Cherwell District Council

Council

18 July 2022

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Report of Assistant Director – Law, Governance and Democratic Services (Interim)

This report is public

Purpose of report

This report presents the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2021/22

1.0   Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

1.1   To note the report.

2.0   Introduction

2.1   The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a constitutional obligation to "report annually to Council on the function of their workings" (Constitution Part 2, Committee Terms of Reference, section 2.12 point C).

3.0   Report Details

3.1   The report summarises the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the committee) during the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

3.2   The Committee considered a draft of the report at their final meeting of the year in March 2022.

3.3   The report was approved, subject to additions being made to reflect the decisions taken at the March 2022 meeting.

Key outcomes achieved - Working Groups

3.4   Two cross party working groups were established to work on two subjects during the year; member training and education, and improving the council's relationship with town and parish councils across the district.

3.5   The member training and education group comprised 6 councillors who had been elected in May 2021 and made nine recommendations (Minute 48 refers), which included creating a series of 'how to' reference guides and frequently asked question documents, to help newly elected members get to grips with and understand their role as elected members.

3.6   The parish working group undertook preliminary work exploring the statutory roles of district and parish councils and mapping current interactions between Cherwell District Council and the parishes in the district. The working group identified a number of areas for further work (Minute 48 refers), including a survey of parish councils to gather views on their interactions with the district council, and investigating IT interactions and integrations.

3.7   Both working groups were well supported by the committee and wider council membership, and both will carry on during 2022/23 to continue the work and implement the recommendations.

Pre-decision Scrutiny - Oxfordshire Plan 2050

3.8   Officers from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 team attended two meetings during the year, to present details of the Regulation 18 consultation stage of the Oxfordshire Plan preparations, prior to their consideration by Executive.

3.9   The committee requested a clear communications strategy for the local plan, ongoing updates and future involvement of Overview and Scrutiny during the remainder of the process, as well as raising awareness of the need for more social rented housing.

3.10   The Chairman of the committee attended the Executive meeting in July 2021 to give the feedback during the Executive discussions.

3.11   The committee also considered changes to the council's Housing Allocation Scheme and draft Tenancy Strategy and Affordability Statement 2021 prior to their consideration by Executive. The committee endorsed all proposed changes, and both documents were subsequently approved.

4.0   Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1   The outgoing Chairman of the committee Tom Wallis, who stood down as a district councillor at the May 2022 elections, has used his Chairman's foreword to sum up the conduct of the meetings across the year "there were high levels of contribution from members in every meeting. Passions were often expressed but every meeting was conducted in a spirit of seriousness and fairness, which greatly enhanced our ability as a group to scrutinise council business".

4.2   The recommendations as set out are in the best interests of the Council and ensures the Overview and Scrutiny committee fulfils its constitutional obligation.

5.0 Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny committee, 15 March 2022 – approved the report.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to agree the recommendations. This is rejected, as this would lead to the Committee not meeting its constitutional obligation.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 01295 221845,
michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The annual report meets the constitutional obligation for the Overview and Scrutiny committee to report annually to full Council.

Comments checked by:
Shahin Ismail, Interim Assistant Director – Law, Governance & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer. Shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

7.3 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Celia Prado-Teeling, Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus, 01295 221556
Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

7.4 There are no equalities and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Celia Prado-Teeling, Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus, 01295 221556
Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A as not an Executive report

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

N/A

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

The Corporate Plan themes addressed by each scrutiny topic are detailed in the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2021/22.

Lead Councillor

None

Document Information
Appendix number and title
- Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22 and annexes

Background papers
None

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