

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 18 October 2011 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Lynn Pratt (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillor Ann Bonner
Councillor Tim Emptage
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Leslie F Sibley
Councillor Daniel Sames
Councillor Trevor Stevens

Also Present: Councillor Kieron Mallon

Apologies for absence: Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford

Officers: Caroline French, Equalities and Diversity Officer
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

25 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

26 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

27 **Equality Framework for Local Government 'Achieving' Self Assessment - update**

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the Corporate Performance Manager and the Equalities and Diversity Officer to the meeting.

The Corporate Performance Manager introduced the report and reminded the Committee of the context for the Self Assessment. She explained that this update report had been prepared in response to the Committee's request at the last meeting for further information on the current status of the areas for development and improvement.

In discussion the Committee reflected on the initiatives to promote the inclusion of the armed forces population within the Council's services. They noted that planning was underway for a Armed Forces "Knowing Your Community" event in early 2012 which would promote awareness amongst the Council's staff about the various issues facing the service population and their families. Officers were also involved in a programme of site visits to local garrisons and other institutions such as Bullingdon Prison to discuss resettlement issues and build an understanding of the potential demand for the council's services. It was intended to also make contact with RAF Croughton and Campsfield House.

The Committee stressed the importance of providing a "joined up" approach to the armed forces from all tiers of local government in the county and pointed out that multiple, fragmented offers of "help" from various departments of the county and district councils could prove to be more of a burden than a benefit. Members of the Committee suggested that Bicester Town Council and the local British American Committee would also be in a position to contribute to this work.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee about future monitoring of this topic the Corporate Performance Manager explained that both the Equalities Self Assessment and the Corporate Equalities Plan were subject to quarterly performance monitoring by the Executive and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

In conclusion the Committee noted that the work on introducing a shared equalities activity across both Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council might be a suitable topic for future scrutiny.

Resolved

- 1) That the Council's Self Assessment against the Achieving Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government should be referred to the Executive for approval.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Service which updated Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/11.

Forward Plan

The Committee agreed that there were no items on the Forward Plan for October 2011 to January 2012 that they wished to include on their work programme in 2010/11.

Agenda for 15 November 2011

The Committee agreed that the agenda should include a discussion on the draft Empty Homes Policy with officers from Housing Services and a briefing from the working party looking at the Registered Social Landlord's Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That there were no items in the current version of the Forward Plan (October 2011 to January 2012) to include on the work programme for 2011/12.
- (2) That the current Overview and Scrutiny element of the work programme for 2011/12 be noted.
- (3) That it be noted that the 15 November 2011 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider the draft Empty Homes Policy. In addition the working group looking at the Registered Social Landlord's Policy would brief the Committee meeting on their initial discussions with officers and advise the meeting whether or not there was sufficient material to support a detailed scrutiny review.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: