

Notes

of an informal meeting of

Joint Scrutiny Committee

members

held on Tuesday, 16 November 2021 at 6.00 pm

Virtual meeting

This meeting was live streamed.

Watch the recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evZFm2G2Wfs>

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Members:

South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Alexandrine Kantor, David Turner, Ian White (Chair)

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Nathan Boyd, Andy Cooke, Andy Foulsham, David Grant.

Officers: Emma Baker, Karen Brown, Harry Barrington-Mountford, Diane Foster, Liz Hayden, Rona Knott, Candida Mckelvey and Adrianna Partridge

Also present: Cabinet members, Councillors Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Debby Hallett and Helen Pighills. Superintendent Lis Knight.

NOTES

Sc.58 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Hayleigh Gascoigne and Kate Gregory. Substitute members present in place of the absent members were Councillors Andy Foulsham and Alexandrine Kantor respectively.

Cabinet member Councillor Ann-Marie Simpson also sent her apologies. She was due to present at today's meeting on the Joint Statement of Community Involvement item, but Councillor Debby Hallett as Vale Cabinet member was present to introduce the report.

Cabinet members Councillors Maggie Filipova-Rivers (South) and Helen Pighills (Vale) were both present to introduce the item on the Community Safety Partnership.

Sc.59 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.60 Urgent business and chair's announcements

Chair (Councillor Ian White) informed the committee that he had discussed the sewage and pollution task and finish group with the Chair of Vale scrutiny. Due to the item being of concern to both districts, the group would be a joint effort. The chair would be inviting scrutiny members to participate, envisaging around 6 or 7 members to complete the group. The first meeting would include formation of a terms of reference, including the relevant officers to advise.

Sc.61 Notes of the last informal meeting

The informal notes of the meeting on 13 July 2021 were noted by committee, and no amendments were raised.

Sc.62 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

Chair updated the committee on the work programmes for South and Vale. Note that the up-to-date versions were published on our websites today. Recent changes included:

The Joint Scrutiny meeting on 28 February had been moved to 31 January 2022, for review of a future waste services item. The GLL items expected in February were being moved to the next meeting, dates to be confirmed, but reports should be ready by the June meeting, which may be moved forward if possible. The performance report would be a joint meeting, but separate meetings for the leisure covid support package for South and Vale would be held.

The Vale scrutiny meeting on 25 November 2021 had since been confirmed as formal. There were other additions, but with no firm dates yet.

Councillor Hallett added updates to the Cabinet member delegation on the programme for Vale – Councillor Hallett will be added as responsible for the A34 item. Councillor Bethia Thomas would be added to the Planning Enforcement Statement.

Sc.63 Public participation

None.

Sc.64 Community Safety Partnership report

Councillor Helen Pighills introduced the report, as Cabinet member for Vale.

Superintendent Lis Knight from Thames Valley Police was present to help answer any questions. Officers present were Liz Hayden, Head of Housing and Environment, Karen Brown, Community Safety Team Leader and Diane Foster, Licensing and Community Safety Manager.

Cabinet member Councillor Filipova-Rivers (for South) was also present to help answer queries.

The report was regarding the work of the Partnership during 2021-21.

The committee asked questions. The committee were informed that further in-depth questions on the Police service could be answered at an upcoming presentation to Councillors.

Main discussion was around different types of terrorism to be aware of such as misogyny. Superintendent added that on terrorism, the police had very clear reporting for different types of hate crime.

South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council – Joint Scrutiny Committee minutes

The new Domestic Abuse Act was mentioned and the duty of training services on the subject. Officer responded there would be work with Oxfordshire County Council. Councillors were pleased with the sanctuary work for domestic abuse.

There was discussion regarding educating children on exploitation and how effective it was. Officer responded that the project was piloted in a number of schools in Abingdon and Didcot and the children tested their knowledge on the topic. The schools had asked for a continuation of the project as they found it useful. It was viewed as important to evaluate the effectiveness and ensure such projects had a positive impact and not the reverse of the aims.

Discussion on rural crime – the 30% decline in South Oxfordshire was commented on. Superintendent added that a rural crime coordinator was employed to monitor and record crime rates.

A member discussed whether there was feedback on services received, and an officer responded that surveys were issued where appropriate, but some choose to not engage further.

The committee were very pleased with the work of the CSP and felt that the work should be publicised more and have its profile raised.

Resolved:

The committee were in agreement with the recommendations in the report.

Committee noted the progress that the South and Vale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) made in 2020-21 in delivering its priorities and statutory functions.

The committee supported the CSP's view that the 2021-22 plan will continue to deliver core priorities and statutory functions and focus on these three key priorities:

1. tackling domestic violence and abuse, including early intervention to reduce harm and improving services for victims
2. working with vulnerable people and children to reduce the likelihood of being exploited
3. reducing serious youth violence, knife crime and harm and vulnerability caused by drugs and alcohol.

Cabinet members, officers and Superintendent Knight were thanked for their input. The report was viewed as excellent.

Sc.65 Consultation on the draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This report was introduced by Vale Cabinet member Councillor Hallett. Officers Rona Knott and Harry Barrington-Mountford were present to support.

The Joint SCI was required due to plans to have a joint local plan. It will be a similar format, but an emphasis on digital engagement. 109 people responded to the 6-week consultation. The feedback presented was positive. The officer response was detailed in the report, including suggested changes. This will be presented at Cabinet.

In the discussion, it was suggested that an easy read format should be part of this, and that shortening the document could help some. Plain English was mentioned, reduction of jargon or technical language.

Cabinet member added that all comments are considered in the report and added that a future consideration could be for an email to be sent to tell consultees what happens next after submitting their views. Officers added that future considerations were for an executive summary, and a review of repetition. Potentially removing internal process details that are not needed in the report.

South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council – Joint Scrutiny Committee minutes

Another suggestion was to add some diagrams as appendices, to make the document more manageable.

A view was expressed that it was more difficult for planning items to be consulted on digitally, due to the equipment needed to view. Committee was reminded that corporate priorities and the climate emergency mean digital was the way forward. Some areas prefer digital, so it was difficult to meet every need.

Consultation length was discussed, and Harry Barrington-Mountford responded that the length should be in line with the complexity and length of the document being consulted on (as per Cabinet Office recommendation). Therefore, a conversation could be had offline regarding appropriate length of consultation.

Cabinet member reminded that planning was a regulatory and legal process and not entirely democratic, but we could change language to empower people to have an influence on decision making despite the limits of regulation and law.

Resolved:

The committee considered the consultation on the draft Joint SCI and provided their views.

The committee were satisfied that they had reviewed the following recommendations within the report:

- (a) To consider the outcome of the public consultation on the joint SCI.
- (b) To review and consider some suggested amendments to the joint SCI.
- (c) To provide any comments to inform the final joint SCI for adoption.

The meeting closed at 7.37 pm