

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 7 November 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present: Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning
Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers

Apologies for absence: Councillor Daniel Sames
Councillor Douglas Williamson

Officers: Andy Preston, Head of Development Management
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Louise Tustian², Senior Performance & Improvement Officer
Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

30 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

31 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

32 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 September 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Draft Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Exceptions Report

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers, Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning, the Head of Development Management, the Corporate Performance Manager, the Senior Performance and Improvement Officer, and the Development Control Team Leader to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers presented the report of the Head of Transformation which set out the areas the Performance team had extracted from the Quarter 2 performance report as areas of concern and achievement as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

In considering the report, the Committee commented that performance reference CBP1 3.5c, Planning appeals allowed against refusal decision, did not sit well with the concept of localism, particularly in the case of overturns of Planning Committee decisions. Members noted that the measure was volatile as it was based on low appeal numbers and that compared with the government's stated threshold for the quality of a local planning authority's performance (i.e. no more than 20 per cent of an authority's decisions on applications for major development should be overturned at appeal) measured over a two year period, the current performance was 7 %. The Development Control Team Leader confirmed that each appeal allowed was carefully analysed in order to identify any trends

In relation to the processing of minor and other planning applications, the Development Control Team Leader explained that registration of all applications had now been brought down to 2 to 3 days, and he was confident this current level of performance could be maintained, and that this improved registration performance was already impacting positively upon the overall process timing of minor and other applications. The Head of Development Management reported that, following the recent changes in joint management team responsibilities, the Registration and Administration team now reported directly to him, which allowed for a greater degree of control.

In response to Members' queries regarding the Preparation of Design Guidance for Major Developments performance indicator, the Head of Development Management reported that funds had been identified to allow for an additional member of staff to be appointed for a period of 18 months. The Committee commented that consideration should be given to charging for giving design guidance for major developments.

The Committee commented that there were a number of indicators where the Council had limited control, for example, whilst planning approval was granted by CDC as local planning authority, developers were responsible for the delivery. With regard to the Task / Measure Description, Members suggested revised wording for inclusion, e.g. rather than a target to 'Deliver 500 new homes.....', the target should instead be 'Deliver Planning Consents for 500 new homes.....'.

The Committee noted that there had been an increase in the number of fly-tips and agreed that more should be done to highlight the prosecution action the Council could take and has taken against perpetrators.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Member for Performance and Customers, the Lead Member for Planning and Officers for their presentation and updates.

Resolved

- (1) That the highlighted areas in the draft Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Exceptions report be noted.
- (2) That no immediate performance related matters for future review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be identified.
- (3) That the Executive be advised of the Committee's concern with regards to instances of fly tipping and recommended to increase publicity about action the Council can take.

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Cherwell District Council Five Year Business Strategy

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers, the Corporate Performance Manager and the Senior Performance and Improvement Officer to the meeting.

The Corporate Performance Manager presented the report of the Head of Transformation, which requested the Committee review the Council's draft five year Business Strategy and emerging priorities for the annual business plan. The Committee was advised that the Strategy and Plan were currently in an early draft stage, and would be refined further before a draft was submitted to the Executive in December. It would subsequently be published for public consultation. This was therefore an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to influence and propose changes to the strategy.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers explained that the Council's current corporate priorities had been set seven years ago when public sector finances were very different from the current situation. He encouraged the Committee to give careful consideration to the document, not only with regard to what should be included, but also whether anything should be removed.

In response to Members concerns that the opening of the new incinerator at Ardley might cause a decline in the Council's recycling rates, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to amend key objective b1, "Provide high quality recycling and waste services, aimed at helping residents recycle as much as possible" to ensure monitoring took place.

The Committee also expressed concern that future cuts by central Government and the County Council would impact on key objectives C4, "Work to promote and support health and wellbeing across the district", C5, "Provide high quality and accessible leisure opportunities" and C6, "Provide

support to the voluntary and community sector". Members agreed that consideration should therefore be given to CDC's involvement, measures the Council could take and whether business and other third parties could provide support.

The Committee discussed options for giving the draft five year Business Strategy further detailed consideration and agreed to add the item to the Work Programme for the January meeting and invite all Members and key officers.

The Committee then gave consideration to the annual Service Plan process, and agreed that the Housing Service Plan should be reviewed in detail at the February meeting. It was also agreed that all Members be invited to attend.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft strategic priorities be supported.
- (2) That the draft Cherwell District Council Five Year Business Strategy be added to the work programme for the January 2014 meeting to which all Members and key officers be invited, to undertake a detailed review of the Year 1 targets, measures and key projects.
- (3) That a briefing for all Members be arranged for February 2014 to undertake a review of the Housing Service Plan.

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Law and Governance, which presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14.

Executive Work Programme

The Committee agreed that there were no additional items in the Executive Work Programme for December 2013 to March, 2014 that they wished to include on their Work Programme in 2013/14.

Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) – The Committee noted that this formed part of the joint Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council Transformation project. Members requested that a briefing note be submitted to the Committee six months after implementation.

Concessions Policy – The draft policy was supported, and it was agreed that, subject to endorsement by legal and finance officers, if necessary it be recommended to the Budget Planning Committee and the Lead Member for sign off.

Contract Scrutiny: Landscape Maintenance Contract – Councillor Lawrie Stratford reported that he had met the Head of Environmental Services and the Street Scene and Landscape Services Manager and would subsequently be meeting with Councillors Williamson and Woodcock prior to consideration by Executive.

Wind Turbines and their Locations – Councillor O’Neill reported that he would be meeting with officers shortly.

CDC Employment initiatives – Councillor Magee reported that she had met with the Economic Development Officer and would be progressing a scoping document.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2013/14 be noted.
- (2) That the update on Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) be noted and officers be requested to submit an update briefing note six months after implementation.
- (3) That the draft Concessions Policy be supported and, subject to endorsement by legal and finance officers, recommended, if necessary, the Budget Planning Committee and the Lead Member for sign off.
- (4) That the update on the Landscape Maintenance Contract be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.23 pm

Chairman:

Date: