

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 28 July 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor John Broad
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Bryn Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Dan Sames
Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group (Virtual)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Ian Harwood

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Nathan Elvery, Chief Operating Officer Interim
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Shahin Ismail, Assistant Director Law, Governance, Democratic Services & Procurement & Monitoring Officer Interim
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 **Minutes**

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

11 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made two announcements:

1. A change in Committee membership had been made since the last meeting, with Councillor Bryn Williams replacing Councillor John Donaldson. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Williams and thanked Councillor Donaldson for his time with the Committee.

12 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

13 **Attendance of the Leader of the Council**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council, to the meeting to give an overview of the current work of the Executive.

The Leader explained to the Committee the current priorities of the Executive, and the day-to-day concerns for him as Leader. The financial stability of the council remained a high priority, with the uncertainty around the continuation of the New Homes Bonus and the proposed changes to Business Rates retention.

The conclusion of the decoupling from Oxfordshire County Council was a current priority. The Leader explained that he was keen to ensure residents saw no difference in service delivery during the decoupling period.

Climate change was a further key priority running through all council work, including the emerging local plan.

The Leader also explained short term issues that were currently being addressed. Following the Health and Care Act receiving Royal Assent earlier in the year, Integrated Care Systems (ICS) were being introduced across the country. The creation of an ICS allowed health and care organisations to join together to provide all relevant support and care to patients, and formalised the 'one system' approach that had been adopted during the covid pandemic. Cherwell district formed part of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICS area, also known as 'BOB'.

In response to questions from the Committee the Chief Executive agreed to circulate more details about the BOB ICS as part of the next weekly update to Members.

Regarding the Executive Forward Plan of upcoming work, the Leader advised that Climate Change was due to be considered in September, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 in October, and discussions were also needed regarding a replacement depot at Bicester.

In response to questions regarding increasing energy costs and an increased number of residents entering fuel poverty, the Chief Executive assured the Committee that a system wide response was being worked on and an update on the work being undertaken would be brought to the September 2022 meeting of the Committee.

Regarding progress on the implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework, the Leader explained that the work linked in with all areas of the organisation, and all reports submitted to the Executive included equalities implications. The Chairman advised the Committee that an EDI update was included on the 'items to be allocated' section of the indicative Committee work programme.

The Committee thanked the Leader for his update.

Resolved

- (1) That the overview of current Executive work be noted.
- (2) That an item on the activity Cherwell District Council is undertaking to support residents with the cost of living crisis be added to the work programme for the September meeting of the committee.
- (3) That information on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System ('BOB') be circulated to all members via the Chief Executive's weekly update.

14

Climate Change

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities to the meeting to give a presentation on the council's work regarding climate change.

Councillor Sames explained that the council had commissioned Bioregional to review the council's activities against the 'One Planet Living' framework. One Planet Living meant living within the resources of one planet rather than the resources of three, as was currently the case in Europe.

The review of the district's activities looked at internal and external activities and their impact on residents and businesses. The review detailed ten principles to form the basis of One Planet Living, and Councillor Sames explained that the aim was to embed the principles across the district to increase sustainability.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Sames explained that Executive were seeking endorsement of the One Planet Living approach as the start of an ongoing process. Bioregional would continue to work with the council, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be involved as work progressed.

The Committee endorsed the One Planet Living approach, but expressed concerns regarding the amount of progress made in relation to the climate emergency declared in 2019, and the pledge to be net carbon neutral by 2030. Committee also requested future agenda items that would allow meaningful scrutiny to take place.

In response to the concerns, Councillor Sames explained the carbon management baseline had decreased 51% by 2020/2021, compared to the 2008/2009 position. The baseline was predicted to reduce a further 25% by the end of 2022, due to the impact of the public sector decarbonisation scheme. Work was also underway to electrify the waste services fleet of vehicles.

Councillor Sames agreed to submit an update on the carbon management action plan to the September 2022 meeting of the Committee, as well as scheduling further climate change updates as required.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.
- (2) That Executive be advised that Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse and support the 'One Planet Living' approach.
- (3) That the Carbon Management Plan be submitted to the September meeting of the committee.
- (4) That further updates on Climate Change work be submitted to the committee as work progresses.

15 Strategic Partnership with Oxfordshire County Council - Decoupling

The Chairman welcomed Nathan Elvery, interim Chief Operating Officer, who gave an update on decoupling of the strategic partnership with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

The Chief Operating Officer explained that following the decision to end the strategic partnership in February 2022, a programme and timetable was established to support the partnership formally ending on August 31 2022. The decoupling process was split into four transitional phases, starting with the management team and moving on to each of the 23 service areas included within the existing partnership arrangements.

Options for the services moving forward were all evaluated against the same five criteria, and the Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee considered each proposal over the period April to June.

The presentation provided to the Committee gave details of the approved recommendations for each service area, the financial and human resource implications, any transitional arrangements in place and any additional information by way of background information for the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee the Chief Operating Officer explained that no redundancies had been made.

When the strategic partnership had been established an employing authority had been identified for each post. During the decoupling process it was assumed that employees would remain with their employing authority, but both Council's had agreed a flexible approach so that if the majority of work for a post was with the other council, the employee was able to transfer accordingly with the joint approval of both Council's.

The Chief Operating Officer explained that due to the interim arrangements in place it was not yet known if posts would be full time or full time equivalents, but that information would be provided to Members when it was available.

Regarding costs of the decoupling and interim arrangements, the Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the total figure wouldn't be known until the process had been completed. Details of the current and projected financial baseline were included in the presentation and would be updated with final figures once they were known.

Resolved

(1) That having given due consideration, the presentation be noted.

16

Working Groups 2022-23 - approval of scoping documents

The Committee considered two updated scoping documents, for the Parish Engagement and Member Education and Training working groups.

Both working groups had been established during the 2021-2022 Municipal year, and produced end of year reports that had been considered by the Committee in March 2022.

The Parish Engagement working group had identified a number of areas for further review to enhance the relationship between the district council and the parishes. These included a survey of parishes to gather their views on interactions with the district, and investigating IT interactions.

The Member Education and Training working group had made several recommendations in the end of year report, including the production of a number of guidance documents and role profiles to assist members.

The Democratic and Elections Officer explained that the request for delegated authority to the Assistant Director Law, Governance and Democratic Services (interim) was to allow the scoping documents to be updated with membership details, once all members had been appointed.

Resolved

- (1) That the Parish Engagement scoping document be approved.
- (2) That the Member Education and Training scoping document be approved.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law, Governance and Democratic Services (interim), in consultation with the working group chairmen, to make minor amendments to the scoping documents.

17

Work Programme 2022/23

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2022-23.

The Democratic and Elections Officer advised the Committee that since the work programme had been published, the Playing Pitch Strategy had been brought forward and would now be considered at the October meeting.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, items relating to the Carbon Management plan and cost of living would be submitted to the September 2022 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That subject to the inclusion of the following items for the 6 September meeting; Carbon Management Plan and cost of living response; and the Playing Pitch Strategy being moved from November to October, the indicative work programme be noted.
- (2) That the update on items previously considered be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.46 pm

Chairman:

Date: