

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 15 March 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Tom Wallis (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Sandy Dallimore
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

Councillor Andrew Beere (In place of Councillor Matt Hodgson)
Councillor John Broad (In place of Councillor Ian Middleton)

Also Present:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council (virtual)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Adam Nell

Officers:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

43 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

44 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

46 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

47 **Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant 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 January 2022.

The Performance Team Leader explained that as of January 2022, 21 performance indicators were reporting green, 3 were reporting amber and 3 reporting red.

The indicators reporting red relating to the amount of time to process new housing benefit claims; percentage of waste recycled and composted; and percentage of council tax collected.

The Committee was advised that the indicator relating to waste composted was as a result of seasonal reductions, with the amount of green waste collected at the end of the calendar year reducing significantly. In response to questions from the Committee the Performance Team Leader advised that discussions were ongoing with the Assistant Director Environmental Services, regarding the best way of recording performance for the waste collection indicators, due to the seasonal implications of the service.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding environmental sustainability performance measures and climate action updates, the Performance Team Leader advised that detailed responses would be sought from the relevant departments.

Resolved

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

48 **Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Law and Governance that presented the final reports of the scrutiny working groups on Members' Education and Training, and Parish Engagement.

With regards to the Members' Education and Training working group, nine recommendations had been made which would be implemented from May 2022 if approved by the Committee. The Lead Member for Finance and Governance would also be requested to endorse the recommendations.

In relation to the Parish Engagement working group, a number of areas for further detailed review had been identified. The recommendation was that the working group should continue in the new Municipal Year, with updated Terms of Reference to reflect the areas identified for further detailed review.

The Chairman of the working groups, Councillor Sandy Dallimore, thanked the Members of both working groups for the work undertaken to date.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Education and Training Working Group be noted.
- (2) That the report of the Parish Engagement Working Group be noted.
- (3) That the Lead Member for Finance and Governance be recommended to note and endorse the recommendations of the Members' Education and Training Working Group.
- (4) That the continuation of the Parish Engagement Working Group in the 2022/2023 municipal year be agreed.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22

The Committee considered the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual report for 2021/22.

The draft report summarised the work of the committee over the Municipal Year, and detailed guests and officers that had attended meetings. As the report had been drafted prior to the final meeting of the year, additional information would need to be added to the report before it was considered by Full Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report for 2021/22 be noted
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Director – Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee,

to finalise the areas highlighted in the report following the final meeting of the municipal year, prior to its submission to Council.

50 **Work Programme**

The Committee considered its indicative work programme for 2022-23, and received an update on items previously submitted to the Committee.

With regard to the Constitution Annual Review, the Committee were advised that the decision to end the formal partnership working between Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) had impacted on the proposed work of the group. An interim Monitoring Officer (MO) had been appointed and full Council had delegated authority to the MO to undertake amendments to the Constitution required as a result of the termination of the section 113 partnership agreement with OCC.

As the delegations granted did not incorporate all areas initially identified as forming part of the annual review, it was proposed that further delegated authority be granted to the interim Monitoring Officer, to review further aspects of the Constitution. Changes proposed would be presented to full Council at the annual meeting in May 2022.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Governance and Elections Manager assured the Committee that all Group Leaders would be kept updated.

With regard to the work programme, two suggestions were put forward as additional items for the Committee to consider.

The first related to the current situation with Ukrainian refugees, and a CDC specific response. The Chief Executive was providing regular updates to Members through her weekly emails and additional emails as required, for example, to signpost to the Government website, however Councillor Perran Moon requested scrutiny consideration of the issue from a local Cherwell perspective.

The Governance and Elections Manager advised that a specific Scrutiny review may not be the most effective way to address the issue, as the Committee were not due to meet again until June 2022. An emergency motion expressing support to refugees had been unanimously agreed at full Council in February 2022. Councillor Moon requested that an update on Cherwell District Council's support to Ukrainian refugees be added to the work programme.

The second suggestion was in relation to transparency and providing information for residents on how elections were run. Councillor Moon requested in particular that information on the process and procedure for an election count be made available on the Cherwell District Council website.

In response to the request the Governance and Elections Manager explained that the Returning Officer role was separate to the day-to-day running of the Council, but that the request would be relayed to the Returning Officer.

Resolved

- (1) That responsibility be delegated to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the named officer where necessary, to review the following aspects of the Constitution to submit to the 18 May Council meeting with a view to their adoption:
 - Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules, in consultation with the S151 Officer
 - Members' Planning Code of Conduct and Councillor call-in of planning applications, in consultation with the Assistant Director Planning and Development
 - Addition of the Council budget debate speaking procedures (currently based on custom) and general review of all sections to ensure consistency of language, accessible format and layout
- (2) That it be agreed that the Monitoring Officer be requested to keep Group Leader, relevant Lead Members and Committee Chairman updated on the Constitution review work.
- (3) That subject to the addition of an item to provide an update on Cherwell District Council's support to Ukrainian Refugees, the work programme update be noted.
- (4) That the update on topics previously suggested for review be noted.
- (5) That the update on items previously submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.12 pm

Chairman:

Date: