

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 3 February 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Simmons (Chair), Hayes (Vice-Chair), Altaf-Khan, Anwar, Coulter, Darke, Fry, Hollick, Henwood, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Smith and Upton.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Mike Rowley (Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants)

INVITEES AND OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Jean Fooks

OFFICERS PRESENT: Ian Brooke (Head of Leisure, Parks and Communities), Angela Cristofoli (Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager), Vicki Galvin (Go Active Co-ordinator), Luke Nipen (Communities Specialist Officer), Julia Tomkins (Grants & External Funding Officer), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

78. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hollick declared a pecuniary interest in item 6 – Grant Allocation to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2015/16 (minute 83).

80. UPDATES SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Cllr Coulter, Chair of the Inequalities Panel stated that the public consultation had now closed, they had received 30 submissions. The next meeting will be held on Monday 9 February.

Cllr Fry, Chair of the Recycling Panel said that the panel was meeting on 16 February at the Cowley Marsh Depot.

81. COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager presented the report. She outlined the work done by the team to build strong community partnerships with local groups and relevant agencies.

The Council has 7 priority neighbourhoods which the team focuses on.

Cllr Fooks said that although community partnership working sounds good in theory, in Cutteslowe, it didn't work in practice. She asked for more support from officers. Officers agreed to follow this up outside the meeting.

The Committee made the following comments

- A range of data sets are used to provide the make-up and needs of the different communities, these include the index of deprivation and the quality of life survey. The full reports and the performance indicators are available for members to download.
- Monthly updates are sent to Councillors that represent priority areas. The last one was in December 2014.
- The team works closely with the elections department to encourage voter registration.
- Improved IT access and support has been provided to the Blackbird Leys and Barton community centres, Wi-Fi is available at all community centres.
- A review group is working to streamline community centre leases.
- Priority areas were last agreed in 2013 – unsure when review is due.
- Community Development fund will end after 2014/15 year.

Scrutiny recommendations:

To encourage a review of the priority areas (last done in 2013).

Retain the Community Development (formerly Social Inclusion) grant in the budget

Officers to provide to Members:

A summary of the number of computers and usage rate of the IT hubs.

The performance indicators and quality of life survey to members.

82. ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND PREVENTING ISOLATION

The Go-Active Co-ordinator presented the report. She outlined the range of projects to tackle isolation being funded by the Council.

Jane Johnson spoke to the Committee. She felt there was not enough activities provided for disabled people and as such, the Council was not meeting the spirit of the Equalities Act 2010.

The Committee noted

That the 1 mile health walks are wheelchair friendly and suitable for the visually impaired.

There is a women only evening run every week at the Barton pool

Officers work closely with Oxford Mind to combat isolation – however there is always more that can be done.

Constant feedback on the programmes run is sought by user and leisure groups to improve services.

Funding and training is available for faith and other groups interested in setting up activities.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

To the Head of Finance:

Does the Council regularly conduct an audit of service provision against legislation? And if so, can it circulate the latest audit to members and to Jane Johnson.

The Communities Specialist Officer to contact the Sweet Memories club about their concerns with the potential closure of the Gladiators Club.

83. GRANT ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS 2015/16

Cllr Hollick left the room.

The Grants and External Funding Officer presented the report.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants said he had met with the Credit Union to expand their services.

The Chair asked the committee whether they had questions why organisations hadn't received funding.

Cllr Fooks queried why Cutteslowe Community Association has only received a quarter of their requested £10,000. The Grants Officers explained that the scheme appeared overly expensive and that other holiday programmes had been delivered for much less.

The committee made the following comments:

No applications had been received from Asian organisations, officers explained that the grants scheme had been widely publicised and two grant writing workshops were run to help groups apply. The open bidding grants programme and the workshops were promoted by OCVA to all of the groups on their database through their monthly funding newsletter and training updates, they were also advertised and promoted on the Council website and by word of mouth.

There is a belief amongst Asian organisations that because they have not been successful in previous years that they would not get a grant. Officers agreed that more work needed to be done to break down this misconception. Concern over why world class organisations had to compete with groups focused on alleviating poverty. Would it be better to have different grants for these groups?

Grants to community newspapers are reducing every year as the newspapers become more sustainable. This is still a few years away, but it is likely future recommendations will be to reduce grant funding as the newspapers become more sustainable.

The Council has limited amounts of funding available, the policy is not to fund activities which are the responsibility of other public bodies eg the Listening centre should seek funding from the NHS.

Scrutiny recommendations

That CEB consider re-categorising the grants scheme into different components – organisations that have a worldwide reputation and organisations that alleviate deprivation/ build social inclusion.

Interest in why Cutteslowe Community Association was not given their full funding request.

The focus should be on capacity building and sustainability rather than just giving money.

Officers to relay the concerns expressed by Members to OCVA.

84. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Cllr Hollick returned to the meeting.

The Cycling panel will start their work in March; Cllr Upton was nominated the interim chair.

The Committee agreed to pre-scrutinise the following items on the Forward Plan

- Agency Staff contract award
 - Energy and Water Management Plan
 - Oxford Heritage Asset Register
 - Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy
- Fusion Leisure Service Plan 2015/16

85. REPORT BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Officer reported back on the Scrutiny recommendations agreed by the City Executive Board. He explained that he was working on a better way to track the implementation of the Committee recommendations.

The Vice Chair suggested that feedback on the influence of the Scrutiny committee be sought from other members, both executive and backbenchers.

86. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee agreed to move the scheduled May meeting to 6pm Wednesday 29 April.

The next meeting will be held on 2 March at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm