

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Tuesday, 15 November 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), Toby Newman, John Walsh, Ian White and Jeanette Matelot (in place of David Dodds)

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Debby Hallett, Alice Badcock, Mohinder Kainth and Chris Palmer

Officers: Jayne Bolton, Patsy Cusworth, Clare Kingston and Ron Schrieber

Also present: Councillors Anna Badcock (SODC) and Matthew Barber (VoWH)

Sc.32 Notifications of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

- South Councillor David Dodds; substitute Jeannette Matelot

Sc.33 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.34 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None.

Sc.35 Statements, petitions, questions from the public relating to matters affecting the scrutiny committee

None.

Sc.36 Communication Strategy

The committee considered the report of the head of corporate strategy on a proposed joint communication strategy for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

Anna Badcock and Matthew Barber, South and Vale Cabinet members for communications, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Clare Kingston, head of corporate strategy, Jayne Bolton, communication and grants manager and Patsy Cusworth, principal communications officer.

This, the first joint communication strategy for both councils, set out the structure, aims and objectives for communicating with the councils' audiences. Cabinet members emphasised the importance of:

- developing a consistent co-ordinated communication strategy;
- using social media to engage with the public whilst continuing to use more traditional methods to communicate with those who are unable to or choose not to use new technology; and
- strengthening relationships with local media.

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

- New council websites were being developed and user acceptance testing would be included in the development process;
- Current evaluation of the effectiveness of communications was via the annual customer survey and the monitoring of the councils' twitter accounts. The intention was to introduce key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of particular campaigns;
- Once the strategy was approved, the level of resources required would need to be reviewed;
- It would not be possible to provide a 24 hour/7 day service responding to social media requests for information and complaints. However, whenever there were critical incidents such as flooding or snow, frequent updates were provided via social media and the council websites to keep residents informed and this would continue to be the case. .

Following further discussion, members made the following suggestions:

- Councillors should be offered social media training;
- Councillor web pages on the new council websites should enable them to provide more information to their constituents;
- If possible, there should be a local government portal giving access to both district and county websites; and
- More information on responses to freedom of information requests and complaints/code of conduct resolution should be published.

The committee welcomed and endorsed the proposed joint communication strategy.

Sc.37 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 late January 2017 to consider a report on commuted sums and affordable housing.

The committee agreed to request that officers/cabinet members submit a report on the corporate services contracts.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm