

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 15 October 2019 at 6.30 pm

- Present: Councillor Lucinda Wing (Chairman)
Councillor Tom Wallis (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Shaida Hussain
Councillor Tony Mepham
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Bryn Williams
- Substitute Members: Councillor Nathan Bignell (In place of Councillor Phil Chapman)
- Also Present: Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Dan Sames – Lead Member for Clean and Green
Eric Owens, Assistant Director Growth and Place, Oxfordshire County Council
- Apologies for absence: Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Sandra Rhodes
Councillor Les Sibley
- Officers: Graeme Kane, Chief Operating Officer
Adele Taylor, Executive Director: Finance (Interim) & Section 151 Officer
Ed Potter, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
Chris Hipkiss, Property and Investment Consultant
Paul Almond, Street Scene & Landscape Manager
Trevor Dixon, Environmental Protection and Licensing Manager
Jim Guest, Environmental Protection Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

24 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

26 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

27 **Waste and Recycling**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services gave a presentation on Waste and Recycling within the Cherwell District and explained how waste was sorted, collected and distributed to the relevant disposal centres.

The Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that a National Resources and Waste Strategy was published in December 2018 to create consistent collections schemes. The Strategy included proposals for a deposit return scheme, which would reduce the value of waste and increase gate fees. It also included proposals for a weekly collection of food waste. Food waste would be collected separately and taken to an anaerobic digester where a biogas would be produced and used to produce heat, electricity or transport fuels.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that the type of recyclable waste collected was changing, with more single use plastics and less newspapers being discarded due to changing lifestyles.

In response to Members' comments regarding the amount of fuel the Council's collection vehicles consumed, the Assistant Director Environmental Services assured the committee that the collection vehicles used existing technology to minimise the amount of fuel used. Electric collection vehicles were some way off from being widely available on the market, fully tested for performance and financially affordable but all small vans in the fleet were now electric. Environmental services kept up-to-date with developing technology and would be aware when more economical and environmentally friendly vehicles were brought to the market.

Resolved

(1) That the Waste and Recycling presentation be noted.

Grass Verges and Green Spaces

The Street Scene and Landscape Services Manager gave a presentation on the council's delivery of landscape services and maintenance of grass verges and green spaces within Cherwell District. The presentation explained that different grassed areas were managed differently depending on their functions and locations to create different aesthetic effects, manage road safety and promote biodiversity.

In response to Members' comments regarding bringing nature back to life and restoring living systems with wildlife returning to grass verges, the Street Scene and Landscape Services Manager explained the potential benefits and challenges in leaving grassed areas to become 'wild'. Verges did not automatically become wild flowers, rather an expensive process of spraying, rotavating, seeding and cut and collect had to be carried out to get results and these results only lasted for 2 to 3 years.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns that this process was not as environmentally friendly as other methods and that some Parishes had expressed an interest in wild flower meadows. The Street Scene and Landscape Services Manager explained that Parishes had been advised of the cost and short lived results but we were able to offer different cutting regimes if that was practical and preferred.

Resolved

- (1) That the Grass Verges and Green Spaces presentation be noted.

Air Quality Update

The Committee considered a briefing note from the Environmental Protection and Licensing Manager which provided updates on the air quality monitoring carried out across the District in 2018 and the review of the Air Quality Action Plan for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. The September 2019 Air Quality Action Plan had been circulated for information. In presenting the briefing note, the Environmental Protection and Licensing Manager advised the Committee that the Annual Status Report, with data for 2018 was now available.

The Environmental Protection Officer informed the Committee that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had recently announced that application could be submitted in the latest round of funding under the Air Quality Grant Scheme. Local authorities were encouraged to bid for funding from central government for local projects to improve air quality. The Committee was advised that scoping was underway for a Countywide campaign and meetings were taking place with other Oxfordshire Councils and the Bicester Delivery team. There was an opportunity for Councillors to participate and details would be circulated to the Committee Members.

Resolved

- (1) That the briefing note be noted
- (2) That officers be requested to circulate information regarding the DEFRA Air Quality Grant scheme to Committee members.

30 **Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities**

The Director Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer submitted a briefing note which advised the Committee of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

In introducing the report the Governance and Elections Manager advised the Committee that the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had published revised Scrutiny Guidance in May 2019 and that Cherwell District Council already had in place many of the areas of good practice but there were options for further enhancing the role of Scrutiny within the organisation, including the drafting of an Executive Scrutiny Protocol.

The Leader of the Council commented that he felt there was a good relationship between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive members valued the work undertaken by the Committee, the Protocol would reinforce this relationship.

Members agreed that an Executive Scrutiny Protocol should be drafted and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in January 2020.

Resolved

- (1) That the publication of a new statutory guidance document about the role of scrutiny be noted.
- (2) That the proposed options and methods of engagement with Councillors in relation to the new guidance be noted.
- (3) That an Executive-Scrutiny Protocol be drafted for consideration by the Committee in January 2020.

31 **Committee Work Programme 2019/2020**

The Democratic and Elections Officers gave an update on the status of topics suggested for Scrutiny, and the indicative Committee work programme.

The Chairman asked Committee Members to review the work programme and topic sheet and draft scoping documents for topics they had raised or any other topic, worthy of further investigation and potential scrutiny review. Completed scoping documents would be submitted to the Committee for review and, subject to sign off, working groups established and/or the topic added to the work programme at the appropriate time.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted
- (2) That Committee Members complete scoping documents for topics they have previously raised or new topics for possible scrutiny review to be considered at future meetings of the Committee

32 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

33 **CASTLE QUAY**

The Interim Property and Investment Manager gave an exempt presentation which provided an update on the Castle Quay development.

Members asked a number of questions to which answers were duly provided.

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt presentation be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Chairman:

Date: