

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 26 July 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, Sandy Lovatt, Ben Mabbett, Yvonne Constance (In place of Vicky Jenkins) and Emily Smith (In place of Judy Roberts)

Officers: Dylan Evans, Suzanne Malcolm, Ron Schrieber, Sally Truman and Jodie Wales

Also present: Councillors Alice Badcock, Roger Cox, Mike Murray, Helen Pighills and Elaine Ware. David Chong-Ping, Mel Research.

Sc.18 Apologies for absence

Councillors Matthew Barber, Vicky Jenkins (substituted by Yvonne Constance) and Judy Roberts (substituted by Emily Smith), submitted apologies.

Sc.19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

Sc.20 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.21 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The Chairman reported that:

- As the chief executive was unable to attend tonight's committee, she had agreed to defer consideration of agenda item 9, self-assessment questionnaire, to a future meeting.
- Subject to the committee's agreement, agenda item 8, Abingdon redevelopment - Charter area, would be taken in confidential session in order that the committee could consider the relevant confidential individual Cabinet member decision.

Sc.22 Public participation

None.

Sc.23 Vale of White Horse Residents' Survey 2018

The committee considered a report and presentation from MEL Research summarising the findings of the Vale of White Horse Residents' Survey 2018.

Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council, introduced the report and presentation. Also present to answer questions were David Chong-Ping, MEL Research, Sally Truman, customer engagement manager, and Jodie Wales, community engagement officer.

The committee was informed that residents' attitudes towards the work of the council were generally positive and much better than national averages. However, there were a number of areas where the reputation of the council had decreased with the largest drop in satisfaction regarding the council providing value for money. The committee noted that, whilst two thirds of residents agreed that they felt informed, residents aged 55 to 64 were less likely to feel informed than those in other age groups.

In response to a member's question, Councillor Cox reported that one of the purposes of the survey was to identify issues where the council needed to do more.

The committee discussed a number of issues arising from the survey, including:

Affordable housing: Given the high cost of local housing, members were surprised that 51% of residents agreed that they could buy or rent housing that met their needs in the Vale of White Horse. As a proportion of respondents would be homeowners who were not looking to move, it was suggested that the question should be amended to ask about "your or your family's needs".

Enforcement: Street parking should be added to the list of issues for which the importance of the council pursuing enforcement is asked.

Waste: Whilst residents' satisfaction with the waste and recycling service was still very high, it had reduced since the last survey.

Timing: Consideration should be given to undertaking the survey in the spring rather than in January.

The committee placed on record its thanks to all council staff for their work which had contributed to the generally excellent survey results. Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED: to

1. note the report and presentation; and
2. recommend that Cabinet consider:
 - improving communication, particularly with the older age groups;
 - investigating the reasons for the decrease in satisfaction with the waste and recycling questions; and

- amending the survey questions regarding affordable housing and enforcement.

Sc.24 Abbey Meadow Progress Review

Councillor Mike Badcock stood down from the committee and took no part in the consideration of this item which was within his daughter's portfolio, as the Cabinet member responsible for community services.

The committee considered the report of the head of community services which reviewed the progress of the Abbey Meadows improvement projects, namely: the outdoor swimming pool and changing room refurbishment, the play area and the Abbey Meadow toilets.

Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet member for community services, introduced the report. Also present to answer questions were Councillor Elaine Ware, the portfolio holder when the project was agreed, and Dylan Evans, active communities manager.

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

- There was provision in the improvement project budget for the accessible ramp and fence works.
- The project board provided overall guidance on the direction of the project to ensure that it remained on brief. However, the board was an informal body without any executive powers.
- A solution for the improvements to the toilets had been agreed and the build was scheduled for a September start. The final approved designs included a Space to Change accessible toilet that provided a wheelchair – accessible toilet that also included an adult sized changing bench and a hoist.
- The council received over 3,200 responses to the public consultation with 81% voting for option A – A place to swim and play.
- In 2011, the main priority was to keep the pool open and this was achieved via funding from Abingdon Town Council. This funding ceased in 2014 when the district council again subsidised the pool. The funding for the outdoor swimming pool refurbishment works was achieved via a separate capital growth bid approved at full Council in February 2017.
- Of the seven improvements identified in addition to the core facility improvements, all but the enhanced splash pad – changing provision, and an electrical supply for a mobile ice rink, had been delivered.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED: to

1. to note the report; and
2. to recommend Cabinet to apply the good practice of community engagement in the Abbey Meadows improvements to future council projects.

Sc.25 Self-assessment questionnaire

Consideration of this item was deferred to a future meeting.

Sc.26 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee noted its work programme.

Sc.27 Exclusion of public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Sc.28 Abingdon redevelopment - Charter area

The committee considered the report of the head of development and regeneration on the history of regeneration plans for the Charter area and the potential for redevelopment.

Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for development and regeneration, introduced the report. Also present to answer questions was Suzanne Malcolm head of development and regeneration.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm