

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Virtual meeting, on 12 January 2021 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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Tony Mepham

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ansaf Azhar, Corporate Director of Public Health & Wellbeing
Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adults & Housing Services
Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development
Anita Bradley, Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Gillian Douglas, Assistant Director: Social Care Commissioning and Housing
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director: Wellbeing
Richard Webb, Assistant Director: Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Belinda Green, Operations Director - CSN Resources
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Frances Evans, Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

34 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

35 **Minutes**

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

36 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, to her first meeting of the Committee.

37 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

38 **Covid-19 Update**

The Committee received a comprehensive presentation from the Chief Executive and Directors, providing an update on the Council's response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

In introducing the presentation the Chief Executive explained that it would cover two aspects, the ongoing situation in Oxfordshire and specifically Cherwell in relation to the number of cases, as well as detailing the latest work by officers in responding to the pandemic.

The presentation covered the latest data and health statistics, including the spread of the new variant that had been identified in December 2020, and daily cases both on a County level and on a district-by-district basis; compliance, and work being undertaken by the regulatory teams to ensure the various duties and requirements were being met; the situation with schools and the availability of key worker spaces; wellbeing services, including the shielding support team and food insecurity assistance; and an update on the grants available to local businesses, and individuals who had been required to self isolate under the Test and Trace scheme.

In response to questions from the Committee the Corporate Director Adults and Housing Services explained that hospitals in the County were coping well with Covid-19 related admissions. The number of Covid patients had increased 100% from the levels seen at Christmas, but the flow of patients into hospitals was being managed well.

The Committee thanked officers for another comprehensive presentation, and requested a further update in March 2021.

Resolved

- (1) That the comprehensive verbal update be noted.
- (2) That a further update be scheduled for the March 2021 meeting of the Committee.

39 **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 that summarised the Council's Performance, Risk and Finance monitoring position as at the end of October 2020.

Of the 39 Business Plan Measures, 33 had been reporting green, four reporting amber and one reporting as red. One measure had been removed from the indicators completely, 'High risk food businesses inspected', as the Food Standards Agency had made changes to the national food law in response to Covid-19.

With regards to the risk register, the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes advised the Committee that two risk scores relating to Covid had changed, Covid 19 Business Continuity had increased to high risk, and post Covid 19 recovery had increased to medium risk.

Resolved

- (1) That the performance aspects of the monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring report for October 2020 be noted.

40 **Business Plan 2021**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes regarding the Business Plan for 2021.

The Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes explained that the proposed Business Plan changes had been included in the consultation process for the 2021/2022 Budget.

The four existing strategic priorities – housing that meets your needs; leading on environmental sustainability; an enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres; and healthy, resilient and engaged communities; would remain in the plan, alongside the underpinning delivery themes of customers, healthy places, partnerships and continuous improvement.

Three new delivery themes would be added, to reflect the changing local and national priorities; Covid-19 recovery; including everyone, the equalities, diversity and inclusion framework; and climate action.

The Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes explained that monitoring of indicators would continue via the Performance Management Framework.

The 'Plan on a page' approach that had been used for previous plans had been replaced by a slightly longer business plan document, which included a foreword from the Leader of the Council and details of Council funding sources.

The Committee commented that they were pleased to see the including everyone policy coming through in various aspects of work across the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

41

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the Assistant Director – Housing and Social Care Commissioning, which detailed the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2021-2026 and the associated action plan.

In introducing the presentation the Assistant Director – Housing and Social Care Commissioning explained that the current Homelessness Strategy had come to an end. As a housing authority it was a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy. The proposed new strategy would cover a period of five years, however the Assistant Director – Housing and Social Care Commissioning clarified that the strategy would be kept under review during that time.

The Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader gave an overview of the proposed new strategy, which would be based on six strategic priorities rather than four as in the previous version.

The main changes included a person-centred, strengths based approach to actions and solutions; working with partners and using feedback from customers to identify up-stream prevention; working with registered providers to review the allocation scheme and accept nominations of customers who are 'tenancy supported'; and improving data capture, recording and monitoring.

The Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader then asked the Committee to consider three brief questions via the Slido online polling app. The questions were:

- i) To what extent do you agree or disagree with our vision for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping?
- ii) Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree that the 6 priorities are the right ones to deliver our vision?
- iii) What are the important things you want to see included in the strategy?

The Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader explained that the draft strategy was out for consultation until 17 January. Feedback received during the consultation, including the comments from the Committee members who had answered the Slido poll questions, would be used to inform any amendments to the strategy, before being considered for adoption by Executive at their meeting on 1 March. All Councillors were encouraged to complete the online survey regarding the draft strategy.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding charities such as mental health specialists being pro-actively invited to respond to the consultation, the Assistant Director – Housing and Social Care Commissioning advised that such groups had been engaged in relation to the County wide strategy, due to the County Council's lead role in mental health accommodation. However they would also be invited to comment before the consultation closed.

The Committee commented that they would like to see more reference to social housing in the strategy rather than affordable housing, as there was still a need for more social housing in the district.

In response to a request from Councillor Perran Moon, the Leader of the Council confirmed that he would be happy to explore the potential of housing co-operatives across the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft strategy and appendices be noted.
- (2) That Executive be advised the strategy should focus on Social Housing provision rather than Affordable Housing.
- (3) That the Executive be requested to explore the potential of housing co-operatives.

(Draft) Statement of Licensing Policy

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services and Community Safety that detailed a revised Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Assistant Director – Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that the Council was required to review the policy at least every five

years. The last review had taken place in 2015, with the revised policy taking effect from January 2016.

The proposed changes for the latest review related to policy changes around child exploitation and safeguarding, and the provision of 70% no smoking seating in external areas of licensed premises, similar to the requirements under pavement licence conditions.

A public consultation had been held between 8 December 2020 and 5 January 2021, and although some licence holders had queried how the changes would affect them, no comments had been made on the proposals.

Following questions from the Committee relating to Councillors and town/parish councils not being made aware of Licensing applications in their areas, the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services and Community Safety agreed to seek information and provide clarity regarding the advertisement and consultation process.

The Committee confirmed that they supported the proposed changes to the Licensing Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy be supported.

43

Work Programme 2020/21

The Committee considered the work programme for the remainder of the 2020/2021 Municipal year.

As agreed during the presentation on Covid-19 earlier on the agenda, a further update would be scheduled for the March 2021 meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the inclusion of a further Covid-19 update at the March 2021 meeting of the Committee, the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.04 pm

Chairman:

Date: