

Minutes of a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE on Monday 21 January 2019

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Committee members:

Councillor Gant (Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Curran

Councillor Donnelly

Councillor Simmons

Councillor Kennedy

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Bely-Summers

Councillor Djafari-Marbini

Councillor Lygo

Councillor Tanner

Officers:

Carolyn Ploszynski, Planning Policy and Place Manager

Stefan Robinson, Scrutiny Officer

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Transport

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fry, Kennedy and McManners. Councillor Tanner was substituting for Councillor McManners.

75. Declarations of interest

None.

76. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded the Committee that the date of this meeting had had to be changed to accommodate the process of developing the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, in parallel with Oxfordshire's other authorities. The document before the Committee at this meeting could not have been made available earlier; this was regrettable but unavoidable.

77. Minutes

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2018 as a true and accurate record subject to correction of a typographical error.

78. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Officer spoke to the Committee's Work Plan and Forward Plan. The item on the Oxford Living Wage was being brought forward to the April meeting of the Committee in the current absence of other items for that meeting. The Fusion Lifestyle Audit Report had been added to the agenda for the March meeting.

79. Report back on recommendations

The City Executive Board, at its meeting on 18 December, had considered the Committee's recommendations in relation to the impact of the Westgate Centre and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. The Board's response to both was before the Committee. The Chair was pleased to note the Board's broadly positive approach to the recommendations. He went on however to note that the Chair of the Board had been disappointed with the tone to the Westgate report which was seen as disproportionately negative about its impact and of its focus on the Oxford Living Wage in particular. The Committee made a number of detailed comments about the Board's responses to the 4 recommendations which he would feedback to the Board on the following day.

80. Reports from Scrutiny Committee Standing Panels

Councillor Simmons introduced the report and recommendations of the Finance Panel concerning Social Value in procurement, for submission to the City Executive Board on 12 February 2019. The Committee endorsed the report and its recommendations.

81. Joint Statutory Spatial Plan

Councillor Tanner left during this item.

The CEB, at its meeting the following day, would consider a report on the emerging Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) and which sought, in particular, to seek approvals to progress the production of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 through adopting the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI); approving an amendment to the Local Development Scheme; and approving the Regulation 18 (Part 1) document for consultation. The item provided the Committee with an opportunity to make recommendations to the Board if it wished.

Since publication of the report some minor additions had been made to it, details of which had been distributed in advance of the meeting. A copy of the paper detailing these additions is attached to these minutes.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the development of the JSSP was a requirement of the Growth Deal to which all of Oxfordshire's District Council and the County Council were signatories.

The Committee addressed the recommendations of the report in order.

Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The Planning Policy and Place Manager said the SCI before the Committee had been subject to consultation and the amendments made to it as result were shown as tracked changes. Equal weight had been given to each of the 38 respondees to this phase of consultation. In discussion about the changes to the list of those who would be consulted it was explained that the current wording sought to meet legislative requirements, include specific organisations where required as well as overarching categories of organisation, which, collectively would ensure that all relevant bodies could and would be consulted. The sheer number of individual organisations across the County made it impractical to list them all individually. The Committee noted that there might be merit in recording, separately, a list of all those bodies that the Council proposed to consult which could be made available, for example, via the Council's website.

Amendment to Local Development Scheme (LDS)

The Board Member for Planning and Transport said the proposal to introduce an additional consultation phase would be accommodated within the previously agreed LDS timetable. The additional phase should result in a more effective consultation process overall and which would not be overtaken by a too early focus on locations for growth. There was a shared recognition that uncertainty about the Oxford-Cambridge expressway would be unhelpful when it came to discussion about broad locations for growth at the next stage.

Regulation 18 issues consultation document

The Chair reminded the Committee of the document's focus on 5 aspirations each accompanied by draft objectives. Councillor Simmons had prepared paper in advance of the meeting which suggested how the Committee might wish to start framing recommendations to the CEB. At its heart was concern at the lack of ambition in the proposed consultation document, with no recognition of the 'mega trends' that will impact on the County over the next 30 or more years and a disconnect between the aspirations and objectives within the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and those stated elsewhere. It would be a matter of regret if it was not possible to recast the document at this stage in a way which was closer to what the Council knew what it wanted to see as an end product.

The Scrutiny Officer had distilled the contents of Councillor Simmons's suggestion as follows:

That the City Executive Board works with the six partner authorities to rewrite the aspirations and objectives set out in the Regulation 18 consultation document to be more ambitious and consistent with international, national and local policies and targets concerning climate change. This should include:

- a) *A greater recognition of the importance of climate change, and its relationship with the forward planning of our housing, transport, health, wellbeing and economic infrastructure.*
- b) *A greater recognition of the 'mega-trends' that are expected to affect the demographic, climatic and technological environment, for example.*
- c) *A 'SMART' target for greenhouse gas reductions against which all the aspirations and objectives are judged.*

This then formed the basis of the subsequent Committee discussion.

Members of the Committee made a number of detailed observations, including the desirability of making explicit reference to the importance of social housing in the Housing Context section.

The Planning Policy and Place Manager and Board Member for Planning & Transport pointed to the practical difficulties of seeking substantial changes at this stage (given the need for all the other authorities involved to agree). The observations being made by the Committee would, however, provide a valuable contribution as *responses* to the proposed consultation. The document provided sufficient 'hooks' on which to raise the points being raised once the consultation was underway and a number of examples were given. The document was drafted with open questions in a way which gave space to meet the prospective needs of all those likely to participate. It would not be desirable for the consultation to seem to be closing down options at this stage.

The Chair expressed frustration on behalf of the Committee at the limits on the extent to which it appeared to be able to recommend changes to the document at this stage. This was particularly so given the Committee's scrutiny function. At the same time he recognised the practical difficulties consequent upon a process requiring the simultaneous agreement of 5 other authorities.

It was agreed however that the CEB could be recommended to make some minor amendments and points of clarifications where it is felt the hooks are ambiguous. This could be recommended to CEB in line with recommendation 4 of the CEB report (ie ...necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments..) to accommodate some of the Committee's views. The Scrutiny Officer to draft a recommendation for submission to the CEB in line with this agreement .

82. Dates of future meetings

The next meetings of the Scrutiny Committee and its panels are scheduled as follows:

Scrutiny Committee

- 05 February 2019
- 05 March 2019
- 02 April 2019
- 15 May 2019

Standing Panels

- Housing Standing Panel: 4 March, 8 April
- Finance Standing Panel: 4 April, 01 July
- Companies Panel: 6 March

All meetings start at 6.00 pm

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 5 February 2019

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