



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

**Overview and Scrutiny
Annual Report
2019/20**

July 2020

Foreword

This annual report for overview and scrutiny at Cherwell District Council outlines the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2019/20.

The scope and number of topics examined by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee this year is truly astounding. Whether 5G capability, the Oxfordshire Growth Deal or our effectiveness at maintaining a clean and green Cherwell, members of the committee have approached each meeting with curiosity and fairness - and I thank them for their pertinent and considered questions.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to members of the wider council for their input in my review of the committee's effectiveness. Feedback has been collated and I look forward to using it to inform our work programme over the next 12 months.

Councillor Lucinda Wing
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2019/20

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Lucinda Wing (Ch)	Councillor Tom Wallis (V-Ch)
Councillor Mike Bishop	Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Shaida Hussain	Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Tony Mepham	Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon	Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Douglas Webb – from December 2019	Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Sandra Rhodes – May to December 2019	

Substitutes

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Nathan Bignell

Guests in attendance

Lead members:

Councillor Barry Wood – Leader of the Council
Councillor Dan Sames – Lead Member for Clean and Green
Councillor Andrew McHugh – Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Ian Corkin – Lead Member for Customers and Transformation

External guests:

Eric Owens, Assistant Director Growth and Place, Oxfordshire County Council
Craig Bower, Digital Programme Manager, Oxfordshire County Council
Bev Hindle, Oxfordshire Growth Board

Officers:

Graeme Kane, Chief Operating Officer (left in March 2020)
Ed Potter, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
Adele Taylor, Interim Executive Director: Finance and Governance & Section 151 Officer
Hedd Vaughan Evans, Assistant Director Performance and Transformation (left in December 2019)
Chris Hipkiss, Property and Investment Consultant
Louise Tustian, Acting Assistant Director Performance and Transformation (from December 2019)
Paul Almond, Street Scene and Landscape Manager
Trevor Dixon, Environmental Protection and Licensing Manager
Jim Guest, Environmental Protection Officer
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director: Communities

Richard Webb, Assistant Director: Regulatory Services and Community Safety
 Simon Furlong, Corporate Director – Communities
 Robert Jolly, Assistant Director Growth and Economy
 Gillian Douglas, Assistant Director Housing and Social Care Commissioning
 Kevin Larnar, Healthy Communities Manager
 Steven Newman, Senior Economic Growth Officer
 Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
 Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
 Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer

Scrutiny Topics 2019/20 – Links to Corporate Priorities	
Scrutiny at Cherwell and Work Programme Planning	Covers all priorities
Car Parking Task and Finish Group	Covers all priorities
Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report	Covers all priorities
Show and Tell – Wellbeing Directorate	Thriving Communities & Wellbeing
Banbury Public Spaces Protection Order	Covers all priorities
Waste and Recycling	Clean, Green and Safe
Grass Verges and Green Spaces	Clean, Green and Safe
Air Quality Update	Clean, Green, and Safe
Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities	Covers all priorities
Castle Quay Update	District of Opportunity and Growth
Oxfordshire Growth Board	District of Opportunity and Growth
Veterans, Armed Forces Covenant and Remembrance	Thriving Communities and Wellbeing
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board/Oxfordshire Adult Board Section 11 Review and Endorsement	Thriving Communities and Wellbeing
Public Art	Thriving Communities and Wellbeing
Business Plan 2020/2021	Covers all priorities
Digital Connectivity in Cherwell	Thriving Communities and Wellbeing District of Opportunity and Growth
Housing Strategy Progress report	Covers all priorities

Scrutiny at Cherwell

At the first meeting of the committee in the 2019/2020 municipal year, Members reviewed the items on the work programme and discussed possible additional subjects for inclusion on the work programme for the year.

Following the introduction of the topic list in the previous municipal year, this approach was continued. Topics suggested by members are added to a list, which is submitted to each meeting along with the work programme. The annexe to this

report gives a brief description of the subjects raised, and how each one was addressed.

Car Parking Task and Finish Group

The year started well with a report from the Assistant Director Environmental Services detailing the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny Car Parking Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish group had been set up during the 2018/19 municipal year. The group had held four meetings with officers to discuss the current car parking provision, and future proposals, with a view to producing a new Car Parking Strategy.

The group had reviewed performance data relating to the Council's car parking management contract with Apcoa, who ran the council owned car parks. Consultation took place with Banbury BID, Bicester Vision and Kidlington Parish Council to gather feedback and suggestions relating to current car parking provision.

The group also discussed arrangements regarding decriminalisation of parking across the district and agreed to pursue decriminalisation alongside Oxfordshire County Council.

As a result of the work of the Car Parking Task and Finish Group, a draft Car Parking Strategy and Car Parking Action Plan was recommended to Executive for consideration in September 2019. Executive approved the Strategy for consultation, which took place at the beginning of 2020. Officers are reviewing consultation responses and it is anticipated the Strategy will be submitted to Executive for adoption in June 2020.

Performance Monitoring

Each quarter the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Council's performance as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

In July 2019 the Assistant Director; Performance and Transformation and the Assistant Director Finance and Governance gave a presentation which summarised the Council's Performance, Risk and Finance monitoring position at the end of the municipal year 2018-2019.

The Committee had suggested that the green waste target should be a percentage recycled and not amount collected, as this was not under the Council's control and would vary each year. The comments were raised with the Assistant Director Environmental Services.

The end of year report considered by the Committee in July 2020 (delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic) was very positive, with just one indicator reporting as red for the year.

‘Show and Tell’ – Wellbeing Directorate

The purpose of the ‘Show and Tell’ items is to enable the Committee to get a deeper understanding and awareness of a directorate or service area, to enable consideration as to whether any aspect should be added to the topic list for possible scrutiny review.

The Assistant Director Wellbeing attended the meeting of the Committee on 3 September and gave a presentation which provided an overview of the Wellbeing team and the activities covered. This included an update on the Cherwell Lottery which had been launched in July 2019.

The Assistant Director Wellbeing also gave an overview of Intergenerational practice and projects delivered by Cherwell District Council. The Committee congratulated the team on the work undertaken on this project.

Banbury Public Spaces Protection Order.

The Banbury Public Spaces Protection Order had been put in place in December 2016 for a period of three years and was due for review. It could either be renewed or allowed to expire.

The Committee considered and supported the proposed Banbury Public Spaces Protection Order and the amendments which removed rough sleeping from the order, recommending its agreement by Executive.

Waste and Recycling.

The Assistant Director Environmental Services attended the October meeting of the Committee and gave a presentation on Waste and Recycling explaining how waste was sorted, collected and distributed to the relevant disposal centres.

A visit was subsequently arranged to the Casepak Materials Recovery Facility in Leicester, to enable Members to see how the materials were dealt with once they had been collected by the Council’s recycling fleet.

The subjects of fuel economy and electric vehicles were raised by the committee and the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that small electric vehicles were already in use, but the larger collection vehicles were not widely available. Environmental Services kept up-to-date with developing technology.

Grass Verges and Green Spaces

At the request of the Committee, 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.

Air Quality Update

The Environmental Protection and Licensing Manager provided updates on the air quality monitoring carried out across the District in 2018 and presented the 2019 Air Quality Action Plan for Banbury Bicester and Kidlington.

The Environmental Protection Officer informed the Committee that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had recently announced that applications 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 had been an opportunity for Councillors to participate and details were circulated to Committee Members.

Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

The Minister for Housing Communities and Local Government had published revised Scrutiny Guidance in May 2019. Cherwell District Council already had in place many of the areas of good practice but there were opportunities for further enhancing the role of Scrutiny within the organisation, including the drafting of an Executive Scrutiny Protocol. The draft protocol is due to be presented to the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

Oxfordshire Growth Board

At the request of the Committee, Bev Hindle, Director of the Oxfordshire Growth Board was welcomed to the meeting in December 2019, and explained the purpose and role of the Growth Board as well as the work that was being done alongside the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Veterans, Armed Forces Covenant and Remembrance

The Healthy Communities Manager gave details of current and planned support relating to veterans, the Armed Forces Covenant and remembrance events.

The Healthy Communities Manager had advised the Committee that the council would be actively promoting various policies and schemes that supported veterans, including the guaranteed interview. Any veteran that applied for a job advertised with the Council and met the essential criteria would be guaranteed an interview.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board/Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board Section 11 Review and Endorsement

The Section 11 Audit for Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards is reviewed each year by the Committee prior to its submission. The Assistant Director Wellbeing gave an overview of the self-assessment and the accompanying action plan. One aspect of the action plan related to the requirement for Members to complete the online

Safeguarding training and the Committee agreed that it was important all Members completed the training. The Committee endorsed the Section 11 Audit for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards.

Public Art

The Assistant Director Wellbeing provided an overview of the Council's role in relation to public art, explaining that public art was recognised as important to developing the cultural identity of Cherwell and offered an opportunity to engage with local communities. The Committee was shown examples of public art across the district.

Business Plan 2020/21

The Acting Assistant Director Performance and Transformation gave a presentation on the draft Business Plan for 2020/21, which outlined four strategic priorities and four themes that would form the basis of departmental service plans for the coming year.

Once approved by Full Council, the Business Plan forms the basis of the performance framework. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor progress against the priorities and themes through the quarterly reports in the new Municipal Year.

Digital Connectivity in Cherwell

Following a pause in Committee meetings due to the coronavirus pandemic, in July 2020 the Committee received an informative presentation from Craig Bower, Digital Programme Manager at Oxfordshire County Council, regarding digital connectivity across the district and the wider county.

The presentation gave the latest picture on the level of connectivity, and commitments from central Government to provide funding for superfast connections (defined as a connection faster than 30MBS) to the remaining 2% of households in the district.

Housing Strategy Progress report

In July 2020 the Assistant Director Housing and Social Care Commissioning attended the Committee to give a progress update on the Housing Strategy that had been adopted in February 2019.

The Committee had considered the draft strategy prior to its approval by the Executive, and requested an update after 12 months.

The Assistant Director Housing and Social Care Commissioning explained that the Coronavirus pandemic had had a serious impact on housing demand, and the action plan for 2020-21 had been amended to account for the additional demand.

The Committee congratulated the Assistant Director on the performance of the department, particularly the homelessness team, during the pandemic.

Member Survey

The Chairman of the Committee created a brief survey which was circulated to all Members of the Council, to gauge their feelings about the effectiveness of scrutiny, and to find out if there were any subject areas that could be added to the future work programme.

Democratic and Elections Officers will work through the results of the survey with the Chairman, before a Committee-wide work planning discussion at the September 2020 meeting.