

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 30 November 2017 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), Mike Badcock, Ed Blagrove, Vicky Jenkins, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Chris Palmer and Judy Roberts

Officers: Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, Emily Hamerton, Ron Schrieber, Mark Stone and Sally Truman

Also present: Councillors Matthew Barber, Roger Cox, Jenny Hannaby, Bob Johnston and Emily Smith

Sc.36 Apologies for absence

None.

Sc.37 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

Sc.38 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.39 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.40 Public participation

None.

Sc.41 Planning procedures

The committee considered the report of the head of planning services which detailed changes made to planning procedures in August 2016 and June 2017 and their effect.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Scrutiny Committee minutes

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Sc.1

Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Adrian Duffield, head of planning services and Emily Hamerton, development manager, planning.

Councillors Jenny Hannaby and Bob Johnston, members of the Planning Committee, attended for this item. They expressed the view that the changes had been beneficial. In particular, members being able to ask public speakers questions of clarification had improved public perceptions as speakers felt that they were being listened to.

In response to members' questions, the committee was informed that:

- The number of planning applications had increased by 309 from 2015/16 to 2016/17 but the number determined by the committee had fallen from 178 to 90 during this period.
- Whilst the number of applications determined by the committee had halved, there had only been a slight reduction in the number of committee meetings which meant that the committee had more time to consider the major and most contentious applications.
- 26.7% of applications determined by committee in 2016/17 had been called in by councillors compared with 3.7% in 2015/16.
- The reason for each application going to committee was now being logged so that more accurate comparative data would be available in future.
- Officers continued to work with parishes on the new procedures. Training sessions had been provided for parish councillors and clerks.

Councillor Sandy Lovatt, Planning Committee Chairman, expressed the view that new procedures meant that local ward councillors were now working more closely with parishes. They also acted as an incentive for councillors who were not committee members or substitutes to receive planning training so that they could advise parishes on what were material grounds for calling in an application.

Following further discussion, it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED: to

1. note the report;
2. recommend to the head of planning services that all future reports to Planning Committee should set out in the introduction the reasons why they have been referred.
3. advise the Cabinet member that the committee is satisfied that the changes to planning committee procedures have had a positive outcome and welcome the closer working with parishes that has resulted.

Sc.42 Corporate delivery plan - progress report

The committee considered the report of the head of corporate services on the corporate delivery plan and progress made against actions in the plan. The committee reviewed the progress made to date with a view to providing feedback to Cabinet who would consider the report in February 2018.

Sally Truman, policy, partnerships and engagement manager, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions was Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the Council.

The committee considered the progress report and thanked the officers for the clear way in which the information was presented. For the next progress report in June 2018, the committee requested that:

- the start and end dates of each activity should be set out more clearly;
- links to supporting performance management documentation should be included, where appropriate;
- the main issues were highlighted with supporting information as to why any actions were not on track; and
- if possible, the information should be circulated to the committee two weeks prior to the meeting to enable councillors to identify the key issues and the heads of service they would wish to attend.

RESOLVED: to note progress against actions in the Corporate Delivery Plan and ask the Cabinet to take the committee's views into account.

Sc.43 Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan

The committee considered the report of the head of devolution and government on a proposed joint spatial plan for Oxfordshire.

Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the Council, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Andrew Down, head of devolution and government and Adrian Duffield, head of planning services.

Councillor Barber gave a presentation that had been made to the Oxfordshire Growth Board on the proposed housing and growth deal for Oxfordshire, as announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budget speech.

He reported that, through the deal, Oxfordshire would be required to commit to:

- The submission and adoption, subject to the inspection process, of a joint statutory spatial plan (JSSP) covering all five district councils in Oxfordshire, by 2021
- Plan for and support the delivery of 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 – backed up with a credible plan for delivery, outlining interim milestones and targets as agreed with the Homes and Communities Agency and Government

In return, the Government would agree to provide Oxfordshire with a comprehensive funding package of up to £215m to secure this ambitious housing and growth deal, as follows:

- Up to £60m for affordable housing, provided this delivers sufficient value for money to be agreed in the forthcoming delivery plan
- Up to £150m funding for infrastructure to unlock key housing sites, to be administered £30m per annum for five years
- £5m resource funding to boost capacity to get a joint plan in place and support housing delivery, and

As part of the growth deal, the Government promised to explore options to grant Oxfordshire certain time-limited planning flexibilities, subject to consultation where appropriate.

The first milestone in the agreement was the preparation of a statement of common ground by 31 March 2018.

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Sc.3

In response to members' questions, the Leader reported that:

- The housing and growth deal had not specified whether the JSSP was to be prepared under Section 28 or 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. He strongly favoured seeking an Oxfordshire JSSP under Section 28 as this was simpler, allowed greater flexibilities and gave ultimate power for deciding where development was planned, to each local planning authority.
- He did not consider funding of up to £150m particularly generous given that it was to be shared amongst the Oxfordshire districts over a five year period.
- The 100,000 new homes by 2031 included those already planned for so represented a relatively small increase.
- However, a firmer commitment was needed from Government than currently offered, including confirmation that any requirement to deliver additional housing would not be counted against the Vale's five year housing land supply.

It was the committee's view that the preparation of an Oxfordshire JSSP would help to fulfil Oxford City's unmet housing need.

Following further discussion, it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED: to advise Cabinet of the committee's view that, in order for the housing and growth deal to be acceptable:

1. The Oxfordshire joint statutory spatial plan must be prepared under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. There should be clear evidence of benefits for both Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.
3. Any motion to Council would need to provide further detail of what the Government would provide in return for the Oxfordshire councils' commitments.

Sc.44 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm