

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 2 May 2017

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Alex Hollingsworth (Planning and Regulatory Services) and Councillor Linda Smith (Leisure, Parks and Sport)

INVITEES AND OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Francois Smit (Sport and Partnership Group Manager – Fusion Lifestyle)

OFFICERS PRESENT: Ian Brooke (Head of Community Services), Patsy Dell (Head of Planning, Sustainable Development & Regulatory Services), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Azad and Simmons and Wilkinson.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

113. MINUTES

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017 as a true and accurate record.

114. REPORT BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair presented the report on recommendations. He said that Cllr Hollingsworth, Board member for Planning and Regulatory would provide a more detailed response to the University Housing Needs recommendations once the draft local plan document is out for consultation in July 2017. He will respond either offline or via the Scrutiny housing panel.

All recommendations from the last meeting were agreed.

The Committee noted the report.

115. WORK PLAN AND FORWARD PLAN

The Chair presented the report.

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed and noted that the City Centre and Grant Monitoring reports for CEB have slipped to July.

Cllr Chapman suggested that the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan briefing be arranged soon because the draft document is already available.

Forward Plan

The Committee agreed a reserve list of items from the Forward Plan, to pre-scrutinise if there is room on their June agenda.

1. Community leases.
2. Sustainable City Strategy
3. Proposals for an Oxford Lottery to raise money for good causes

116. FUSION LIFESTYLE'S 2017/18 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S LEISURE FACILITIES.

The Head of Community Services presented the report. He highlighted the positive progress made in leisure participation since Fusion Lifestyles took over the running of the leisure centres in 2009. He explained that the targets remain ambitious; they are challenging but not impossible.

Cllr Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks & Sport outlined the key focus areas for the forthcoming year these include:

- Increasing participation
- Reducing carbon emissions at centres in particular Hinksey Outdoor Pool where they hoped to use a Pool cover to reduce loss of heating. The logistics for how this would work would be a challenge for Fusion – (size and shape of the pool).
- The Free U17 swimming classes needed more promotion at the individual pools
- Keen to see progress of a crèche facility at Ferry.

The Head of Community Services said the Scrutiny Committee could offer changes to the report – to an extent.

The Committee made the following comments:

They would like to know the number of individuals using the facilities rather than the number of visits. The Committee were concerned the same people were visiting the facilities and skewing the results. The Head of Community Services said that visits were the benchmark used but we could review the usage. Moving people onto reward cards to capture this data would be paramount.

They would like to see added to the key areas how Fusion plans to improve disability facilities at the centres. The Head of Community Services said encouraging inclusiveness was a fundamental objective of the Fusion contract.

They enquired what the geographic spread of the users at each facility was. Fusion's Sports and Partnership Group Manager said that people were using multiple facilities across the city. Which facilities are the former users of Temple Cowley Leisure Centre going to?

Increased usage is great but there is a trade-off between usage and cleanliness.

The Committee suggested including some of the feedback from user groups regarding performance in the report next year.

Queried whether it would be more meaningful to consider the Annual Service Plan alongside the performance monitoring document.

Asked what strategies are used to encourage usage in the off-peak periods. Cllr Smith said that the usage data is constantly being reviewed and that she reviews performance data every month.

In terms of GP referrals; are GPs working with Fusion actively. Fusion's Sport and Partnership Group Manager said GP referrals vary across the city. His new role is responsible for improving this. Fusion also works closely with Sport England and various mental health services.

Asked if it was feasible for city residents to get cheaper membership than people outside of the city? Cllr Smith said it was worth considering; the U17 free swimming classes are for residents only.

The Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to the City Executive Board:

1. That the City Council, in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle, resolves the issue of whether or not to capture the numbers of individual leisure centre users (as far as practicably possible) in addition to the numbers of visits, either by coming forward with a plan for doing so or providing reasons why not.
2. That the Service Plan includes a greater emphasis on improving disabled access to leisure centres.

3. That in future years Fusion Lifestyle Service Plans can be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for pre-decision scrutiny alongside performance data for the previous year. This is likely to mean the service plans going to CEB for endorsement in June rather than May in future years.

The Committee also requested geographical and seasonal information about leisure centre usage as part of the annual performance report, as well as feedback from user groups.

Cllr Tidball left the meeting at 18.35

117. SOUTH OXFORD SCIENCE VILLAGE PLANNING APPLICATION

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report. He provided some background to the decision and highlighted the progress that had been made in working constructively with neighbouring district councils on the issue of Oxford's unmet housing need. The Council's preferred approach was to agree sites and numbers with the districts and for these to be taken forward through their local planning processes.

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services said that even though agreements were now in place with some of the districts, no new homes would be built specifically to meet Oxford's unmet housing need before 2020/21.

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services said that the Council was looking to develop South Oxford Science Village through a three-way partnership arrangement with Thames Water and Magdalen College. The site was being promoted as a mixed use development and all costs would be split three ways between the three land-owning partners, including the costs of hiring planning consultants to act on their behalf. The Council's budget allocation of £560k had also contributed to a lot of detailed technical work which had taken the partnership up to the point of submitting an application. As the land was outside the city boundary the Council was not the planning authority but the additional costs arising from this factor were relatively small.

Cllr Hollingsworth said that South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), had voiced support for an alternative site at Chalgrove Airfield, which was being proactively pursued. However, the Council's view was that the location of that particular site was too remote, being some 12 miles from the city. The site's location meant that the associated infrastructure costs would be very high and good public transport links were unlikely to be viable, so a big increase in car journeys would be expected. In addition to distance the expected time-lag to completion made the site unsuitable in terms meeting Oxford's unmet housing need.

Cllr Hollingsworth believed an urban extension on land south of Grenoble Road would be more sustainable as it would be connected with existing bus routes,

cycle infrastructure and potentially the Cowley branch line. The increase in car journey numbers would therefore be lower than for an equivalent development at Chalgrove.

Cllr Hollingsworth said that in his view it was likely that the South Oxford Science Village planning application would be refused by the planning authority. It was difficult to quantify the risk to the Council of pursuing an application but the Council believed that an urban extension at this location was a major priority and that it had a robust case to put forward in a planning appeal or call-in inquiry. The Head of Service said that the proposal was deliverable, given that the Council was a landowner, and the Council was taking all the right steps but there were no guarantees. Sites at Wick Farm and Elsfield to the North East of the city were also in contention for development, as well as Chalgrove. If development went ahead at multiple sites then there would be a need to work closely with the County Council on how the sites fit together strategically.

The Committee received assurances on the following points:

- Transport improvements in the Eastern Arc of the city would be picked up in the Oxford Transport Strategy.
- Changes to the green belt were commonplace in district councils' local plans, e.g. SODC were proposing changes to the green belt at Berinsfield.
- The Council would have scope to exceed SODC's planning policies in regards to social housing, although costs would be a limiting factor.
- The strength of the economic case for development had previously been accepted by planning inspectors.
- Part of the site was within the 'odor footprint' of the sewage works but this was not unusual and could be mitigated through planning.
- Similarly the presence of electricity pylons could also be mitigated through planning.

The Committee voiced strong support for the decision and agreed not to add to the recommendations in the officer report, other than to say they hope the planning application can progress as quickly as possible.

The Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to the City Executive Board:

That the City Council, in partnership with Thames Water and Magdalen College, seeks to submit a planning application for South Oxford Science Village as soon as possible.

118. REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

The Council's use of PSPO powers

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to approve the report for submission to the City Executive Board:

The local financial impacts of Brexit

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to approve the report for submission to the City Executive Board:

119. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is scheduled for 12 June 2017 – Special for Local Plan.

The Scrutiny Shareholder Panel is meeting in July – date TBD

The meeting started at 6.04 pm and ended at 7.28 pm