

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** Tuesday 13 March 2012  
**Time:** 6.30 pm  
**Venue:** Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

### Membership

<b>Councillor Kieron Mallon (Chairman)</b>	<b>Councillor Lynn Pratt (Vice-Chairman)</b>
<b>Councillor Ann Bonner</b>	<b>Councillor Tim Emptage</b>
<b>Councillor Chris Heath</b>	<b>Councillor Alastair Milne Home</b>
<b>Councillor Neil Prestidge</b>	<b>Councillor Leslie F Sibley</b>
<b>Councillor Daniel Sames</b>	<b>Councillor Trevor Stevens</b>
<b>Councillor Lawrie Stratford</b>	<b>Councillor Rose Stratford</b>

### Substitutes

<b>Councillor Andrew Beere</b>	<b>Councillor Patrick Cartledge</b>
<b>Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE</b>	<b>Councillor Simon Holland</b>
<b>Councillor David Hughes</b>	<b>Councillor George Parish</b>
<b>Councillor Alaric Rose</b>	<b>Councillor Douglas Williamson</b>

## AGENDA

Overview and Scrutiny Members should not normally be subject to the party whip. Where a member is subject to a party whip they must declare this at the beginning of the meeting and it should be recorded in the minutes.

- 1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

**3. Urgent Business**

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

**4. Minutes** (Pages 1 - 4)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2012.

**5. Core Strategy (Local Development Framework)**

The Head of Strategic Planning and Economy will be present at the meeting to discuss the latest position regarding the Core Strategy (Local Development Framework) which is scheduled to go to Executive in May 2012 prior to public consultation.

**6. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011- 2012** (Pages 5 - 12)

Report of Head of Law and Governance

**Summary**

To update the Committee on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12.

**Recommendations**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note any items of interest in the current version of the Forward Plan (March – June 2012) and consider whether to include them on the work programme for 2011/12.
- (2) Note the current Overview and Scrutiny element of the work programme for 2011/12 as set out at Appendix 1.

**Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members Room at the end of the meeting.**

**Information about this Meeting**

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence should be notified to [democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) or 01295 221583 prior to the start of the meeting.

## **Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item. The definition of personal and prejudicial interests is set out in the constitution. The Democratic Support Officer will have a copy available for inspection at all meetings.

**Personal Interest:** Members must declare the interest but may stay in the room, debate and vote on the issue.

**Prejudicial Interest:** Member must withdraw from the meeting room and should inform the Chairman accordingly.

With the exception of the some very specific circumstances, a Member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if it is one which a Member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest.

## **Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates**

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

## **Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds you must evacuate the building by the nearest available fire exit. Members and visitors should proceed to the car park as directed by Democratic Services staff and await further instructions.

## **Access to Meetings**

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

## **Mobile Phones**

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

## **Queries Regarding this Agenda**

Please contact Catherine Phythian, Law and Governance  
catherine.phythian@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk, 01295 221583

**Sue Smith**  
**Chief Executive**

Published on Monday 5 March 2012

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# Agenda Item 4

## 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 31 January 2012 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Kieron Mallon (Chairman)  
Councillor Lynn Pratt (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ann Bonner  
Councillor Tim Emptage  
Councillor Chris Heath  
Councillor Alastair Milne Home  
Councillor Neil Prestidge  
Councillor Leslie F Sibley  
Councillor Daniel Sames  
Councillor Trevor Stevens  
Councillor Lawrie Stratford  
Councillor Rose Stratford

Also Present: Councillor Barry Wood  
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing

Officers: Tim Mills, Private Sector Housing Manager  
Helen Town, Strategic Housing Officer  
Marianne North, Housing Needs Manager  
Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant  
Catherine Phythian, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

#### 41 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 42 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

#### 43 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **The Council's Approach to Empty Homes**

The Chairman opened the discussion by praising the Lead Member for Housing and the staff of Housing Services for their hard work and significant achievements in reducing the levels of homelessness and improving housing standards in the district. The Chairman explained that this agenda item was an opportunity for the Committee to learn more about the steps being taken by the Council to bring empty homes into use and to consider the proposals for the strategic approach to empty homes that it is intended should form part of the new Housing Strategy.

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the report and reminded the Committee of the range of initiatives, such as loans, leasing and brokering, and home improvement grants, currently used by the Council to bring empty homes back into use. He explained that there were an estimated 600 empty properties across the district but that very few represented a serious social, environmental or safety problem for the Council.

The Private Sector Housing Manager highlighted the four principles, which it was proposed, would underpin the Council's approach to empty homes in the future:

1. The Council wants empty homes to be used.
2. The Council will encourage and facilitate their re-use (e.g. by providing advice, grants and loans).
3. The Council will take action to resolve specific issues caused by empty homes (where powers permit).
4. The Council will take action to secure re-use of empty homes where a business case exists.

The Committee noted that the Council had not previously considered use of Empty Dwelling Management Order or Compulsory Purchase Order powers as a means of restoring empty dwellings to use because of the potentially significant cost and uncertainty of outcomes. However, in future the application of the four principles outlined in the report would include consideration of their use when a suitable business case could be established.

The Strategic Housing Officer briefed the Committee on some of the practical issues faced by the Council in bringing empty properties back in to use. She emphasised the importance of promoting a collaborative approach with Registered Providers and with private and corporate landlords of both residential and commercial properties. The Committee noted that given the subject matter the negotiations were often protracted and complex.

The Housing Needs Manager informed the Committee that the number of people on the Council's housing register had been increasing steadily over the past year and a further rise was anticipated in 2012-13 as the government's changes to the benefit system took effect.

The Lead Member for Housing emphasised that every empty property added to the district's housing stock, whatever the type of tenure, would release another housing unit and ultimately assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligations on housing. She concluded by urging the Committee to agree that

the Council should be prepared to use strong measures such as Compulsory Purchase Orders or Empty Dwelling Management Order, when and if the circumstances justified such action.

The Committee welcomed the report and confirmed their support for the four principles as an excellent, pragmatic and low risk approach to tackling one of the housing issues in the district. They agreed that it was important to prioritise the cases and use the measures to address properties which had been empty for some time or which posed other economic and social issues. It was important that the Council's approach should not be seen as a disincentive to people buying properties as an investment strategy or as a further complication for properties in probate. The Committee urged the Lead Member and officers to ensure that the work was publicised to residents.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the actions being undertaken to address empty homes issues be noted and welcomed.
- (2) That the principles set out in the report as the basis for the Council's approach to empty homes be supported.
- (3) That the proposal that the Head of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, should be responsible for considering the business case for intervention to return specific empty properties to use be supported.
- (4) That the Lead Member for Housing be requested to submit a further report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide further details of the approach taken by Registered Providers to manage the empty homes on their stock within the district.

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### **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011- 2012**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Law & Governance which updated Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12.

#### **Forward Plan**

The Committee agreed that there were no items on the Forward Plan for February – May 2012 that they wished to include on their work programme in 2011/12.

#### **Potential Work Programme Items 2011/12**

##### **Strategic Tenancy Policy**

The Committee noted that the Strategic Tenancy Policy was scheduled to be discussed at Executive in March 2012. They asked that it be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 March 2012.

**Agenda for 13 March 2012**

The Committee confirmed that the Lead Member for Planning should be invited to the meeting in March 2012 to discuss the Local Development Framework.

**Resolved**

- (1) That there were no items in the current version of the Forward Plan (February – May 2012) to be included on the work programme for 2011/12.
- (2) That the current Overview and Scrutiny element of the work programme for 2011/12 be noted and that the Strategic Tenancy Policy be added to the work programme for March 2012.
- (3) That it be noted that the agenda items for the 13 March 2012 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be the Local Development Framework and the Strategic Tenancy Policy.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chairman:

Date:

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2011/12 Work Programme

13 March 2012

### Report of Head of Law and Governance

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note any items of interest in the current version of the Forward Plan (March – June 2012) and consider whether to include them on the work programme for 2011/12.
- (2) Note the current Overview and Scrutiny element of the work programme for 2011/12 as set out at Appendix 1.

#### Details

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##### **1 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12**

- 1.1 Appendix 1 sets out the existing work programme for both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board, as agreed at the committee meetings in January 2012.
- 1.2 The Committee will wish to note any items of interest in the current version of the Forward Plan (March - June 2012) and consider whether to include them on the work programme for 2011/12.
- 1.3 The latest version of the Forward Plan can be found at

<http://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPIId=115&RD=0>

- 1.4 Members will note that the Strategic Tenancy Policy is included on the work programme. Two briefings were held for Members in January 2012 to allow detailed consideration of the draft policy and provided Members with an opportunity to contribute to the development of the policy. The Policy will be submitted to Executive for consideration in April 2012. Should Members have further questions about the Policy, they are requested to liaise directly with Housing Officers.

## **2 Potential Work Programme Items 2011/12 and 2012/13**

- 2.1 There are no outstanding items for scrutiny on the 2011/12 work programme and no items have been submitted for inclusion on the 2012/13 work programme.

## **3 Agenda for 19 June 2012**

- 3.1 The meeting on 19 June 2012 will focus on planning the work programme for meetings in 2012-2013.

## **4 Future Meetings Schedule**

- 4.1 The future meeting dates for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board are listed below.

<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	19 June 2012 24 July 2012 11 September 2012 16 October 2012 27 November 2012 22 January 2013 12 March 2013 23 April 2013
<b>Resources &amp; Performance Scrutiny Board</b>	12 June 2012 17 July 2012 4 September 2012 9 October 2012 20 November 2012 15 January 2013 5 March 2013 16 April 2013

## Implications

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- Financial:** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific financial issues.  
Comments checked by Sarah Best, Senior Accountancy Assistant 01295 221736
- Legal:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific financial issues.  
Comments checked by Paul Manning, Solicitor, 01295 221691
- Risk Management:** If the work programme contains too many items there is a risk that scrutiny agendas become overloaded. This undermines effective scrutiny because Members are unable to concentrate on the key issues and officer resources are over-stretched. It may be necessary to hold further meetings during the year if the risk of not achieving the work programme becomes apparent. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific risk issues.  
Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager, 01295 221587

## Wards Affected

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Each scrutiny review will identify the wards affected

## Corporate Plan Themes

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Each scrutiny review will identify the relevant corporate plan themes

## Document Information

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Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Work Programme 2011/12
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Contact Information	01295 221583 Catherine.phythian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

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Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12

Title	Sub-committee	Comments	Meeting	
			Mar	Later
<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>Scheduling – to identify and agree potential topics for scrutiny</b>				
<b>Scrutiny – agreed topics for consideration at committee meetings</b>				
Local Development Framework	OSC	For pre-decision scrutiny prior to submission to Executive. Agenda item for 13 March 2012.	✓	
Strategic Tenancy Policy	OSC	Two briefing sessions were held for Members on the Strategic Tenancy Policy in January 2012.		
<b>Task &amp; Finish Groups – agreed topics for review outside committee meetings</b>				
None				
<b>Monitoring – to examine responses to scrutiny reports and to check on progress on implementation of recommendations</b>				
Youth Services	OSC	Monitor developments in OCC and CDC Youth Services.		✓

Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12

Title	Sub-committee	Comments	Meeting			
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Later
<b>RESOURCES &amp; PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY BOARD</b>						
<b>Scheduling – to identify and agree potential topics for scrutiny</b>						
Partnerships: Bicester Vision	R&PSB	Agenda item for February meeting. Chairman to submit a scoping document for consideration.		✓		
<b>Scrutiny – agreed topics for consideration at committee meetings</b>						
Budget Scrutiny 2012/13	R&PSB	Consideration of items deferred from November 2011 meeting to agree recommendations to Executive in February 2012.	✓			
Contracts review – Landscape Maintenance	R&PSB	2 Members nominated to work with officers regarding the Landscape Maintenance contract. Update to be provided on the contract review process and performance in light of the reduction in service.	→	→	→	✓
Concessions Policy	R&PSB	Cllrs Cullip and Tompson to work with officers to develop the policy which will feed into the 2012/13 budget.	→	→	→	✓
Planning Applications Charges	R&PSB	To consider changes to charges for planning applications in line with government guidance and CDC policy – timescale dependent on Government issuing guidance				✓?
<b>Task &amp; Finish Groups – agreed topics for review outside committee meetings</b>						
None						
<b>Monitoring – to examine responses to scrutiny reports and to check on progress on implementation of recommendations</b>						
Partnerships: ORCC	R&PSB	Progress against recommendations accepted by Executive in April 2010				✓

OSC: Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
T&FG: Task & Finish Group

R&PSB: Resources & Performance Board

FSWG: Finance Scrutiny Working Group  
PSWG: Performance Scrutiny Working Group

## Overview &amp; Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12

Title	Sub-committee	Comments	Meeting			
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Later
<b>RESOURCES &amp; PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY BOARD</b>						
		reviewed in September 2010 and June 2011. Retain on work programme in light of budget position, to review again				
Partnerships: Cherwell Safer Communities	R&PSB	To receive an update on the partnership and to consider the impact of funding cuts and how the CSCP is preparing for these cuts from the Local Police Area Commander. To include impact of budget reductions on crime and anti-social behaviour.				✓
Partnership Scrutiny: Oxfordshire Waste Partnership	R&PSB	Monitor OWP review of Joint Municipal Waste Strategy and financial arrangements				✓
Disabled Facilities Grants	R&PSB	Progress against implementation of policy and any wider implications in light of budget position				✓
The cost and use of external consultants by Cherwell District Council	FSWG	Monitor consultancy costs through the information provided to the Finance Scrutiny Working Group				✓
Budget 2012/13	R&PSB	Request during budget scrutiny that once the 2012/13 budget is finalised, reissue analysis with bullet point analysis				✓

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