

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 28 February 2017

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COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Gant (Chair), Hayes (Vice-Chair), Chapman, Fry, Henwood, Pegg, Simmons and Taylor.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor John Tanner (A Clean and Green Oxford) and Councillor Dee Sinclair (Community Safety)

INVITEES AND OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

Martin Krafft (Oxfordshire County Council), Stewart Wilson (Oxfordshire County Council) and Clare Gray (Police and Crime Panel Scrutiny Officer)

OFFICERS PRESENT: Jo Colwell (Service Manager Environmental Sustainability), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wilkinson, Councillor Coulter, Councillor Azad and Councillor Tidball

90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

91. WORK PLAN AND FORWARD PLAN

The Chair presented the report.

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed and noted the following changes in its work plan for the 2016/17 council year.

- Agreed to schedule a special meeting for the Local Plan on 6 June 2017, in addition to a normal meeting on 8 June.

- The Scrutiny Committee appointed a new sub-committee to monitor the shareholder function. Cllr Simmons offered to give his group's seat to Cllr Fry to provide a link with Audit and Governance. The Committee agreed the sub-committee's membership to be Cllr Gant (Chair of Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Hayes* (Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee), Cllr Henwood (Chair of Housing) and Cllr Fry.

**After the meeting, Cllr Hayes advised that he would not be able to take up this seat so it was offered back to Cllr Simmons, who accepted.*

Forward Plan

The Committee requested the following items from the Forward Plan

- Oxford Flood Alleviation -March
- Community Leases - May

92. REPORT BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair presented the report on recommendations.

Cllr Simmons explained that all the recommendations on the budget were agreed except one.

The Chair said that all the other report's recommendations were accepted except the one about replacing the cycling signs on the Cowley Road. Cllr Simmons said he would like to look further into the reason why the signs on the Cowley Road hadn't been replaced as the Ministry of Transport approved them at the time.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to circulate the advice note he had received from Direct Services to the committee.

93. AIR QUALITY

Councillor John Tanner, Board Member for a Clean, Green Oxford presented the report. He said the County Council was committed to a zero emission zone by 2020. The City and County councils had appointed a consultant to look into practical ways to achieve this in the city centre. Ideas are still being formulated. When the low emission zone was introduced it was buses that caused most of the air quality problems but they have mostly been changed to produce only low emission.

Martin Kraftl from Oxfordshire County Council addressed the committee. The County's Local Transport Strategy 2015-2030 plans to start implementing a zero emission zone in 2020. How quickly it can be rolled out will depend on what vehicles will be affected. Improved technology will assist the move to zero emission.

The Environmental Sustainability Manager said that the City monitors air quality based on DEFRA advice. Diffusion tubes are placed in areas in the city known to have poor air quality. These are places with high levels of traffic close to residential homes and businesses. There are 75 diffusion tubes in the city which officers check every month and analyse results. Data needs to be collected, analysed and audited over a 12 month period to show the long term trend of air quality at the site. The exact location of tubes is listed in the air quality report.

The Committee asked why there were so many diffusion tubes in close proximity in the city centre and why none were positioned near the bypass.

Cllr Tanner said it was important to have lots of diffusion tubes in the city centre to monitor the situation main street by main street. Often 2 diffusion tubes were put close together to act as a control. We need to monitor the different sites to inform the County Council of areas of concern.

There is no evidence to show that air quality from traffic on the ring road is as bad as the city centre.

Cllr Simmons asked what specific steps could be taken to improve air quality in the worst areas, e.g. St. Clements and are there plans for additional monitoring or public signage? Cllr Tanner said he'd much prefer to focus on the causes of the problem rather than tell people how bad it is.

The Environmental Sustainability Manager said that daily air quality levels are already available on the Council's website.

Cllr Simmons said that as a planning authority we don't put any mitigating measures (in regards to air pollution) on applications approved on sites in high air pollution areas ie Westgate or Northern Gateway¹.

Martin Krafft from Oxfordshire County Council said that the Transport Strategy includes working on creating better cycling and walking routes in Headington. There is a huge amount to be done but we must be doing something right as there is 25% less traffic in the city than there was 20 years ago.

Cllr Simmons asked how the City Council comments on the County's Local Transport Strategy were taken. Cllr Tanner said the County agreed with the City Council's comments. It's going to take a lot of co-operation to deal with the ongoing problems. If we clean up the city centre it will have a knock on effect in other areas of city.

The Committee asked about the reason why Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) levels had risen since 2014. The Environmental Sustainability Manager said that road works contributed to some of these increases – eg the re-development of Frideswide Square. However the long term trend is reduction.

Is NOx contributed to one type of fuel?

¹ The Environmental Sustainability Manager confirmed after the meeting that the Council does require mitigation where air quality is forecast to be impacted and we did secure measures and a full air quality action plan for the Westgate.

Cllr Tanner said that all combustion engines produce NOx emissions that are harmful to people's health however diesel produces more. The government needs to stop tax incentives for diesel vehicles. It should give tax incentives for electric vehicles.

The Chair said the City Council has the power to adopt parking zones with differentiated charges. We could offer free parking for electric vehicles (up to 5 spaces). Cllr Tanner said it would be hard to enforce a differentiated parking zone and he would prefer focusing on the prime cause of the problem and how to improve air quality in the city.

Cllr Chapman said he would like to see officers review the measures in the City's Air Quality Annual Status report for the measures that have not progressed to date. The key performance indications also need to be provided. Cllr Tanner to progress.

The Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to CEB

1. Consider implementing a differentiated parking charges for car-parking in the city to offer cheaper car parking for electric vehicles
2. As part of the Local plan review to consider a policy that mitigate the effect of worsening air quality for development in poor air quality zones of the city.
3. For officers to review the feasibility and impact of measures in the City's Air Quality Annual Status report that have not progressed to date.

94. WORKPLACE PARKING LEVIES

Stewart Wilson from Oxfordshire County Council explained that the County's cabinet had approved the work for a congestion charge and a workplace levy at its last meeting. Officers are at the pre-planning phase of the project and haven't started engagement yet.

Nottingham City Council had used the money raised through a workplace levy to fund a tram system and connected bus service. Overall private vehicle numbers are down. Oxfordshire County Council has had a discussion with a previous director of Nottingham to understand issues.

Cllr Taylor asked how work place levies operate for people who need to take their car for work uses. Mr Wilson said that Nottingham's levy has exemptions eg for hospital workers and places with fewer than 10 workers. Not sure yet whether Oxfordshire will have any exemptions.

Cllr Fry asked what the charge would be. Nottingham charges around £375 – £400 per space per year. Employers are liable for the charge and it is up to

them if they pass it onto their employees. Businesses only pay for spaces they use.

Cllr Henwood said he was concerned with people parking their car in Cowley and then catching the bus into the city. Would a city centre levy be followed up with a citywide CPZ? Mr Wilson said it was something to consider, the proposed levy was likely to be applicable to the whole of Oxford.

Cllr Chapman said that there will have to be significantly better public transport to convince people that a levy was a good idea.

Cllr Tanner said that if we do nothing parking and traffic jams will get worse. Its unlikely things will improve unless the County can bring in the levy to pay for the new schemes. eg high speed rapid buses.

We need to ask employers “do they want workers to come to work on time?” If yes, then they need to pay for dead space of car parks for more productive means. Businesses can avoid it by not providing car parking.

Cllr Fry asked if we could price variations by zones eg higher in city centre, than surrounds. Mr Wilson said it was worth considering, however businesses might move out of the city to surrounding areas to avoid the higher costs. This would mean the city could lose vitality.

Cllr Simmons asked why the County was looking at a workplace levy and not congestion charge. Mr Wilson said the County Council was looking at both. Initial report is that a congestion charge wouldn't have the same impact or benefits as a levy. A congestion charge costs a lot to run. The County's focus is to raise money to improve transport links into city.

The Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to CEB

1. Encourage continued exploration of both a congestion charge and a workplace parking levy.
2. Welcomes the additional money that a levy charge would bring to improve the transport structures in the City
3. Need to manage the Impact on the surrounding areas of a levy scheme and consider the case for additional controlled parking zones.

95. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

Cllr Dee Sinclair, Board Member for Community Safety and Oxford City Council's representative on Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (PCP) presented the report.

She explained that the Panel consists of 20 members from across the Thames Valley, 18 councillors and 2 independents. The Independent members have backgrounds in victim support and cybercrime. The panel is predominately made up of conservative members and meets in Aylesbury 6 times a year. Each meeting is themed.

The PCC has appointed Matt Barber, Leader of the Vale of White Horse as deputy. The position of deputy has been around since 2012 but the panel has not yet been informed of Mr Barber's specific responsibilities.

Clare Gray, Police and Crime Panel Scrutiny Officer said the Thames Valley PCC budget had reduced by £88m over 6 years, a 25% saving of overall budget. Part of the budget is to consider reducing the assets of the police force eg St Aldate's police station with proviso that there is a city centre police presence.

The Panel ran a taxi licensing themed meeting where they looked at taxi licensing issues across the Thames Valley and discussed the need for a regional database. The PCC is trying to raise the issues of the taxi licensing regime at the national level but is not getting much response.

Cllr Sinclair said she uses the panel to inform the representatives from the other districts of the issues faced in the city ie safeguarding, human trafficking. However the Panel's powers are limited by the legislation and can only bring things to the attention of the PCC. There is very limited public interest in the process.

Cllr Henwood asked whether there were plans to have a themed meeting on safeguarding across the area. Cllr Sinclair said that the Panel's Scrutiny Officer could propose it but safeguarding is touched on in a lot of what we already do.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the following recommendations to CEB

That CEB suggest to the PCC that the Panel meetings are rotated around the Thames Valley to encourage public engagement and to focus on local issues.

That the PCC meetings are promoted through council media outlets.

96. PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 3

Cllr Fry, Lead Member for Performance monitoring presented the report. He said he did get an officer response from the previous scrutiny comments. However there are still a lot of issues with the way that performance is monitored and presented in these reports.

He made the following comments on the performance report:

- BI002a and B1002b – why are the targets 0?
- CE002 – commentary – why can't Finance provide a figure for income excluding VAT – not very useful?

- CS003 – Presentation of information – why does commentary have to fill 2 pages.
- PC027 –The result is 73,390 but the target is 420. And the result from last year was 2,500. It should be explained that the target is an error.
- PC004 – Grow in level of active participation in dance – why so specific? Would it not be better to measure How much people are using leisure centres.
- B1001 – commentary states they have not received any data for several months – why doesn't the officer do more to find it out?
- Indicators that are reported only annually (LG002) need to be presented in a separate report to quarterly one.
- There's a real mix of comparisons some indicators compare performance with month before others compare with the same month of year before, which was often more useful.

Cllr Simmons said that the local business spend is off target and needs to be raised with CEB

Cllr Hayes said that it feels that a strategy is developed, and the evaluation and monitoring measures are done as an afterthought. Is there a good reason for monitoring to be done by one individual?. Is training given to assist these officers?

Cllr Pegg said it appears to be a huge time serving exercise. People need to consider it important and not try and fit everything into the same box.

Cllr Henwood suggested that the relevant performance indicators should be presented at the beginning of all reports going to members.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that collating the performance monitoring report is the responsibility of the Head of Business Improvement.

Cllr Hayes said it was very important for officers to do this well and for scrutiny to see these reports.

Recommendation

Cllrs Fry and Chapman to meet with the Head of Business Improvement and discuss their concerns and how they reports could be improved.

97. MINUTES

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Pegg asked that this item be moved to the top of agenda for future meetings. The Committee agreed.

98. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is scheduled for 27 March 2017.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.11 pm