



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17

March 2017

Foreword

This annual report for overview and scrutiny at Cherwell District Council outlines the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2016/17.

There were significant changes to Committee membership in May 2016, following the all-out election. A number of new Members joined the Committee, and have spent the past 12 months gaining a better understanding of the role of overview and scrutiny in the wider Council context.

Councillor Neil Prestidge
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2016/17

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Neil Prestidge (Ch)	Councillor Jolanta Lis (V-Ch)
Councillor David Anderson	Councillor Claire Bell
Councillor Mike Bishop	Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Mark Cherry	Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Andrew McHugh (since Oct. 2016)	Councillor Nick Mawer (May – Oct. 2016)
Councillor Sandra Rhodes	Councillor Jason Slaymaker
Councillor Bryn Williams	

Substitutes

Councillor Andy Beere
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Guests in attendance

Lead members:

Councillor John Donaldson – Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Tony Ilott – Lead Member for Public Protection
Councillor Debbie Pickford – Lead Member for Clean and Green
Councillor George Reynolds – Deputy Leader of the Council.
Councillor Barry Wood – Leader of the Council.

Officers:

Paul Almond – Street Scene & Landscape Manager
Ed Bailey - Corporate Performance Manager
Natasha Barnes - Shared Contact Centre Service Manager
Scott Barnes – Director of Strategy and Commissioning
Ian Davies - Director of Operational Delivery
Trevor Dixon – Team Leader – Environmental Protection
Sean Gregory – Environmental Protection Officer
Nicola Leonard – Consultation and Engagement Officer
Ed Potter – Head of Environmental Services
Nicola Riley – Shared Community Services Manager
Fiona Todd – Empty Property Officer
Louise Tustian – Acting Corporate Performance and Insight Manager

Scrutiny Topics 2016/17 – Links to Corporate Priorities	
Performance Monitoring	Covers all priorities
Results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016	Covers all priorities

Development of Corporate Business Plan, Priorities and Pledges 2017/18	Covers all priorities
Lead Member Overview – Leader of the Council	Covers all priorities
Lead Member Overview – Lead Member for Housing	Covers all priorities
Council Car Parks and Car Park Service Improvements	A Thriving Community Sound Budgets and a Customer Focussed Council
Area Amenity Maintenance Report	Safe, Green, Clean
Fly Tipping and Environmental Enforcement	Safe, Green, Clean
Safeguarding – update on internal review action plan and draft section 11 return submission	Safe, Green, Clean
Air Quality Action Plan	Safe, Green, Clean
A361 Working Group	A District of Opportunity
Mobile Phone Signal Working Group	A District of Opportunity
Youth Engagement Working Group	A District of Opportunity

Performance Monitoring

Each quarter the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Council's performance as measured through the Performance Management Framework. Annual Performance for the 2015-16 year was reviewed in May 2016, with Quarter 1, 2 and 3 reports being considered in September and November 2016, and February 2017 respectively.

The Council had maintained generally excellent performance as in previous years, but the Committee did request further information from relevant officers regarding Flytipping and the Council's parking strategy.

Results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016

In November 2016 the Committee reviewed the results of the latest Customer Satisfaction survey.

The Committee were particularly pleased to hear that the method for conducting the survey had changed. Previous surveys had been completed by a Citizen's Panel, but in 2016 the process was changed. 3,500 households were selected at random to complete the survey over the summer, and 1,034 responses were received.

The results of the survey were used in the development of the Business Plan for 2017/18.

Development of Corporate Business Plan, Priorities and Pledges 2017/18

In January 2017 the Committee reviewed the Priorities and Pledges included in the draft 2017/18 Business Plan.

The Committee supported the retention of the current priorities as they were presented to them, and did not suggest any changes to the Executive. The Business Plan was subsequently approved at the full Council meeting in February 2017.

Lead Member Overview – Leader of the Council

In February 2017 Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council, attended the Committee to discuss his role as Leader. The Committee had invited Councillor Wood to attend following a similar initiative by Scrutiny colleagues at South Northamptonshire Council, designed to increase Members knowledge of the Lead Member roles and to develop the relationship between Executive and Overview and Scrutiny.

The Committee found the overview extremely informative, and agreed to extend the invitation to the other Executive Lead Members.

Lead Member Overview – Lead Member for Housing

In March 2017 Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing, attended the Committee to discuss the various aspects of his responsibilities as a Lead Member.

The Committee found out more about the different teams operating under the portfolio, as well as receiving an update regarding the Empty Homes Project, which concentrated on bringing empty properties back into use.

As with the item from Councillor Wood, the Committee found the overview very informative.

Council Car Parks and Car Park Service Improvements

Following consideration of the Executive Forward Plan at the May 2016 meeting, the Committee requested that a report scheduled for the September Executive relating to Council Car Parks be discussed by the Committee before submission to Executive.

The Director of Operational Delivery and the Deputy Leader agreed to the request, and attended the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in early September. The proposals were discussed, and the Committee requested that more flexible disabled parking provision be considered.

A follow up to the report, regarding Car Park service improvements, was then considered by the Committee in March 2017. The report detailed the recent 'competitive dialogue' process that had taken place, with a view to upgrades being made to the Council owned car parks.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations to Executive, which were subsequently approved.

Area Amenity Maintenance Report

As a result of a motion to full Council in July 2016 regarding maintenance of amenity areas across the district, the Head of Environmental Services and the Street Scene and Landscaping officer attended the November 2016 meeting of the Committee.

The officers explained to the Committee the proposed action plan for co-ordination of maintenance, involving relevant town and parish councils and the County Council.

The Committee supported the proposed actions.

Fly Tipping and Environmental Enforcement

After consideration of performance data in May 2016, the Committee requested that officers provide more information regarding fly tipping and enforcement, ahead of Executive's consideration of a report in October 2016.

The Head of Environmental Services attended the September meeting, and explained that the Government had allowed Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's) to be introduced for Fly Tipping offences. Although the number of fly tipping incidents had gradually increased, it had not been possible to increase the number of prosecutions as there was not always sufficient evidence. It was hoped that the introduction of the FPN's would act as a deterrent, and the level of offences would start to reduce.

The Committee supported the proposed introduction of the FPNs, as did Executive at their meeting in October.

Safeguarding

Following an extensive internal review during 2015, it was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny would receive an annual report on Safeguarding in advance of the yearly submission of the Section 11 Audit return.

The report highlighted areas where actions had been completed, and those that were still work in progress.

The Section 11 audit return was supported by the Committee for submission to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board in December 2016.

Air Quality Action Plan

Following consideration of the Executive Forward Plan at the February 2017 meeting, the Committee requested that a report scheduled for the April Executive relating to the Air Quality Action Plan be discussed by the Committee before submission to Executive.

Officers from Environmental Protection attended the March 2017 meeting of the Committee, and answered questions from the Members.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations, which were subsequently approved at Executive in April 2017.

Task and Finish Working Groups

At the first meeting of the year in May 2016, the Committee discussed areas that may benefit from a Task and Finish style scrutiny review. Three subjects were agreed for review, and working groups were set up.

A361

In November 2016 a scoping document was signed off by the Committee, which agreed to look at the A361 running through Cherwell district.

The working group are currently in the early stages of research gathering, and have contacted parishes along the route to ask for their input into the review. Work will continue into the new Municipal Year.

Mobile Phone Signal

Following the establishment of the Mobile Phone Signal Working group, initial research identified a similar project being undertaken by a group of MPs.

The British Infrastructure Group (BIG) intend to improve mobile phone signal across the UK by the end of 2017, off the back of a £5 billion commitment from Government.

The Committee agreed that the working group should carry out local research with a view to submitting it to the BIG review.

Youth Engagement

In 2014, a review was carried out to improve Youth Engagement in the democratic process.

The review started well and had a lot of interest from local schools, but as time passed and students moved on, interest in the subject waned.

The Committee discussed the subject again, and felt that it was important for Youth Engagement to be encouraged wherever possible. A new scoping document was completed, with the aim of the review being to launch an event designed to engage young people in the democratic process.

The Committee approved the document in February 2017. Work on the review will continue over the coming months.