

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 22 January 2019 at 6.45 pm

Present: Councillor Sean Gaul (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Tony Mepham
Councillor Cassi Perry
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Lucinda Wing

Also Present: Gary Brewer, Gypsy and Traveller Service Manager,
Oxfordshire County Council

Apologies for absence: Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Sandra Rhodes
Councillor Bryn Williams

Officers: Graeme Kane, Chief Operating Officer (Deputy CEO)
Adele Taylor, Executive Director: Finance and Governance (Interim) & Section 151 Officer
Hedd Vaughan Evans, Assistant Director Performance and Transformation
Richard Webb, Assistant Director: Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

36 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

37 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reminded Members that there would be Code of Conduct Training on 24 January 2019 at 6pm and Safeguarding training on Thursday 7 February 2019 at 6pm.

Details of both sessions had been sent out by the Democratic and Elections team and confirmation requested if attendance at either session was planned.

38 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

39 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40 **Unauthorised Encampments**

The Chief Operating Officer introduced Gary Brewer, Gypsy and Traveller Service Manager, Oxfordshire County Council who gave a presentation on Unauthorised Encampments within the Cherwell District.

The Gypsy and Traveller Service Manager explained the process that was undertaken when an unauthorised encampment was set-up, including the legal process that might need to take place to get an injunction for the travellers to move on, and the requirement of the County Council to assess welfare needs of travellers before any form of eviction process could be started.

In answer to questions from the Committee, the Gypsy and Traveller Service Manager advised that information on how to respond to Unauthorised Encampments had been included in the briefing note. Information and contact details were also available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.

In the course of discussion, the Committee raised concerns that when unauthorised encampments were set-up, incorrect information was sometimes shared on social media such as Twitter and Facebook by some members of the community, escalating situations with Travellers unnecessarily. The Committee and officers agreed that accurate communication was important when unauthorised encampments occurred, and that all parties should do more to ensure correct information was being circulated

In response to Members comments regarding the lack of official available sites for travellers in the Cherwell District, the Chief Operating Officer informed the Committee that this would be a planning matter and agreed to speak to the Executive Director of Place and Growth (Interim) to request that he provide a briefing note to the Committee, giving the current position relating to Authorised Encampment sites in the Local Plan part 2.

The Committee thanked the Gypsy and Traveller Service Manager for his informative presentation and work with the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Resolved

- (1) That the Presentation and Briefing Note be noted.

- (2) That the Interim Executive Director of Place and Growth be requested to provide a briefing note to the Committee giving the current position relating to Authorised Encampment sites in the Local Plan part 2.

41 **Draft Business Plan and Budget**

The Executive Director Finance and Governance(Interim) & Section 151 Officer and the Assistant Director Performance and Transformation presented the Draft Business Plan and Budget which set out Cherwell District Council's priorities for 2019/2020 and an overview of the anticipated budget.

The Executive Director Finance and Governance(Interim) & Section 151 Officer explained that 2019/20 was the last year of a four year financial settlement from Central Government, and the figures for subsequent years were therefore an estimate. A more detailed report was due to be considered by the Budget Planning Committee at their meeting on 29 January 2019.

With regard to the Draft Business Plan, the Assistant Director Performance and Transformation explained that the plan on a page format would again be used for 2019/20, with the three main areas remaining the same for the new financial year. A light refresh of the performance indicator headings had been carried out.

In response to Members' comments regarding the amount of business rates received by the Council being projected to go down, the Executive Director Finance and Governance(Interim) and Section 151 Officer gave a brief explanation of Business Rates volume and the existing retention scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That the Draft Business Plan and Budget for 2019/2020 be noted.

42 **Work Programme**

The Democratic and Elections Officers gave an update on the status of topics suggested for scrutiny.

In response to a request from the Committee, it was confirmed that Youth Provision would be added to the next municipal year's work programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the workplan be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman:

Date: