

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 22 September 2016 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 (chairman), David Dodds, John Walsh, and Ian White

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Debby Hallett, Mike Badcock (in place of Alice Badcock), Monica Lovatt and Ben Mabbett

Officers: Gerry Brough, Clare Kingston, Ron Schrieber and Chris Webb

Also present: Councillors Anna Badcock (SODC), Charlotte Dickson and Mike Murray (VoWH) and Ben Whaymand, Steve Hercus and Jamie Coleshill (GLL)

Sc.17 Notifications of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

- South Councillor Toby Newman
- Vale Councillor Alice Badcock; substitute Mike Badcock

Sc.18 Minutes and actions arising

The committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 2 August 2016 were an accurate record and the Chairman signed them as such.

Sc.19 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.20 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None.

Sc.21 Statements, petitions, questions from the public relating to matters affecting the scrutiny committee

Need not Greed Oxfordshire had registered to address the committee (see Minute 23 below).

Sc.22 2015/16 performance review of GLL

The committee considered the report of the head of corporate strategy setting out the performance of GLL in delivering the joint leisure management contract in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Chris Webb, facilities development officer (leisure), introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Anna Badcock and Charlotte Dickson, South and Vale Cabinet members for leisure, Clare Kingston, head of corporate strategy, together with GLL representatives Ben Whaymand, Steve Hercus and Jamie Coleshill.

The committee noted that GLL had achieved an “excellent” performance rating in meeting its key performance targets (KPTs) and an overall assessment of “good”. It congratulated GLL on its performance.

In response to questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- A range of concessions were available to leisure users.
- As Vale facilities joined GLL in September 2014, the maximum term of membership to the end of the reporting year was 19 months which impacted on the average length of stay for members (KPT6). However, it was anticipated that this figure would increase over the course of the contract.
- Annex B to the report detailed the actions being taken in the current year to address the areas for improvement identified.
- Following concerns expressed in the customer satisfaction survey regarding the quality of food and drink, the catering operation had been brought in-house at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre with effect from 1 January 2016.
- Progress on carbon reduction schemes was detailed in the report and were included in the KPTs.

Members suggested that, in future, there should be one annual customer satisfaction survey on leisure facilities rather than separate but similar GLL and councils’ resident surveys.

RESOLVED: to recommend the Cabinet members for leisure to award a “good” performance rating to GLL for its performance in delivering the joint leisure management contract in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse in 2015/16.

Sc.23 Update on Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) refresh process

John Gordon, representing Need not Greed Oxfordshire, addressed the committee as follows:

“Need not Greed Oxfordshire believe the time has come for our Local Authorities to take full responsibility for the overall growth figures in the revised SEP 2016.

We are deeply concerned at the 'pass-the-parcel' game being played by OxLEP and our District and County Councils, with each blaming the other for the inflated and unrealistic targets for employment and housing.

We believe this Plan sets very damaging and unrealistic growth targets which would radically change Oxfordshire's communities and environment - today, you - our elected representatives, have the opportunity to have your say.

- Do you genuinely believe we can create 85,000 jobs by 2031?
- Do you genuinely believe we can build 100,000 houses by 2031? Are you prepared for the consequences when this target isn't met and we see an increase in the speculative development that is already blighting so many of our communities?
- Do you genuinely think the development currently proposed will solve the affordable housing issues we have in the County?
- Do you genuinely think that Oxfordshire, the most rural county in the south-east, is the right place to accommodate a 30% increase in population by 2031?

If your answer to any of these questions is NO, we urge you to speak out against OxLEP's Strategic Economic Plan as currently drafted at today's meeting.

Need not Greed Oxon want to see an alternative approach to growth in our county.

We are calling for a review of the economic growth figures and by association the housing figures, for the county outlined in the revised SEP Refresh, in the light of:

1. The implications of Brexit.
2. The social and environmental constraints – i.e. not just 'how much growth can we get' but also 'how much growth can our infrastructure, services and environment absorb'.
3. A re-consideration of the priorities for action – i.e. how to provide affordable housing for existing local residents, rather than seeking to attract ever more people into the area making the jobs versus housing balance worse.
4. Genuine public consultation on the future vision for Oxfordshire.

As our elected representatives, will you take a stand today and help force re-consideration of these overly aggressive and unrealistic growth targets that make no allowances for Brexit and that take little account of environmental and social impacts?"

He requested that, at the very least, both Councils should have a full discussion on OxLEP's refreshed SEP.

On behalf of the committee, the chairman thanked Mr Gordon for his statement.

Gerry Brough, interim head of development and regeneration, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions was, Mike Murray, Vale Cabinet member for economic development.

The committee considered a report on the process for producing a refreshed Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). Gerry Brough also gave a presentation on the SEP.

The presentation stated that many of the issues highlighted during the consultation period had now been addressed. However the document would have been stronger if:

- more detail had been provided to indicate how the strategy intends to build on strengths, address weaknesses, exploit opportunities and respond to threats,
- the proposed actions were more directly linked to the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats,
- a clear indication was provided of where the main responsibility lies for implementing these proposed actions, and
- the spatial dimension was articulated in more detail to provide a more County-wide perspective, rather than the current Oxford-centric perspective

The committee expressed concern at the fact that an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, including utilities, energy and flood alleviation action plans, was not due to be produced until the spring of 2017. Members expressed the view that this document should have been published prior to the SEP.

The presentation also detailed a number of issues which, in the officer's view, were still unresolved. In addition, members raised the following issues:

- The SEP was too narrowly focussed, failing to take into account the impact of major developments close to but outside Oxfordshire e.g. Haddenham and Princes Risborough.
- The map detailing Oxfordshire's growth corridors (Figure 10) was unhelpful since it covered most of the County apart from Thame and Chinnor.
- The continuing problems of broadband connectivity in both districts had not been addressed.
- The response rate from the business sector to the document had been extremely disappointing.
- A risk register should be included as an appendix to the SEP.
- Future educational infrastructure requirements should have been addressed in more detail, especially in connection with how this supports the job market and skills agenda,

The committee noted that a paper summarising the SEP was due to be submitted to both South Oxfordshire's and Vale of White Horse's October Cabinet meetings for their consideration, comment and endorsement (either full or qualified). However, it was the committee's view that the Cabinets should defer their responses pending consideration of the SEP by both Council meetings.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the timetable for production of a refreshed Oxfordshire SEP.
2. To welcome the officer presentation and to request both Cabinets to take into account the issues highlighted together with the committee's comments when considering the SEP.
3. To request both Cabinets to defer their responses to the SEP pending its consideration by both Council meetings.

Sc.24 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee considered its current work schedule and noted that there was likely to be a meeting in November to consider a draft communications strategy.

It was agreed to add the following items to the workplan:

- South and Vale Committees: Broadband connectivity
- Joint Committee: Unitary status

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm