### Present:

Members: Councillors Jim Halliday (Chairman), Charlotte Dickson (Vice-Chairman), Eric Batts, Tony de Vere, Debby Hallett, Sandy Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Alison Thomson, Richard Webber, Yvonne Constance (In place of Fiona Roper), Bill Jones (In place of Mohinder Kainth), Margaret Turner (In place of Jason Fiddaman) and Elaine Ware

Officers: Kate Arnold, Jayne Bolton, Adrian Duffield, Susan Harbour, Paul Holland, Clare Kingston, Anna Robinson, Chris Tyson and Mark Williams

Also present: Councillor Roger Cox (Cabinet) and Councillor Mike Murray (Cabinet)

Number of members of the public:

### Sc.132 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies	Substitute
Councillor Jason Fiddaman	Councillor Margaret Turner
Councillor Mohinder Kainth	Councillor Bill Jones
Councillor Fiona Roper	Councillor Yvonne Constance

### Sc.133 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17 April were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the chairman as such.

### Sc.134 Declarations of interest

Councillor Charlotte Dickson is a trustee of the Wantage Independent Advice Centre and withdrew from the room while the item, which concerned their grant funding from the district council, was discussed.

Councillor Bill Jones is the father of the above and withdrew for the same item.

## **Sc.135 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

Members of the committee were reminded about the upcoming IT training for councillors and about the request for IT FAQs.

There would be no meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in August, but there would be two in September: 18 and 25 September 2015.

## **Sc.136 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee**

None.

## **Sc.137 Action List**

The committee received the action list from March and June. Committee members had requested to see a demonstration of the cameras and audio equipment on the Biffa lorries. These had yet to be installed and committee members would be notified when these were installed and invited to a demonstration.

## **Sc.138 Revenue grant to Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice Bureau and The Independent Advice Centre, Wantage for 2013/14 - 2016/17**

Tom Fox, Director of South and Vale CAB, Richard Dudding, vice chair of South and Vale CAB, Clare Kingston, Head of Corporate Strategy, and Jayne Bolton, Grants Team Leader attended the meeting. The representatives from the CAB gave a report on the last year since the merger of the CABx at Abingdon, Didcot, Henley and Thame, to form the South and Vale CAB.

- The South and Vale CABx have branches in Abingdon, Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford;
- The CABx has not been able to align their user figures with the Wantage Independent Advice Centre's figures, because they are required to use NACAB (National Association of CABx) figures;
- The service charges would be higher in the new premises at Abbey House than they had been at Old Abbey House, although the CABx; representatives were not sure what these would be. They were concerned that this would add a significant cost increase over last year;
- The caseload and type of work is similar across districts, although there are differences between the urban and rural areas;
- There has been an increase in parish and town council donations.
- Increased opening hours of the Abingdon office by using a supervisor based in another location using Skype;
- Standardised job descriptions, compensation and conditions for salaried staff;
- Maintained turnover of paid and volunteer staff at pre-merger levels;
- Extended the program of personal budgeting workshops to whole area;
- The CABx are budgeting for a deficit year: this is partly due to salary increases and pension provisions; increased service charges associated with the move and deferred costs in Abingdon due to preparation for the move. Last year's reorganisation impacted on other issues such as fundraising.

### **Action points**

- Cabinet member to look at the service charges to remove uncertainty;
- CABx to pursue fundraising;
- CABx to produce figures on average parish usage and to use this as leverage to request more money from the parishes.

*Councillors Charlotte Dickson and Bill Jones left the meeting.*

The representatives from the CABx stood down from the table.

Geoff Hamer, Chair of Wantage Independent Advice Centre (WIAC) and Wendy Watson, the Centre Manager came to the table.

- The representatives from the WIAC described the work of the centre, and responded to questions from the committee.
- There are two full time equivalent staff and 90 volunteers working at WIAC;
- WIAC ask for donations from neighbouring parishes;
- WIAC have yet to consult Oxfordshire County Council on the military covenant as a possible funding stream;
- There are high levels of social housing in Wantage and Grove and there are no council offices in Wantage and Grove, unlike Abingdon.

### **Actions**

- For next year, the committee would like to see a profile of users by parish showing their financial contribution;
- WIAC were asked to pursue parish contributions with evidence of usage and also to pursue funding through the military covenant scheme.
- Both the CABx and WIAC were asked to harmonise their terminology for reports and to work towards making profiling compatible across organisations for next year.

*Councillors Charlotte Dickson and Bill Jones re-entered the meeting.*

## **Sc.139 2013/14 performance review of Soll Leisure**

Adrian Bidwell, Contract manager for SOLL Vale came to the meeting to answer questions from the Scrutiny Committee. He was accompanied by: Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Economy, Leisure and Property, Chris Tyson, Head of Economy, Leisure and Property and Kate Arnold, Leisure Services.

The committee discussed some detail of the performance and the contractor feedback. However, there were no action points as this was the end of the contract.

### **Resolved:**

- The committee thanked SOLL for its ten year partnership with Vale of White Horse District Council.
- The committee recommended the assessment of "Good" to the Cabinet member.

## **Sc.140 The consultation draft of the Vale of White Horse air quality action plan (AQAP)**

## **Sc.141 Local Plan Update**

Mike Murray, Cabinet member for the local plan, and Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning attended the committee to provide an update on the local plan and to answer questions from the committee.

- The Cabinet member considered that the council would need to be able to demonstrate an extremely good reason to depart from its objectively assessed needs.
- If the council did depart from the above, it would need to ask neighbouring authorities to assist in the delivery of housing numbers.
- A co-operation agreement would need to be sought with neighbouring authorities in the case of the above, and would be subject to scrutiny from these authorities under the duty to cooperate.
- The requirement for the number of houses in Vale of White horse is within the range of the national average.

## **Sc.142 Scrutiny work programme**

Noted.

## **Sc.143 Dates of meetings**

Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm