

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1ST JULY 2015

Present:

Councillor Jim Parsons - Chairman
Councillors -
SI Andrews RG Keeling
Julian Beale NP Robbins
JA Harris

Apologies:

SDE Parsons

OS.4 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

No substitution arrangements had been put in place for this Meeting.

OS.5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members under the Code of Conduct.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no Declarations of Interest from Officers.

OS.6 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Minutes of the Meeting of the former Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 28th April 2015 be noted;

(b) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19th May 2015 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.7 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT - COTSWOLD FLOOD ACTION GROUP

The Chairman reminded Members of the previous pro-active work undertaken by the Committee in relation to flooding issues which, in conjunction with the County Council, had led to the creation of the Cotswold Flood Action Group (CFAG), along with a number of smaller area-specific sub-groups.

Councillor Parsons explained that, as Scrutiny Chairman at CDC, he had attended meetings of CFAG, to ensure that relevant issues were being addressed and actions taken. Given that these meetings had now been operating for over 18 months, were well attended by a cross-section of representatives, and positive outcomes were being achieved, he felt that his presence at meetings was no longer required. He had advised the Group of this at its recent meeting, subject to there being no adverse comments from members of this Committee. However, he would continue to request copies of the minutes of future CFAG meetings, and would circulate them to Committee Members, perhaps through the Quarterly Digest.

OS.8 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

OS.9 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.10 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

No executive decisions had been the subject of Call-In since the Committee's previous Meeting.

OS.11 2020 VISION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE - PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATIONAL MODEL

The Committee received an update in respect of the 2020 Vision Partnership and was invited to comment on the report and the proposed services/functions to be initially retained, prior to consultation with staff.

The circulated report set out the background to the Programme/Partnership thus far; the key messages emanating from more recent Programme Board discussions; the key outcomes of a commissioning review across the partner councils, including the common approaches already in place and some proposed shared principles; the three principal areas for shared services - management, specialist staff, and administrative, technical and customer support; suggested service design principles, including collectively-agreed approaches in terms of financial rules and policies, HR policies and procedures, common ICT platforms and applications, and customer-focussed service redesign; a recognition of the need for a flexible pragmatic approach and evolutionary process; the various organisational models considered, and the preference for the Interim Partnership Chief Executive option; and details of those services which it was suggested should not be shared across the Partnership at this stage (albeit that some were already shared with West Oxfordshire District Council), those services where a strong case already existed for sharing, and those services where sharing at a management level appeared possible but sharing at an operational level required further work/evaluation.

The Chief Executive amplified the key elements of the report and the rationale behind the way forward now being recommended. He explained that each partner Council had two member representatives on the Programme Board, and drew attention to planned Member and staff engagement, including a Member event to which scrutiny and opposition group members had been invited. He also

reminded Members that the 2020 Vision set out an ambition for the authorities to become more efficient and effective by working together but without sacrificing their sovereignty; and, in fact, their ability to take the decisions needed for their locality would be strengthened.

The Chief Executive also responded to various questions from Members, covering the next steps; accountability; communications; resilience; local choice; operational models; other joint working opportunities beyond the partnership; any impact on Ubico; and the financial projections.

The Committee accepted the drivers behind the proposed partnership; welcomed the evolutionary approach; commended the desire for meaningful engagement across all Members and staff; and were content with progress thus far.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.12 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2014/15 YEAR
END

The Committee received a report summarising overall finance/service performance for the Council in 2014/15, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks, and efficiency measures, and providing information on the Council's capital expenditure, capital receipts and use of reserves.

Officers amplified various aspects of the circulated report, and responded to a number of questions from Members on a variety of issues. Specific topics covered included the circumstances relating to the situation in respect of the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool and the options available to, and future implications for, the Council in that regard; the current situation relating to the repatriation of the Council's investment in the Icelandic Bank, Glitnir and the suggestion that a financial provision in a sum of £150,000 be established to cover potential exchange rate losses; and the current situation relating to a legal challenge in respect of personal searches and the suggestion that a financial provision in a sum of £99,323 be established in that respect.

While pleased with the overall performance achieved, the following points were made during the detailed consideration of the performance information:-

(i) Para 2.16, page 34 - the Committee was surprised at the underspend on street cleansing, given the concerns that had been expressed during the year regarding litter and street cleansing problems. The Head of Service was asked to provide further details.

(ii) Appendix B, page 50 - whilst the claimant figures were encouraging, a number of Members questioned whether the Council had sufficient influence over such figures that would justify the issue being a key efficiency measure against which the Council should be judged.

(iii) General - Performance Indicators - the Committee asked for further information in respect of the Building Control service and performance; and in relation to the completion of Section 106 legal agreements associated with

planning proposals - given continuing concerns over performance in these areas.

(iv) Para 7, pages 38/39 - given the work to be undertaken in relation to the preparation of a new Corporate Strategy/Plan for the period 2015 to 2019, which would include a fundamental review of all performance measures and which would be reported to the Committee and Cabinet before being presented to the Council, the Committee was content for the previous work on this subject to be taken into account as part of the review (as opposed to convening its own working group for this purpose).

RESOLVED that the report be noted, and the comments made be forwarded to the Cabinet.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.13 COUNTY MATTERS

(i) Updates

The Committee received an update report from Councillor Jim Parsons on various health-related issues, including in relation to Cirencester Hospital. Given the on-going review of hospital services, he suggested that representatives of NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust be requested to attend the next meeting and provide Members with a progress update. This suggestion was supported.

(ii) Appointments to County Committees

RESOLVED that:

(a) Councillor Jim Parsons be appointed to the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Gloucestershire County Council, with Councillor Stephen Andrews as deputy representative;

(b) Councillor Stephen Hirst be appointed to the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee of Gloucestershire County Council, with Councillor Nigel Robbins as deputy representative.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.14 QUARTERLY DIGEST

The Committee was invited to identify any issues arising out of the Quarterly Digest for future debate and/or action by the Committee.

No specific issues were highlighted.

OS.15 WORK PLAN 2015/16

A skeletal draft Work Plan for 2015/16, including details of items suggested for possible carry forward from the previous year, was circulated for consideration.

It was noted that, during the Meeting, the Committee had noted the following:-

- A follow-up report would be presented to the September 2015 meeting in relation to the 2020 Vision Programme;
- A stand-alone working group would not be reconvened to conclude the review of Performance Indicators but, instead, the Committee would receive a report in due course on the review being undertaken in respect of the Council's strategy and priorities for the current term, as part of which consideration would be given to the previous efficiency measures and performance indicators.

In addition, the following items of business were also agreed, subject to timings to be scheduled:-

- An update on progress with, and the timetable for, the Local Plan;
- A presentation by the GCC Cabinet Member and Area Highways Managers in respect of the implications for rural communities of the new GCC highways and transport contract (awarded to Amey);
- Consideration of the findings of the review being undertaken following the 2015 elections;
- The CDC Parking Strategy.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above additions, the Work Programme be approved.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.16 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and closed at 12.42 p.m.

Chairman

(END)