

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 27 June 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Isabel Creed (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Tom Gubbins, Sport & Recreation Physical Activities Manager

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 14 March 2023 and 23 May 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

6 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

7 **FAST Programme Review**

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager gave a presentation on the FAST (Families Active Sporting Together) Programme and explained the positive impact it had on families across Cherwell over last four years and had enabled family provision to be upscaled across the county through Public Health funding.

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager advised the Committee that the FAST programme began in 2018 and ran until March 2023. The aim of the programme was to make it easier for families to be physically active together, promoting positive experiences of physical activities by providing free or discounted activities.

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager explained that the FAST programme had finished however because of its success. Public Health England had funded the new initiative 'You Move' across Oxfordshire. "You Move" was aimed at families who access free school meals but the whole family could access the activities provided under the scheme.

Following questions from the Committee, the Sport and Physical Activity Manager advised that 16% of people who had signed up to the FAST programme were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and additional work had been undertaken in the local community by the Leisure team to promote the programme.

Resolved

(1) That the presentation be noted.

8 **Overview of the Housing Register**

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to provide the Committee with an overview of the Cherwell District Council Housing Register and allocations process.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that the council operated a waiting list for those seeking social housing. The housing allocation scheme used was called choice-based lettings. There were eight steps to the housing application process for applicants seeking social housing.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that in the near future there would be a review of the parameters for the four housing needs bands that applicants could be allocated to. This would be carried out to assess whether the parameters were correct and if people were within the correct banding.

Following questions from the Committee regarding properties owned by Housing Associations that may be empty for a period of time, the Head of Housing advised that he engaged with Sanctuary Housing on a regular basis to address the matter. However, as they were an independent organisation, the council could only advise and work in partnership to try and get houses that may be empty occupied again.

In response to a query regarding the selection process for advertised social houses, the Head of Housing advised the system created a shortlist of applicants based on who had bid for a particular property, in order of banding and length of time on the register. Officers in the Housing team then assessed the need of each shortlisted applicant against the specific property, to ensure the property was offered to a suitable applicant, e.g. checking that the if the applicant used a wheelchair, the access at the property wasn't via steps.

Following questions by the Committee regarding the difference between social and affordable housing in new developments, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing advised that social housing was houses that were purchased by a registered housing provider. The council speaks to registered providers to ask if they would be interested in taking on available houses however the Section 106 agreement that was agreed in the planning process for housing developments dictated how many housing units were provided as affordable and social housing.

In response to Members' questions regarding disproportion of numbers within each banding on the waiting list, the Head of Housing advised that the proposed review of the bands would make sure that applicants in the highest need were placed in the highest band, and not competing with applications where needs were not as high.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the description of band four as 'no housing need', the Head of Housing clarified that the band covered applicants who were eligible to join the register, but didn't have urgent needs as covered by the other bands. The Head of Housing explained that each council could make their own decisions as to whether applicants with 'no housing need' were allowed on the housing register or not.

Resolved

- (1) That how the Council administers applications it receives to the Housing Register and enacts its Housing Allocations Scheme be noted.
- (2) That the basis for a review of the Council's allocations and banding scheme to ensure that the scheme was working correctly in prioritising and meeting local housing needs now and in the foreseeable future be noted.

9 **Wellbeing Strategy**

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing gave a presentation outlining the proposed new Wellbeing Strategy for Cherwell for 2023 – 2027.

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing advised that the council had previously had an 'active lives' strategy however the Wellbeing Strategy was broader and looked at the factors that come together to give individual residents or the whole community good wellbeing.

The Strategy focused on areas for improvement where the district compared less favourably to other districts in the county or nationally. These included loneliness, diet and exercise.

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing confirmed that a public consultation and focus groups would take place after the draft Strategy had been presented to Executive in September.

Following questions from the Committee regarding the 'happy healthy workplace' scheme, the Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing advised that there had been a similar national scheme for employers, however it had been withdrawn and had not yet been relaunched. The council had decided to run its own equivalent scheme that, if successful, could be used as an example for private employers across the district to follow.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.

10 **Year End 2022/2023 and May 2023 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to give the Committee a summary on the council's performance against the Business Plan priorities for 2022/23 up to the end of the financial year.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus reported that out of 33 measures for the yearly performance, 32 measures reported as green and one measure reported as amber. In relation to the measure that

reported amber, percentage of waste recycled and composted, the Committee was advised that the council reported percentage was 9 percent higher than the average of England which was 44 percent.

Following questions from the Committee regarding how the targets were set, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus explained that some of the measures had to be reported on nationally to government, so the indicator was how the Council performed against other councils, or how the council had performed in previous years.

In response to comments from the Committee that no detail was included as to how the council would meet the target of promoting the green economy, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that she ask officers to provide additional narrative.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Performance Report for End of year 2022/2023 be noted and no comments be passed to the Executive for consideration at their 3 July meeting.
- (2) That the Annual Report 2022/2023 be noted.

11

May 2023 Performance Monitoring Report

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to give the Committee a summary on the council's performance against the Business Plan priorities for 2023/24 as of end of May 2023.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus reported that of the eight measures with monthly targets, seven measures were on track to be achieved and one measure was reported as amber and slightly off track. The measure reported as amber was percentage of electric vehicles in the fleet. The Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that the service reported that additional electric vehicles had been ordered for in year delivery and subject to no supply chain issue the target was expected to be achieved by year end.

In response to Members' comments regarding the performance measure BP4.1.02, Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour and that the measure seemed to relate to intervention and not prevention., the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that consideration would be given to introducing more tangible quarterly measures.

It was proposed by Councillor Broad and seconded by Councillor Walker that the comment 'The Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.' The Committee voted unanimously in favour.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the monthly Performance Report for May 2023 be noted and the following comment be made to the Executive for consideration at their 3 July meeting: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.

12

Working Groups Update

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead explained that in 2022/23 there were three scrutiny working groups: Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (joint group with Personnel Committee) and Food Insecurity working groups. The Committee was asked to consider whether these working groups should continue during the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Committee agreed that all three groups should continue and requested that the Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead ask existing working group members, where appropriate, if they wished to continue being on the relevant working group.

Resolved

- (1) That the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (joint group with Personnel Committee) and Food Insecurity working groups continue.
- (2) That the Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead be requested to ask existing members of each working group, where appropriate, if they wish to continue on the relevant working group.
- (3) That the following additional Overview & Scrutiny Committee members be appointed to working groups:
 - Climate Action – Councillor Isabel Creed,
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Lynne Parsons, Councillor Rob Pattenden.
 - Food Insecurity – Councillor Isabel Creed, Councillor Dorothy Walker.

13

Work Programme 2023/24

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead presented the indicative Committee work programme for 2023/2024.

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead included anticipated dates and items that were usually presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work programme was a live document and would be regularly

reviewed with the Chairman and submitted to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead advised that discussions were ongoing with Planning Policy officers and the Chairman regarding an additional meeting in August for the Committee to consider the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation documents prior to Executive consideration on 4 September.

In liaison with the Chairman, consideration was being given to the 24 October to be an 'external partners' session. External partners, such as registered housing providers, would be invited to the meeting to explain their work with the council and to give Committee members the opportunity to ask questions.

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing added that the Tenants Charter would be submitted to the 1 August meeting for the Committee to consider and comment before it was submitted to the 4 September Executive meeting.

Resolved

(1) That the indicative work programme 2023/2024 be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

Chairman:

Date: