

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held as a virtual meeting, on 16 March 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lucinda Wing (Chairman)
Councillor Tom Wallis (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Shaida Hussain
Councillor Tony Mephram
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Bryn Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Ian Corkin, Lead Member for Customers and Transformation

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Douglas Webb

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adults & Housing Services
Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment
Jason Russell, Corporate Director Communities
Anita Bradley, Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Hayley Good, Deputy Director for Education
Richard Webb, Assistant Director: Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Ed Potter, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director: Wellbeing
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Sandra Fisher-Martins, Climate Action Mobilisation Manager
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Sam Thomas, Sustainability Project Officer
Sarah Gilbert, Team Leader Climate Action
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

44 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

45 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

46 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

47 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

48 **Covid-19 Update**

The Committee received a detailed update in relation to the ongoing joint response of Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Corporate Director of Public Health and Wellbeing explained that the number of cases was declining on a national and local level, with Cherwell District having 50% fewer cases in the 7 days to 5 March than the previous 7 days. Epidemiological curves and heatmaps across all age groups reiterated the reduction in cases.

With regard to COVID business support and compliance, the Assistant Director: Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that the county wide COVID team had increased capacity, with three additional first responders available in the Cherwell area. Ahead of the anticipated first stage of lockdown easing on 29 March, a coordinated approach had been undertaken across the Thames Valley area to contact licensed premises to find out their intentions regarding reopening.

In relation to students returning to schools, the Deputy Director for Education explained that school attendance was mandatory for all pupils from 8 March, with a phased start for secondary pupils. The Committee was advised that overall attendance rates for the County on Monday 15 March had been 93.7%.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Deputy Director of Education explained that mass testing had been increased across school staff

and secondary school pupils, with twice weekly testing being encouraged from the return to in person teaching on 8 March. A requirement for face coverings in secondary classrooms from 8 March had also taken effect.

With regards wellbeing and support to the community and residents, the Assistant Director Wellbeing advised the Committee that all Councillors had spent their £2000 COVID-19 funds. Councillors had used their funds to support community groups providing food and other essentials, who had changed how they were working to respond to the pandemic.

The council's Wellbeing service continued to work in partnership with the Citizens Advice, who was administering the Winter Support Fund for Cherwell, which provided grant funding for food and fuel hardship.

The Assistant Director Wellbeing advised the Committee that the shield support team continued to support clinically extremely vulnerable residents, and the help had been extended to residents needing to self-isolate.

The Committee thanked officers for the comprehensive update.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.

49

Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report and Performance Management Framework 2021 Update

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance and the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes which detailed the Council's performance, finance and risk monitoring position as at the end of January 2021. The Committee was responsible for reviewing the performance aspects of the report.

In introducing the report, the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes explained that the Council was maintaining a strong position in relation to performance, with 77% of measures rated on target for the year to date.

In relation to indicator BP1.2.02, number of people helped to live independently through use of DFG and other grants/loans, the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes advised the Committee that this area of work had been disrupted by COVID restrictions limiting the access to client's homes for surveying and works to take place.

In response to questions from the Committee relating to recycling and the possible impact of chargeable brown bin collections on recycling levels, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that a lot of data had been collected from other councils in order to undertake modelling regarding the proposals.

Further work would be undertaken in the coming months, with a report expected to be submitted to the July meeting of the Executive that would detail the plans, rollout, charging and all required policies in relation to the proposed scheme.

In response to questions raised in relation indicator BP1.1.4 Deliver the local plan, and the legal challenge being lodged, the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes advised the Committee that she would liaise with the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to gather answers for circulation to the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the Performance aspects of the monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring report be noted.

50

Climate Action Update

The Committee received a presentation from the Climate Action Team, which provided an update in relation to the Climate Action Framework, progress made on the Climate Action programme since October 2020 and the Greenhouse Gas report for 2019-20.

The Climate Action Team Leader explained that 90% of local authorities had adopted a Climate Action Framework in response to the climate emergency, which set a net zero target for emissions. The UK Government had subsequently amended the Climate Change Act, to replicate the net zero target for the UK.

The Sustainability Project Officer gave an update on the 87 workstreams that were currently taking place across both Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Councils. The electric vehicle (EV) charging bays being installed in Bicester had been delayed slightly due to COVID, but it was anticipated that they would be operational from April 2021.

Key tasks for the next 6 to 12 months included a further 72 EV charging points being installed in Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington, and up to 25,000 trees being planted at the Burnehyll community woodland.

With regard to the Greenhouse Gas report, the Sustainability Project Officer explained that Greenhouse Gas emissions had reduced by 9.2% for 2019/20 compared to the 2018/19 report. Leisure Services accounted for half of the total carbon footprint across the council's estate, with Waste Services accounting for a third.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding monitoring of the framework and progress made against it, the Climate Action Programme Manager explained that a regular newsletter would be circulated, and information would be included in the Chief Executive's weekly updates to Members.

With regards to decarbonisation of the waste collection fleet of vehicles, the Assistant Director Environmental Services advised the Committee that electric versions of larger capacity vehicles for bin collections were currently more expensive than diesel equivalents. Dennis Eagle, a refuse vehicle supplier, had gone into electric vehicle production at the start of 2021, and the council was on the list of authorities to trial an electric waste collection lorry, however the price of an electric vehicle was currently around £425,000 compared to £175,000 for a diesel equivalent.

The Committee thanked the Climate Action Team for the update.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.

51 **Consideration of the Oxford to Cambridge ARC Environment principles**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Environmental Services and Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Growth Deal in Cherwell regarding consideration of the Oxford to Cambridge ARC Environment Principles.

The SRO for the Growth Deal in Cherwell explained that the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision was due to be considered by the Oxfordshire Growth Board at its meeting on 22 March 2021. The draft strategic vision would provide an overarching framework to deliver sustainable development and integrated environmental, social and economic wellbeing across the community.

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc had been identified as a significant area, and the Government had recently announced an intention to develop a spatial framework for the Arc, a long-term strategic plan to coordinate new developments in the area together with the required infrastructure.

The SRO for the Growth Deal in Cherwell explained that six principles had been drafted to become part of the developing plans and statements in relation to the Arc, including Local Plans, local authority activities, plans, projects and programmes for all statutory bodies operating in the Arc.

As the report had been circulated as a late supplement to the agenda, the Chairman requested that Members provide detailed comments on the report to her, for collation and reporting to Executive at their meeting on 6 April 2021.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That it be agreed that Committee Members provide comments on the report to the Chairman, for reporting to Executive at their meeting on 6 April 2021.

52 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Law and Governance which presented the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report for 2020/21.

The Committee had a constitutional obligation to produce a unified annual report for the whole scrutiny process, and to present it to Council. The draft report detailed work that had been undertaken during the year to date, and identified areas that would require further information based on the outcome of the March 2021 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2020/21 be noted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to finalise the areas highlighted in the report following the final meeting of the municipal year, prior to its submission to Council.

53 **Work Programme 2021-22**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year, and a briefing note from the Assistant Director Regulatory Services and Community Safety that answered queries raised in relation to Licensing applications received by the Council.

With regards to the proposed topic of Management Companies, the Committee requested that it remain on the indicative work programme. There were now a number of management companies in place across the district, and the Committee felt it was a subject that needed further investigation.

The Committee requested that their thanks be passed to the Assistant Director Regulatory Services and Community Safety for the briefing note on Licensing applications. The Committee supported the proposed approach of notifying town and parish councils of certain licensing applications.

Resolved

- (1) That “Management Companies” remain on the topic list for 2021/22.
- (2) That the indicative work programme for 2021/22 be noted.
- (3) That the briefing paper on Licensing Notifications to Parish/Town Councils/the role of the Licensing Committee be noted and that the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services and Community Safety be advised that the Committee recommend that parish and town councils

should be advised of licensing applications which are likely to be material interest.

The meeting ended at 9.06 pm

Chairman:

Date: