

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 28 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 (Chairman), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Katie Finch, Vicky Jenkins, Monica Lovatt, Ben Mabbett, Chris Palmer and Judy Roberts

Officers: Jayne Bolton. Ben Davis, Adrian Duffield, Clare Kingston and Ron Schrieber

Also present: Councillor Elaine Ware

### Sc.8 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

None.

### Sc.9 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2016 were agreed as accurate and were signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 6. Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings  
In third bullet point, insert a comma between “policies” and “services”

Minute 7. Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2013: Part 1  
Under Main implications and next steps, fifth bullet point, insert “be” between “to” and “updated”.

### Sc.10 Declarations of interest

None.

### Sc.11 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

There was no urgent business.

The Chairman reported that:

- If members noticed any typographical or grammatical errors in any of the committee documents, they should notify democratic services outside of the meeting.
- The vice-chairman, Alice Badcock, would be leading on the committee work programme. (see also Minute 15 below).

## Sc.12 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

None.

## Sc.13 Capital and New Homes Bonus grant schemes

Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for grants, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions was Jayne Bolton, grants team leader.

The report set out the impact of the new capital and new homes bonus (NHB) grant policies introduced in 2015 and listed further amendments to the policy and procedure that the cabinet member intended to make following feedback from area committee members and the grants team.

The committee noted that the number of organisations applying for capital and/or NHB grants had risen from 25 in 2014/15 with 36% awarded the full request, to 34 in 2015/16 with 68% awarded the full request.

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

- the proposal to allocate the capital grant budget to each area committee at the start of the financial year rather than after each round of funding would mean that the area committees would know, from the start of the process, how much money they would have to spend.
- the majority of applications covering more than one area committee were from organisations operating across the Vale of White Horse.
- whilst the threshold of £1,000 for capital grant applications might exclude some organisations, a balance had to be struck between the amount applied for and the officer time spent in processing the application. Those seeking smaller amounts could seek funding from their parish council.

One of the proposed policy amendments was that organisations applying for a capital grant either owned the property or had a lease with at least ten years left on the term. Whilst understanding the reasons for this, a member asked the Cabinet member and officers to bear in mind that, in some parts of the district, such leases were difficult to obtain.

Following further discussion, it was the committee's view that, rather than allocating funding to three area committees for them to make awards, the process should be simplified with one budget and one member body making the awards.

### **RESOLVED:** to

- (1) note the combined performance statistics for the capital and new homes bonus grant schemes set out at appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to request the Cabinet member for grants to make the following amendments to the policies and procedures:
  - under policy amendments, third bullet point, delete "multiple committees" and insert "more than one area committee"
  - under procedure amendments, add the following: " on rejection of an application, the applicant be given feedback on what they should do in order to obtain a positive outcome in future."
- (3) to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that, in order to simplify the process, authority to award community grants be delegated to a single council-wide committee or panel from a single fund.

## **Sc.14 Statement of Community Involvement**

Roger Cox, the Cabinet member for planning policy had submitted his apologies. In his absence, Ben Davis, planning policy officer introduced this item. Also present to answer questions was Adrian Duffield, head of planning.

The committee considered the updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which was out for public consultation. As the consultation fell within the school holiday period it had been extended until 14 September, in accordance with the commitment set out in the draft SCI.

During the ensuing discussion the committee made the following comments on the draft SCI:

### **General comments**

- The consultation document should be reviewed before the final version is published to ensure that language is as user-friendly as possible.
- A glossary of terms should be added to each part of the SCI.
- Any footnotes should be on the relevant page rather than at the end of the document.
- A separate user guide on planning applications should be produced.
- A monitoring (measurement) system should be established to ensure that public engagement is effective

### **Specific**

#### **SCI Part 1**

- Page 4, Ease of access to information, bullet point 2: the feasibility of a dedicated planning service facebook/twitter account for consultations on planning policy documents and major planning applications should be explored.
- Page 4, Ease of access to information, bullet point 5: delete “ and how your comments have been taken into account” and insert “and will provide feedback on your comments”.
- Page 5, Where can I view planning documents? bullet point 8: delete “Westgate Library, Oxford” and insert “Oxford Central Library, Castle Quarter”.

#### **SCI Part 2**

- Page 5, Who do we consult?: the list of statutory consultees to be publicly available.
- Page 15, All consultation reports and statements should be accessible at a specific location on the Council website.
- There should be a separate section on neighbourhood plans.

#### **SCI Part 3**

- Page 6, What is a pre-application? second paragraph: delete “ any pre-application advice” and insert “any pre-application advice letter”.
- Page 6, amend heading to read “Who might be involved in the Development Forum” rather than “ Who will be....”
- Consideration be given to how the Development Forum fits into the planning application process (see flowchart on page 5, and narrative on page 6). The flowchart mentions a ‘developer forum’; and it is not clear whether this is the same as a Development Forum mentioned on the next page.
- Page 7, Neighbour notification letter: criteria used to determine who may be directly affected by a proposal to be set out as examples.
- Page 7, Site Notice: delete last sentence of paragraph 4.
- Page 7, Email alerts. Use a full link rather than a ‘click here’, which doesn’t work from a printed copy of the SCI.
- Page 8, Neighbourhood notification consultation: bullet point list to be included to show when wider consultation may be carried out.
- Page 11, Does it matter what I think?: title to be deleted and paragraph to be moved to precede “What types of comments are taken into account” on page 10.

- Page 12, The paragraph setting out the Council's policy on enforcement to be added together with information on how to report a breach of planning conditions and the contact details for the customer services team
- Page 13-16, Consideration to be given to adding social media as another column for publicity in Appendix 1 of Part 3
- Page 13, a new box for social media – facebook/twitter account to be added for consultations on major planning applications.

**RESOLVED:** to request the Cabinet member for planning policy to take the committee's comments, detailed above, into account as part of the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement.

## **Sc.15 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings**

The committee considered its current work schedule which would be updated to reflect recent changes to Cabinet membership and portfolios.

The committee advised that the Government response to the Local Plans Expert Group report would not be published by September, as previously anticipated. Accordingly it was agreed to remove this item from the 29 September agenda.

Alice Badcock reported that she had agreed with the chairman that she would lead on managing the work programme and would be submitting details of potential items to future meetings. She requested members to contact her with their suggestions for possible topics.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm