

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 14 June 2018 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), Chris Palmer (Vice-Chairman), Mike Badcock, Robert Hall, Vicky Jenkins, Sandy Lovatt, Ben Mabbett and Judy Roberts

Officers:

Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, James Gagg, Holly Jones, Suzanne Malcolm, Adrianna Partridge, Ron Schrieber and Melanie Smans

Also present:

Councillors Roger Cox, Jenny Hannaby and Mike Murray

Sc.1 Apologies for absence

Councillor Matthew Barber submitted apologies.

Sc.2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 January and 8 February 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

Sc.3 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.4 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The chairman:

- welcomed the new members appointed to the committee at Annual Council and congratulated Chris Palmer on being appointed vice-chairman.
- gave a brief presentation on the committee's roles and responsibilities as set out in the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules.

- gave a brief presentation on how to find, access and use the committee's Sharepoint site.

Sc.5 Public participation

Gene Webb addressed the committee regarding sports and leisure facilities in Faringdon and the use of S106 monies.

The chairman asked her to send a written version of her statement to officers in order that an appropriate response could be prepared.

Sc.6 Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy

The committee considered the report of the head of planning on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS).

Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for partnership and insight, introduced the report. Also present to answer questions were Andrew Down, head of partnership and insight, Adrian Duffield, head of planning, and James Gagg, transport planner (lead).

The committee was informed that OxIS was an Oxfordshire Growth Board commissioned project involving all six Oxfordshire local authorities. Its purpose was to identify, map and prioritise Oxfordshire's currently known strategic infrastructure requirements to 2040 and beyond. It was not a statutory document but provided evidence that could shape and influence local plans and service providers.

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

- OxIS was a living document which was subject to review.
- There was an overlap with Local Plans insofar as OxIS helped identify key infrastructure projects linked to proposed development. However, it did not replace the requirement to provide a more detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support each Local Plan as it came forward.
- The identification of key infrastructure projects and criteria used for scheme prioritisation helped enable bids to be made for Government funding as and when the opportunity arose.

The committee considered the scoring applied to the criteria used for scheme prioritisation and some members expressed the view that too much weighting was given to the provision of additional housing relative to that awarded to education and health and social care schemes. Officers reported that the criteria did put the emphasis on growth as, in particular, this was in line with where funding opportunities were currently available (e.g. Growth Deal, Housing Infrastructure Fund). They also pointed out that housing projects would generate funding for schools and community benefits via S106 agreements and the community infrastructure levy. The criteria could be reviewed but any changes would need to be agreed by the Growth Board.

The committee noted that the Stage 2 OxIS report had been subject to public consultation prior to endorsement by the Growth Board. However, a member expressed the view that the number of responses to the consultation had been disappointingly small given that the strategy applied to the entire county. She asked officers to circulate a breakdown of the responses to committee members for information.

Following further discussion, the committee:

RESOLVED: to recommend the Cabinet member for partnership and insight to ask the Growth Board to:

- 1) ensure that the assessment criteria used for scheme prioritisation in any OXIS updates met the needs of the users of the strategy; and
- 2) assess the ways in which any further consultation is carried out and public engagement is maximised.

Sc.7 Business and Innovation Strategy Action Plan 2017 to 2020 Update

The committee considered the update report of the head of development and regeneration on the business and innovation strategy (BIS) action plan 2017 to 2020.

Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for development and regeneration, introduced the report. Also present to answer questions were Suzanne Malcolm, head of development and regeneration and Melanie Smans, economic development manager.

The committee was informed that the vast majority of businesses in the district were small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In order to gain a better understanding of them and their priorities, Lichfields were appointed to prepare a BIS which analysed the SMEs in the district and which recommended a series of practical steps to maximise the impact of the council's business support interventions from 2016 to 20120.

In response to members' questions, it was reported that:

- This was a progress report on the first year of a three-year action plan so there was much work still to do.
- However, of the 20 actions in the plan, 19 were on track or completed. The outstanding action, "Proactively promote SME career opportunities", would be progressed over the next six months.
- A customer relationship management system was being used to track interactions with individual businesses and monitor outcomes.

Members welcomed the BIS action plan and the progress made to date. A member suggested that the feasibility of establishing a website identifying employment opportunities within the Vale of White Horse be investigated.

RESOLVED: to recommend to the Cabinet member for development and regeneration, that the feasibility of establishing a website identifying employment opportunities within the Vale of White Horse be investigated.

Sc.8 Self-assessment

Adrianna Partridge, head of corporate services, informed the committee that, following discussions with the chairman, she would be circulating a self-assessment questionnaire to members

Responses would be used to shape a tailored development programme for members and substitutes on the committee and to improve the support officers gave to committee members.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Scrutiny Committee minutes

Sc.9 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee noted its work programme.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm