

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 30th March 2011

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Jim Campbell), the Vice-Chair (Councillor Gill Sanders), Councillors Altaf Khan, Mary Clarkson, Jean Fooks (substituting for Councillor Ruth Wilkinson) Rae Humberstone, Matt Morton, Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan, Mike Rowley, Oscar van Nooijen and Dee Sinclair.

Councillor John Tanner (Board Member for a Cleaner Greener Oxford)

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lois Stock and Pat Jones (Law and Governance), Tim Sadler (Director, City Services).

ALSO PRESENT: Barrie Finch (Improvement Monitoring Panel – IMP),

INVITED SPEAKERS: Huw Jones (Oxfordshire County Council Director for Environment and Economy)

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Received from Councillor Wilkinson – Councillor Fooks substituted.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

49 OXFORDSHIRE RECYCLING CENTRES STRATEGY

The Committee received Oxfordshire County Council reports concerning the Household Waste Recycling Centre Strategy (HWRCS) (previously circulated, now appended).

The Chair, Councillor Jim Campbell, welcomed Huw Jones (Director of Environment and Economy, Oxfordshire County Council) to the meeting. It was important that the City Council had a chance to comment upon the strategy, and he thanked Mr Jones for his attendance in order to explain the issue to the Committee. Councillor Campbell also welcomed Councillor John Tanner, City Council Executive Board member for a Cleaner, Greener Oxford.

Huw Jones explained that the aims of the new strategy were to provide a strategic network of recycling sites, increase the capacity for growth in

recycling, especially for small and medium sized enterprises, and offer the opportunity to recycle closer to the centres of urban population. There would be more recycling opportunities than at present, despite the fact there would be fewer sites. The County Council believed that there would be a reduction in fly tipping. The new site at Kidlington would have a central “re-use” shop. It would require capital investment, and therefore there was a need to secure private funding for it.

Councillor Campbell asked the Committee, when considering this issue, to focus on the implications for Oxford – that is, the issues around the Redbridge and Kidlington sites.

The following comments were offered by the Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee of Oxford City Council in response to the County Council’s consultation on the Recycling Centre Strategy

General comments

1. The committee welcomed the new recycling centre at Kidlington as a significant investment in state of the art facilities for the County

Access and Service Levels

2. The change from the original proposals to close Redbridge to domestic waste to a facility that will take trade waste each day and domestic waste at weekends was recognised as a step in the right direction

The committee however remained unconvinced that the current proposals for Redbridge would adequately provide for Oxford’s population. The committee wished to remind the County Council that the densely populated urban area of Oxford would be the only District within the Oxfordshire boundary without a full time trade and domestic waste recycling centre. The committee asked that the following views were considered:

- Currently 40% of the visits to Redbridge were on weekdays. It was not clear how this was split between trade and domestic customers but it seemed reasonable to assume that some were domestic customers and that these were likely to choose to shift their visit to the weekend. The effect of this would be to increase traffic around the site and in turn increase waiting times to enter the facility. In essence, this would create a poorer service to Oxford residents and increase disruption to those living and driving through this busy area;
- Poorer or changed access was likely to convert to increased fly tipping. This view was supported by the Waste Partnership which had factored into their financial calculations for this strategy the clear up operations of increased levels of fly tipping

- Established patterns of fly tipping were difficult to change and costly to deal with. This was evidenced in current patterns and clear ups around the Oxford ring road. The allocating of money to counteract a behaviour potentially bought about by this strategy was a poor use of money. A better use would be to support the full opening of Redbridge to domestic waste;
- It was likely that some domestic customers who would previously have taken bulky waste to Redbridge would because of reduced access, ask the Local Authority to collect it from their home. This would create pressure on these services both in terms of affordability and customer service;
- Proposals presented to bridge the service gap whilst Redbridge was closed for refurbishment were not acceptable. They were likely to produce many of the difficulties outlined above. The scrutiny committee would wish to see further efforts made to find a temporary site closer to the City
- The refurbishment of Redbridge was to be supported by private sector investment. Should this investment not be forthcoming the committee wished to see all efforts made to bridge the funding gap. The bottom line for the committee was that a position where Oxford has no recycling facility for domestic waste was insupportable

Traffic

3. Comments on traffic issues in the south of the city had been made at 2 above. In addition the proposals assume that some of Oxford's domestic and trade waste customers would use the new facility at Kidlington. This was likely to cause increased traffic flows and therefore congestion in the north of the city. These increased traffic flows and the potential difficulties they present to residents and those passing through need to be acknowledged and planned for within the strategy

Charging

4. The scrutiny committee welcomed the confirmation that the strategy had no intent either now or in the future to charge domestic waste customers. The committee would like to see consideration given to differential charging for trade waste customers in an effort to encourage recycling

Information

5. Oxford residents were to experience a significant change to service and therefore would be required to make changes to their well

established habits. The committee wished to see clear information and signposting provided to all residents in a timely and plain English style

Resolved to

- (1) Send to Oxfordshire County Council and to Ian Hudspeth (Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet member for Growth and Infrastructure) via the City Council Executive Board, the above comments as part of the County Council's consultation on this issue;
- (2) Thank Huw Jones for his attendance and useful contribution to the debate.

50 CLEANER GREENER PANEL UPDATE

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning the progress of the Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel. Pat Jones (Principle Scrutiny Officer) introduced this update report and explained the back ground to it.

The Cleaner Greener Panel was seeking from Blackbird Leys residents opinions about the efficacy of the "Cleaner Greener" campaign. This would include attendance at the Parish Council meeting in April in order to garner its view. The Panel would meet again at the end of April to review all responses and decide whether to continue with the work or draw a conclusion from the information already to hand.

Initial results indicated that house dwellers were generally satisfied with the outcome of the campaign, but that there were still some issues around flats and maisonettes. In general terms, people were happy and had noticed a positive difference in their environment as a result of the Cleaner Greener campaign.

One problem that had been identified, however, was that of dog fouling. Councillor Tanner suggested that Tim Sadler (Director of City Services) should address this issue as it clearly was of great concern across the City, and especially in Blackbird Leys. Councillor Dee Sinclair suggested that the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) should be made aware of this issue, and Barrie Finch (IMP) added that signs warning of £80 fines for dog fouling should be erected in Blackbird Leys.

Tim Sadler explained that as a result of the Cleaner Greener Campaign in Blackbird Leys there had been some improvements to the cleansing schedules. It was important that the positive outcomes from the campaign in Blackbird Leys should be noted and applied elsewhere as the scheme moved across the City. Councillor Humberstone added that there was a need to follow up the campaign on Blackbird Leys, perhaps by a second Cleaner Greener campaign during the summer.

Resolved to:

- (1) Note the current position;
- (2) Thank the Panel , especially Councillors Val Smith and Rae Humberstone, for all their hard work;
- (3) Ask Tim Sadler to investigate the issue of dog fouling and how this problem could be lessened, taking into account observations made by the Committee.

51 PROGRESS ON YOUNG PEOPLES' ENGAGEMENT PANEL

Pat Jones (Principle Scrutiny Officer) introduced this update report (previously circulated, now appended) and explained the background to it.

She explained that the Panel had been working with Neil Holman (Active Communities Partnership Manager), Ash Barosso and young people from around Oxford. It had required a great deal of hard work to enable the project to reach its current stage and it was envisaged that it would take another six months before the first five young people were fully engaged with the project. It was intended that some Councillors would fill a mentoring and communicating role, and would enable access for young people to decision makers. There was a good team of committed youth workers involved in the scheme, and it was hoped to carry it forwards into the next Council year.

Pat Jones observed that the Council often struggled to engage with young people, yet they were an important part of regeneration plans. In answer to a question, she indicated that she did not know what proportion of referrals to Neil Holman came from BME communities, but she could investigate and report back. Although it was expected that there would be an end of project review, in order to see how the scheme could be further developed, it was not possible, at this stage, to predict the shape of the project at its end.

The Committee felt that this was a very useful project, and members thanked Pat Jones for her persistence with it. Some concern was expressed about its future sustainability, although it was accepted that this was a small start that could be used to inform any future strategy. A question was asked about a role for the new Community and Neighbourhoods team; and it was noted that Rebecca Wrigley (one of the Team Leaders) had special responsibility for young people and had already been involved with this panel.

The Committee felt that Neil Holman and Ash Barossa could be trusted to find young people who would most benefit from this project. However, it would be helpful if some younger Councillors could become involved and meet the young people. !

Resolved to note the current position.

52 WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORT BACK ON THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2010/11 (previously circulated, now appended). Pat Jones presented this report to the Committee, explaining that as this was the last Committee meeting of the 2010/11 Council Year, it was a good time to review the work completed and look forward to the next year's work. Of particular interest were Members' views upon:-

- Feelings of engagement with the scrutiny process;
- Balance between Panel work and more formal Committee work;
- Items to be rolled forwards for the next year;
- New items for inclusion next year;

The Committee made the following points:-

- (1) Generally there was a feeling that the process had become more effective. Despite the fact that there were now only two scrutiny committees, there was no loss of focus;
- (2) The real measure of success was the difference that had been made by the committee's deliberations. It would be interesting for Tim Sadler to explain the value that he saw in scrutiny;
- (3) Tim Sadler indicated that he found the pace of scrutiny committees now much easier to deal with, with helpful, high quality advice emerging from meetings. He found it useful to attend meetings where he could in order to determine what issues of concern for members were emerging;
- (4) There was some concern that only half the members of the Committee had volunteered to serve on a panel or in a review group. It was desirable for more members of the Committee to become involved in this way, especially if they suggested a topic for investigation by a panel;
- (5) There had been some excellent committee meetings, but it was the panel work that provided the greatest opportunity to make a difference. Some panels and reviews - for example, the housing stock de-designation panel - had provided a good mechanism for greater involvement by members. It took time but was more involving and rewarding;
- (6) There was a feeling that there was a lack of engagement of tenants and tenants' representatives, especially with issues such as the Housing Revenue Account and the Housing Strategy. This concern was something that Tim Sadler could usefully take up;

- (7) Sometimes, scrutiny could appear to be a “hands off” process. Issues were often very complicated for Committees to deal with. It was hard to understand a topic in the relatively short lead up to it, and then there might not be sufficient time at the meeting to address the subject adequately. It would be helpful if the focus could be on areas where the Committee had a chance to make a real difference, and if this could be made very clear in any reports that were written to support this;
- (8) Pat Jones observed that the Communities and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee had a more difficult remit than the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee, because it had to tackle more outward facing issues which tended to be more complex and took longer to develop and investigate.

Members of the Committee were asked to contact Pat Jones with any suggestions for inclusion in the next work programme. It was felt that the programme should be no more than 75% full to allow space for any items that might crop up during the year. In the meantime, the following items were suggested for consideration for inclusion in the new work programme:-

- Tenant involvement and the role of Estate Managers;
- Older Person’s Strategy;
- An item drawn from “Measuring what Matters” – a case study of Coventry, including a Social Investment Bank and how this could be used in Oxford.

Resolved to:-

- (1) Note all comments and suggestions made;
- (2) Invite members of the Committee to contact Pat Jones with any suggestions of items for inclusion in the new work programme;
- (3) Thank Pat Jones for all her hard work over the year, especially as she has had a reduction in staffing resources available to her;
- (4) Thank Lois Stock (Democratic Services Officer) for her support to the Committee and Pat Jones, and her development in the scrutiny role.

53 MINUTES

Resolved to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2011.

54 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meeting dates have yet to be ratified by Council. It was noted that the provisional date for the next meeting of this Committee was Monday 6th June.

55 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

None

The meeting started at 5pm and ended at 7pm