

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held as a Virtual meeting, on 7 October 2020 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 Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Barry Wood - Leader of the Council
Councillor Ian Corkin - Lead Member – Customers and Transformation

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Tony Mepham

Officers:

Steve Jorden, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment & (Interim) Monitoring Officer
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Robin Rogers, Head of Strategy
Samantha Shepherd, Policy Team Leader
Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

19 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

20 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

21 **Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring report**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance and the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes which detailed the Council's Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring position as at the end of the first quarter of 2020/2021.

The report showed that performance had maintained a relatively stable position in light of the covid-19 situation.

With regard to the four indicators reporting as red – number of affordable homes delivered; maintaining a 5-year land supply; percentage of business rates collected; and percentage of non-major applications overturned at appeal - the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes advised the Committee that all four had improved during the course of quarter two.

Resolved

- (1) That the monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring report for July 2020 be noted

22 **Including Everyone - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework**

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director for Customers and Organisational Development which gave details of a proposed new inclusion framework.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Customers and Transformation explained that a partnership approach had been undertaken with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to draft the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework 'Including Everyone'.

A number of engagement sessions had been held with staff at both Cherwell District Council (CDC) and OCC, with information gathered relating to

experiences of inequality. Further staff sessions had then been held during August, to discuss the draft framework and seek feedback, which would shape the final policy.

The policy would be accompanied by individual action plans for CDC and OCC to take account of the unique circumstances and actions needed in each council.

The Executive were due to consider the draft Framework and the associated Action Plan at their meeting in November.

The Committee congratulated officers for the work that had been undertaken, and supported the draft framework.

With regards to suggestions for the CDC action plan, the Committee commented that not all residents had access to IT equipment or the internet at home, and in some areas of Banbury Polish speaking residents accounted for a large proportion of the electorate. It was therefore requested that digital inclusivity and community integration of non-English speakers be included.

The Committee also requested that consideration be given to anonymised job applications during the recruitment process.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft policy document be noted.
- (2) That digital inclusivity and community integration of non-English speakers be included in the associated action plan, which will be considered by the Executive at their meeting of 2 November 2020.

Constitution Review

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director – Commercial Development, Assets and Investment that detailed potential 'areas for further consideration' in relation to a review of the Council's Constitution.

Feedback from members, officers and the wider review of local authority constitutions, supported by Bevan Brittan, had identified the potential for positive change in several areas. Full Council would consider the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including the establishment of a cross-party Member working group, at its meeting later in October.

In considering the areas for review, Members of the Committee expressed concerns relating to the proposed review of the time limit for public addresses and the possible introduction of a limit on the total number of public speakers permitted to register per item. It was felt that these could be seen as ways of restricting public input into the democratic process.

The Corporate Director – Commercial Development, Assets and Investment assured the Committee that all areas for review would be discussed in full by the working group who would make proposals for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before final consideration by Full Council.

Resolved

That full Council be recommended to agree:

- (1) the areas for further consideration outlined in paragraph 3 of the report (annexe to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) the establishment of a politically balanced, informal cross-party working group to review proposed changes.

24

Work Programme 2020/2021

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2020/2021.

Democratic and Elections Officers advised the Committee that an update on the Constitution Review would be scheduled for the December 2020 meeting, along with an update on the action plan relating to the Community Nature Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the inclusion of a Constitution Review update and Community Nature Plan at the December 2020 meeting, the indicative work programme be noted

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

Chairman:

Date: