

VALUE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 12 September 2011

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Brown (Chair), Seamons (Vice-Chair), Abbasi, Gotch, Humberstone, Keen, Malik, McCready, Rowley, Royce, Van Nooijen and Williams.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alec Dubberley (Democratic Services Officer), Tim Sadler (Executive Director for City Services) and Pat Jones (Principal Scrutiny Officer)

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

No apologies for absence were received.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Abbasi and Malik declared personal interests in item 6 (minute 18 refers) as holders of a taxi licence.

15. STANDING ITEM: WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended) updating the Committee on the work programme for the current year.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided a brief overview of the Committee's work programme for the current year and, during discussion, the following points were noted:-

Councillor Van Nooijen, with the assistance of Councillor Gotch, would be leading on a committee enquiry to review the Council's Asset Management Plan. Councillor Van Nooijen said that his particular focus would be checking the plan works effectively and milestones marked on it had been achieved. A specific analysis of the risk of the Council's portfolio was also planned to be worked through.

The Committee also agreed that Councillor Royce, with the assistance of Councillor Rowley would be leading the Committee's work on equalities.

Resolved to note the position.

16. STANDING ITEM: REPORT BACK ON THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee noted the recommendations made to the Executive Board and the response received.

17. TRADING STRATEGY

The Executive Director for City Services submitted a report detailing the Council's proposals to optimise income through charging for certain services. The report would be submitted to the Executive Board later in the month.

The Committee came to the following conclusions:-

It was clear from answers to questions that it was not the intention at this stage to move much beyond the activities that are already undertaken. Instead the focus was on extending these and other like opportunities in an effort to reduce overheads and therefore reduce the cost of services to the public. As these opportunities are already governed by current delegated powers the committee is happy that adequate governance arrangements exist. Should the intention in the future be to move beyond this into areas of greater risk then the committee would want reconsideration of the governance arrangements that stand.

The report mentions the use of spare capacity in services to raise income (section 3). The committee recognised that spare capacity comes in a number of forms and for a number of reasons but would want to see a sound financial and risk match between trading services and reducing capacity.

In order to take a view on success within this strategy the committee would ask to see a report in a year's time showing:

- The service sold or traded
- The amount of money raised
- The effects of this within our budget identifying specifically, if possible, where this has allowed us to reduce the costs of services within our budget.

Resolved to make the above views known to the City Executive Board's meeting on 21 September 2011.

18. RECONFIGURATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) outlining proposals to reconfigure certain services offered by the Environmental Development Service.

In discussion the following points/conclusions were made:-

(1) After a debate supported by the Director for the service the committee concluded:

- The principle outlined of focusing resources in areas of importance and where the Council can make a difference is sound but the report did not give enough information to make these judgements
- The general principle of doing more for less (20/20 rule) applied to other services going through reconfiguration seemed absent on reading the report. The debate suggested that some efficiency gains would be taken but it was not

entirely clear from information what these meant in practical service delivery and monetary terms

- The management and resolution of noise nuisance is clearly an issue for some communities in Oxford affecting social well being and community cohesion. Further work is needed with our partners and communities on more effective handling and prevention

(2) The Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Board Member, when considering where reductions are made, assesses carefully what the outcomes will be based on data and the knowledge of current case work and calls for service. In doing this to focus particularly on:

- Target/vulnerable groups
- Significant issues of well being across the City
- What efficiency gains can be made to bridge priority gaps

If after this areas of focus or priority groups remain without service to consider more broadly solutions to this

It was recommended to recast the report for final decision on this basis.

Resolved to make the above recommendations to the Board Member for Cleaner Greener Oxford in order to inform the report that would be presented to a future City Executive Board meeting.

19. BRIEFING ON PARK AND RIDE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Executive Director for City Services submitted a report outlining changes to the way in which the three Council owned park and ride site would operate in future as responsibility for their operation returns to City Council.

As he presented the report the Executive Director for City Services said that the situation of proposing a charge was regrettable but necessary when placed in overall context with the Council's budget. He added that the proposed charge would be implemented to cover running costs of the three sites and that an operating profit was not forecast.

The Committee discussed the report and the following principal points were covered:-

- Concern was expressed that anti social behaviour at the Redbridge site would become more of a problem once permanent staff were withdrawn from the site. Increased CCTV cameras and frequent mobile patrols were intended to deter anti-social behaviour.
- The Executive Director said that money saving measures which included removal of permanent staff, automated payment options and mobile patrols would help to keep running costs down.
- Press coverage, new signage and leafleting in the affected car parks would contribute to public awareness of the new charges.

- It was not yet known how the introduction of charges at the park and ride sites would affect the occupancy of city centre car parks. This would be monitored closely.

The Committee concluded that although the charge was regrettable, the level of charge proposed was reasonable given the circumstances.

Resolved to note the report.

20. MINUTES

Resolved that subject to a number of typographical errors to approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2011.

21. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

21 November 2011
30 January 2012
26 March 2012

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.15 pm