

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Wednesday, 6 July 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 (Chair), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Katie Finch, Vicky Jenkins, Monica Lovatt, Ben Mabbett, Chris Palmer and Judy Roberts

Officers: Adrian Duffield, Andrew Maxted and Ron Schrieber

Also present: Mike Murray

Number of members of the public:

Sc.1 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

None.

Sc.2 Minutes and actions arising and referral

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April were agreed as accurate and were signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- The recording of Cllr Katie Finch's apologies and Anna Robinson's attendance.

It was also noted that the committee had requested that, in future, the annual review of the council tax reduction scheme should be a brief summary rather than a detailed report.

There were no actions arising or referrals.

Sc.3 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.4 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.5 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

None.

Sc.6 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee considered its current work schedule together with a spreadsheet produced by the chairman which set out some principles for scrutiny and a list of potential items for consideration by the committee.

A wide ranging discussion on the future direction of the committee took place during which it was agreed that:

- The committee would seek to be more proactive rather than simply responding to Cabinet reports;
- The committee would seek to establish a closer, more constructive relationship with the Cabinet and Cabinet members;
- The feasibility of establishing “task and finish” groups to undertake in depth reviews of appropriate policies services or issues should be explored;
- The issue of consultation be added to the workplan.

Sc.7 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1

Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy including the local plan, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions was Andrew Maxted, interim planning policy project lead.

The committee considered three documents:

- A report setting out the main implications and next steps in taking the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 forward.
- An appendix detailing the Inspector’s proposed Main Modifications.
- A paper providing responses to questions submitted by the committee in advance of the meeting.

Members expressed concerns about the late circulation of the first two of the documents which gave them insufficient time to assimilate detailed information in advance of the meeting.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, the Cabinet member reported that:

Main Implications and next steps

- Subject to the Inspector’s formal acceptance of the proposed main modifications, the public consultation to be carried out during the summer would be extended for up to two weeks outside of the maintained school holidays.
- The Cabinet member believed that the Inspector’s suggestion that the Local Plan Part 2 would determine the quantum of Oxford City’s unmet housing need was helpful insofar as it enabled Part 1 to progress. It was anticipated that the Oxfordshire Growth Board would quantify this unmet need in the autumn.
- If the Local Plan Part 2 was not adopted within two years of the adoption of Part 1 then the council would no longer have a five year housing land supply.
- The Government required local planning authorities’ local plans to meet national standards and not exceed them. Some modifications had been made to meet this requirement.
- The Local Plan was a living document which would need to be updated in the light of changes to national planning policy and government guidance.

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Sc.2

- The Inspector supported the council's green belt allocations but did not support the unallocated site review.

Main Modifications

- The Main Modifications were proposed by the Inspector. Therefore, whilst the committee might wish to see clarifications or amended wording, the Cabinet member did not consider the benefit of making changes to the text outweighed the risk of delaying the adoption of the plan.
- The reduction in the number of properties arising from the removal from the Plan of three strategic site allocations at East Hanney and Harwell Campus did not need to be addressed in Part 1 but could be addressed in Part 2 if the Council wished to consider this.
- The revised Monitoring Framework referred to in the schedule of main modifications but not attached to the current version of the Main Modifications Schedule would be included in the final, published document. NB: the Revised Monitoring Framework was included within the Strikethrough Plan and thus available for Scrutiny Members to review if they wished to.
- The recruitment of two planning officers on six month agency contracts to provide additional capacity with regard to progressing Local Plan Parts 1 and 2 simultaneously would be funded by savings in salaries elsewhere.
- The cost of producing the Local Plan Part 1 had not been calculated.

Conclusions and lessons learned

A member expressed the view that many of the public concerns arising from the public consultation on the Local Plan: Part 1 could have been avoided if there had been a prior consultation on the green belt. The Cabinet member's response was that this would have extended the process considerably. The Council's proposed changes to the Green Belt were consulted on in detail during the Housing Delivery Update consultation (Feb 2014) and the Pre-Submission Consultation (Nov 2014).

In response to a question about the lessons learned from the process, the Cabinet member reported that:

- It had been worth spending as much time as possible preparing for the examination.
- By frequently consulting informally it had been possible to respond to public concerns more speedily. For example, two bulletins had been published recently, in addition to the formal stages of Local Plan consultation, that provide an update on progress of the emerging Local Plan 2031: Part 1 and a brief outline of the preparation of Part 2, with bulletin no.3 being published shortly.

He concluded by stating that the Plan had been produced remarkably quickly given the numerous recent changes to national planning policy. The council was ahead of most south-eastern local planning authorities in the process of getting Part 1 adopted. .

RESOLVED: to

- (1) note the report;
- (2) request the Cabinet member to take the committee's comments into account.
- (3) request that future planning policy projects are costed separately.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm