

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: Tuesday 23 January 2018
Time: 6.45 pm
Venue: Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

Membership

Councillor Neil Prestidge (Chairman)	Councillor Jolanta Lis (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor David Anderson	Councillor Claire Bell
Councillor Mike Bishop	Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Chris Heath	Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE	Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Andrew McHugh	Councillor Jason Slaymaker

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 - 6)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2017.

5. **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive communications from the Chairman.

6. **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** (Pages 7 - 16)

Report of Director of Operational Delivery

Purpose of report

To consider the new legislation coming into force April 2018, the preparation undertaken for its implementation and the potential risks and challenges in meeting the Council's duties

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

- 1.1 To consider the work being carried out to prepare the authority to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in 2018;
- 1.2 To consider the potential impacts upon service delivery and resource implications in future years; and
- 1.3 To consider that the Shared Housing Service intend to adopt a collaborative approach to implement the new obligations imposed under the Act

7. **Draft Business Plan and Budget**

Report of Interim Director and Executive Director, Finance and Governance

Please note that this report will be to follow, as at the time of agenda publication it is being finalised

8. **Work Programme 2017-18** (Pages 17 - 24)

Report of Monitoring Officer

Purpose of report

To give an update on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2017-2018

Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 To review the draft work programme (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To identify any items from the Executive Work Programme to form part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2017/18
- 1.3 To identify any other possible future topics for scrutiny and consider whether these topics should have scoping documents produced, based on the considerations of risk and what value scrutiny can add through considering the issue.

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@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk or 01327 322043 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.

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 Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections
emma.faulkner@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk, 01327 322043

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

Published on Monday 15 January 2018

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 21 November 2017 at 6.45 pm

Present: Councillor Neil Prestidge (Chairman)
Councillor Jolanta Lis (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Claire Bell
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Jason Slaymaker

Substitute Members: Councillor Barry Richards (In place of Councillor Mark Cherry)

Also Present: Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy
Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Ian Corkin

Apologies for absence: Councillor David Anderson
Councillor Mark Cherry

Officers: Scott Barnes, Director of Strategy and Commissioning
Paul Sutton, Executive Director: Finance and Governance / Section 151 Officer
Nicola Riley, Shared Community Services Manager
Maria Wareham, Safeguarding Officer
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

33 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

34 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

35 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

37 **Lead Member Attendance - Councillor Lynn Pratt**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy, to the meeting, to give an overview of her portfolio.

Councillor Pratt explained that the portfolio was extremely diverse, and involved working closely with the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy and the interim Property Investment Manager.

Due to the level of economic growth across the district, Councillor Pratt explained that it was an exciting time to be involved with the portfolio.

The recent Banbury Business Improvement District (BID) process had returned a yes vote, meaning that further work would be undertaken in the coming months to establish the BID board.

In addition to the economic growth, Councillor Pratt explained that Cherwell District Council was the headline sponsor for the 2018 Cherwell Business Awards, which had been officially launched in October.

The Committee thanked Councillor Pratt for the overview.

Resolved

(1) That the overview be noted

38 **Quarter Two Performance Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Director – Strategy and Commissioning that detailed the Council's performance during Quarter Two, 1 June to 30 September 2017.

With regard to indicators 3.2.2 a to c, average time taken to process new Housing benefit claims, change of circumstances, and new claims and changes to Housing benefit, the Committee asked for further information regarding the length of time customers had to wait and what the longest wait was. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to circulate the information.

In connection with indicator 3.3.1, deliver the actions identified within the revised Homelessness prevention strategy, the Committee asked if there was

any homelessness provision within the district. The Director – Strategy and Commissioning agreed to find out and circulate information to the Committee.

With regard to the Equalities Action plan sunburst, ‘to ensure Cherwell District Council meets all government requirements’, the Committee asked for more information concerning the areas reporting as amber, and which government requirements were not being met. The Director – Strategy and Commissioning agreed to circulate the information.

Resolved

- (1) That the exceptions highlighted be noted
- (2) That no performance related matters be referred to Executive

39 **Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board/Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board Section 11 Review and Approval**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Operational Delivery, which detailed the draft Section 11 return for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board.

The Community Services Manager explained that the Council was submitting a good return, and good progress had been made since the last audit return in 2016. A part time safeguarding officer had been appointed at the start of the year, and work was well underway regarding training for all staff and Members.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Community Services Manager confirmed that a formal information sharing agreement and procedure was in place with all of the relevant partners, and the procedure would be reviewed to ensure it was up-to-date.

The Committee asked if taxi drivers were covered by the requirement for safeguarding training. The Community Services Manager confirmed that they were, and agreed to gather further information from the Licensing Manager regarding the numbers of those who had and had not been trained.

Resolved

- (1) That the Cherwell District Council Section 11 return be noted and endorsed for submission, alongside the results from the staff survey currently underway

40 **Work Programme 2017-18**

The Committee considered the draft work programme.

With regards to the Mobile Phone Signal review, it was agreed that the survey should be sent to parish councils, with a request for it to be further distributed amongst residents. It would be sent in January for a period of 6 weeks, with completion being encouraged via Survey Monkey in the first instance.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted
- (2) That the Mobile Phone Survey Signal be distributed to parish councils in January 2018, for a 6 week completion period

41 **The acquisition of Castle Quay Shopping Centre**

The Chairman advised the Committee that in light of legal advice this item was exempt and therefore would not be considered in the public part of the meeting.

42 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

- (1) That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information .

43 **The Acquisition of Castle Quay Shopping Centre - Exempt Report and appendices**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted an exempt report on the Acquisition of Castle Quay Shopping Centre.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chairman:

Date:

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 January 2018

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
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Report of Director of Operational Delivery

This report is public

Purpose of report

To consider the new legislation coming into force April 2018, the preparation undertaken for its implementation and the potential risks and challenges in meeting the Council's duties

1.0 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

- 1.1 To consider the work being carried out to prepare the authority to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in 2018;
- 1.2 To consider the potential impacts upon service delivery and resource implications in future years; and
- 1.3 To consider that the Shared Housing Service intend to adopt a collaborative approach to implement the new obligations imposed under the Act

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Homelessness Reduction Bill became an Act of Parliament in April 2017 and will come into effect in April 2018. The Act places new legal duties on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.
- 2,2 This represents a significant change in the expectations of local authorities in the prevention of homelessness and widens the catchment group of potential customers owed a duty. The Local Government Association anticipates that the imposition of the prevention duty, alone, will increase the workloads of London boroughs by circa 270%. (<http://www.magdalenchambers.co.uk/the-homelessness-reduction-act-2017-initial-thoughts/> . This does not necessarily mean that the same increase is anticipated across all authorities; nonetheless it flags up potential risks and emphasizes the need to be ready when the law is enacted.

- 2.3 The shared Housing Service is ensuring that services at South Northamptonshire and Cherwell District Councils will be ready to implement the legislation. A joint project is underway to address key themes such as IT, staff training and communications given that the planning and strategic work will be the same for both councils.

3.0 Report Details

3.1 What are the key changes?

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the Act) sets out new duties on English local authorities with the aim of preventing homelessness. The Act amends the homelessness provisions within the Housing Act 1996 (part VII). A summary of some key sections the Council must be prepared for is as follows:

Meaning of “threatened with homelessness”

- Extends the period during which someone might qualify as being threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days.
- Establishes a duty to treat an applicant as threatened with homelessness if they present a valid section 21 notice that expires in 56 days or less.

The Cherwell Housing Team have always had a prevention focused approach and offered advice prior to the statutory 28 days prior to homelessness, but the Act now imposes this as a duty on all Local Authorities. The Council will now need to be prepared to assess all housing needs earlier and in more depth.

Duty to assess all eligible applicants’ cases and agree a plan

- requires local authorities to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless

This means the Council will need to offer the same service and assessment to all households, including couples and single people without health needs.

Duty in cases of threatened homelessness

- a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any individual, regardless of priority need, who is at risk of homelessness, either assisting them to stay in their current accommodation, or helping them to find a new place to live.

This means that the Council will have duties to assist more households than under current legislation; however note that this is *a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness*, not to provide accommodation necessarily.

Duties owed to those who are homeless

- A duty on councils to relieve homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need. The duty lasts for up to 56 days.

This means that the Council will have duties to assist more households than under current legislation. However it should be noted that this is *a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness*, not to provide accommodation necessarily.

Deliberate and unreasonable refusal to co-operate

- A council can take action if an applicant who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, deliberately and unreasonably refuses to take any steps set out in the personalised plan.
- Sets out the procedure and duties which apply if an applicant who is homeless refuses, at the relief stage, a suitable final accommodation offer.

This means that the Council can end its duty to a household in certain circumstances where the applicant does not cooperate in a reasonable personalised housing plan. This is an area likely to be heavily tested by reviews and case law in determining what *deliberate and unreasonable refusal* means.

Local connection of a care leaver

- makes it easier for care leavers to show they have a local connection with both the area of the local authority responsible for them and the area in which they lived while in care, if that was different.

This means that care leavers originally from, or accommodated anywhere in the county must be considered as having a local connection with this district.

Reviews

- extends an applicant's right to request a review of their local authority's homelessness decisions, so they apply to a number of decisions that a local authority might make when discharging the new prevention and relief duties.

This means that the Council may face a higher number of legal challenges to decisions made, and so our processes, decision making and record keeping need to be fit for purpose; another area likely to be heavily tested by reviews and case law.

Duty of public authority to refer cases to local housing authority

- requires public authorities to notify a local housing authority of service users they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Council needs to ensure that our partner agencies are well informed about when to refer cases to it and how, to ensure that appropriate and timely referrals are made.

3.2 How is the Council preparing?

As stated above, officers have commenced a project to ensure that the Council is ready to implement the legislation in April 2018. It includes the following;

- The Council is preparing a Communications Strategy to ensure that all relevant partners are briefed appropriately and public authorities know how and when to make referrals.
- The Council is completing homelessness reviews and will publish a fresh Homelessness Strategy to ensure that it properly understands and plans to meet the demands of the District.

- The Council is developing a training plan to ensure that staff are prepared and confident in their roles; training on the details of Act has already been provided with other related training to follow.
- The Council is working to ensure that the IT systems meet the Council's needs, and support officers in efficiently managing increased workload and ensure legal compliance.
- The Council is a partner with the other Oxfordshire Districts and the City Council in a Trailblazer Project which will support partnership working across the district and county and provide additional resources to implement the new duties under the Act.

These are just some of the tasks due for completion prior to April 2018 to ensure the Council is legally compliant. The Homelessness Strategies will set out further plans for the future to enable the Council to adapt and develop our services to respond to local needs.

The government has recognised the burden of implementing the new Act, making available £72.7M nationally to help authorities meet the new burdens; CDC is receiving £47k in the first year from this fund. This figure is based on an assessment of our local needs. Each Local Authority in England will also receive £9,200 for IT changes. In the context of the new Act and the increased duties on local housing authorities it is important that money allocated to the Council specifically for homeless activities is used for these purposes and provides additionality to the core statutory homelessness services a local housing authority should currently provide. The funding allocated to Cherwell District Council by Central Government for homelessness activities is outlined in Appendix A.

Please note the cost of preparing for implementation of the Act is being met through in-year budgets and funding from central Government associated with the new legislation.

3.3 Homelessness in Cherwell

Statistics:

Nationally, homelessness is on the increase, with visible signs of homelessness such as rough sleeping on city streets and local authorities receiving more homeless applications. This picture is reflected in Cherwell with an ongoing rise in applications for housing assistance.

Number of Homeless Presentations:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Cancelled	2	1	0	5	10	18
Number of Presentations	124	127	128	166	159	157
Accepted	62	59	51	78	74	69
Non Priority	10	9	22	26	25	30
Intentionally Homeless	30	24	33	26	28	22
Not Homeless	20	27	14	30	12	13
Not Eligible	2	1	3	1	4	2
Pending	0	5	5	0	6	3
Referrals from other areas	0	2	0	1	0	0

Number of Prevention Cases:

	Total Number Prevention Cases Opened	Prevention Cases closed as casework
2016/17	966	466
2015/16	1011	438
2014/15	841	367
2013/14	1098	398

Nationally the number of households being made homeless due to termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies has overtaken family evictions as the most common reason for homeless approaches. This is the case in Cherwell and increasingly these tenancies are ending due to the affordability of accommodation for those on low wages or benefits. Locally the rents private landlords can achieve are far above Local Housing Allowance, making private rented accommodation unaffordable for many households. This has a double impact as more households have to be accepted under homeless duties and there are less options in the private sector to resolve housing issues.

Specifically for single people, the Council is working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and the other districts to provide the Adult Homeless Pathway. The Council has created additional local resources to meet anticipated increased need. Currently there are 24 bed spaces available to Cherwell clients. Complex needs beds are located in purpose built services in Oxford City and local units provide move back for those who have lower support needs.

This has resulted rough sleeping in figures in Cherwell decreasing from 24 reported in 2014/15 to 17 in 2016/17, but there is no room for complacency. The current partnership arrangements for funding the Adult Pathway are only in place for a further 2 years and the Housing Team need to plan how to meet Cherwell's needs going forward. It may also be necessary to provide additional accommodation for this client group in the future.

3.4 What are the challenges?

Changed demand

As stated in the introduction, many districts and boroughs are anticipating a significant increase in workload; an increase in case load but also an increase in the depth of work required with that household to try and prevent their homelessness. If the Council properly briefs its partner agencies, this is likely to lead to greater numbers of referrals of homeless or potentially homeless households at early stages.

The Council does not yet know how its customer group will respond to the new legal framework which challenges their expectations. The Act represents a culture change, with the focus on homeless prevention and relief, and active participation from the customer. These may not be the Council's customers expectations when they approach it for help.

The Council has made no forecast of how the new Act will change demand beyond the annual increases already noted above as the Council does not know at present whether there are a large number of households who do not approach it at present

but will do in the future. It will take time for awareness of the changes to develop amongst the public and professional agencies. The Council does not yet know whether officers will see an increased caseload, volume of work, or both.

Resources and services to meet demand

- Monitor existing staff and service resources will need to be reviewed in order to ensure the Council has sufficient staff at the right level to meet demand.
- Policies and Procedures will need to be updated to ensure the Council complies with the legal requirements of the Act.
- The initial customer contact point will need to be reviewed to ensure the Council is confident when and if legal duties have been imposed.
- Close working with the Revenues and Benefits service will need to be maintained to make best use of all available DHP funding to prevent / resolve homeless issues.
- The Council will need to ensure the New Burdens Funding and the Flexible Homeless Support Grant meets identified local needs.
- A review of the Allocations Scheme is needed to ensure this meets any new duties under the Act and also continues to support a prevention focused service.
- A review of the current Cherwell Bond Scheme is also needed to make it more attractive to private sector landlords.
- The Council needs to ensure Home Improvement Grants incentivise private landlords to work with it.

A revised Homelessness Strategy will be critical when responding to any changing demand. This current piece of work to review homelessness need and plan for future service changes will respond to the requirements of the new Act. It is anticipated that the revised Strategy will be reported to the Executive in April 2018. This will need to be an evolving strategy to respond to lessons learned during implementation of the Act and the customer reaction to it.

As stated in section 3.3, loss of private rented accommodation and affordability play a key role in causing homelessness. Finding affordable housing solutions in the private market will be a key strategic challenge.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 represents a significant culture change in homelessness, with the focus on prevention and relief and greater duties to assist households regardless of priority need or local connection. The Council needs to be prepared for implementation to ensure it is legally compliant. A robust and planned approach is in place which will enable the Council to achieve this. However, this is just the beginning.
- 4.2 The scale of the impact on case load and work load at Cherwell is as yet unknown. The Council is currently working on a review of homelessness to inform a revised Homelessness Strategy due for completion in the first half of 2018. This strategy itself will need to be flexible and able to evolve to respond to changing demands. Therefore, it is planned to complete a further review of homelessness after 12 months of the Act coming into effect and the Homelessness Strategy amended accordingly if required.

5.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: To not prepare for the implementation of the Act. This option has been rejected as it would leave the Council unprepared for the Act and the service potentially operationally unlawfully.

Option 2: South Northamptonshire Council and Cherwell District Council to prepare for operational implementation separately. This option has been rejected as Housing shared services efficiencies will be gained in the same shared planning and strategic work even if front line service delivery may differ slightly.

6.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct costs to the recommendations within this report. However the Committee is asked to note that the requirements of the Act will likely impact upon future budget setting and strategic planning.

The Committee is also asked to note that the authority is awarded various separate sources of funding for homelessness prevention work and implementing the 'new burdens' of the Act.

Comments checked by Kelly Wheeler Principal Accountant, 01327 332230, kelly.wheeler@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report. The main body of the report captures an overview of the statutory obligations that will be placed on the Council to ensure compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which will come into force in April 2018.

Comments checked by Christopher Mace , Solicitor, 01327322125
chris.mace@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

7.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Cherwell: a thriving community

Lead Councillor

Councillor John Donaldson - Lead Member for Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix A	Summary of DCLG Homelessness Funding
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Joanne Barrett & Alison Adkins
Contact Information	Joanne Barrett Joint Housing Manager Joanne.barrett@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk 01327 322369 Alison Adkins Housing Team Leader Alison.adkins@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk 01295 221677

Appendix A: Cherwell District Council's allocation of DCLG Homelessness Funding

Type of Funding	17/18	18/19	19/20
Homelessness Prevention Grant	£99,901	£100,211	£100,712
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	£178,538	£205,425	TBA
Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens - General Funding	£47,246	£43,277	£45,747
Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens - IT Funding	£9,200	--	--
Discretionary Housing Payment	£309,040	TBA	--

Homelessness Prevention Funding

Grant funding from the DCLG annually to help tackle homelessness. There are no specific grant conditions attached to this funding, which is **not ring-fenced**, except to enhance front line housing services with the view to reducing and preventing homelessness.

Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

Up to the end of March 2017 local housing authorities could charge £60 per week management fee on temporary accommodation units. This was paid from the Department for Work and Pensions to local authorities on a per household basis. From 1 April 2017, the temporary accommodation management fee subsidy payment was removed, restricting subsidy to 90% of the appropriate January 2011 Local Housing Allowance Rate. No subsidy is paid for Universal Credit claimants.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for the alternative funding – the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG). As the name suggests, FHSG is paid to local housing authorities as a grant and can be used in any way a local authority sees fit, to better manage temporary accommodation pressures. **The grant is ring-fenced** for activities to prevent and deal with homelessness.

Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens – General

Funding provided to local housing authorities to meet the new burdens associated with the additional duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act. This funding is **not ring-fenced**; however the expectation from Central Government is that it will be committed locally to homelessness activities.

Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens – IT

Additionally, Government will be providing local authorities with £9,200 to support the upgrade of our data systems to monitor the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This funding is **not ring-fenced** but both CDC and SNC will need to purchase new IT systems to be legally compliant with the new Act.

Discretionary Housing Payment

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) can provide extra money to meet housing costs or minimise the effects of welfare reform (benefit cap, spare room subsidy). They are available to those currently claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with housing costs towards rental liability.

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Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 January 2018

Work Programme 2017-18

Report of Monitoring Officer

This report is public

Purpose of report

To give an update on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2017-2018

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 To review the draft work programme (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To identify any items from the Executive Work Programme to form part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2017/18
- 1.3 To identify any other possible future topics for scrutiny and consider whether these topics should have scoping documents produced, based on the considerations of risk and what value scrutiny can add through considering the issue.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Committee are required to review the Work Plan at each meeting and make any amendments required as a result of developments since the last meeting.

3.0 Report Details

Update on current Scrutiny reviews

A361 Traffic review

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Committee in May 2016, it was agreed that a working group be established to look at a potential review regarding the A361 through the district.
- 3.2 As part of the research carried out so far, the group found out about funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of the Safer Roads Fund that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) had the opportunity to bid for.

- 3.3 At the time of writing, no further announcements have been made regarding the award of Safer Roads funding. Should this change before the meeting, a verbal update will be given.
- 3.4 In September 2017, the working group were made aware of a consultation from Oxfordshire County Council regarding a possible weight limit on the A361 through Burford.
- 3.5 Whilst this is not part of the Cherwell District, it was anticipated that such a limit would have positive effects on traffic through villages such as South Newington, due to the need for affected traffic to find an alternative route.
- 3.6 The results of the consultation were considered by the County Council's Cabinet member for Environment, Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE, in October 2017.
- 3.7 The full report on the issue can be viewed via the [County Council's website](#), but in summary further research and consultation will be carried out on the possibility of a 20mph speed limit, and the impact of a weight limit on local vehicles of 18/20 tonnes.
- 3.8 Officers will continue to monitor progress of the issue.

Mobile phone signal review

- 3.9 Following concerns regarding the quality of mobile phone signal across the district, the Committee agreed to set up a working group comprising of Councillors Anderson, Brown, Lis, Prestidge and McHugh.
- 3.10 At the meeting of the Committee in February 2017, officers advised the Committee of work being undertaken by the British Infrastructure Group (BIG) into the same subject. At that time, it was agreed that the working group would continue research gathering with a view to submitting it to the BIG review.
- 3.11 At the November 2017 meeting of the Committee, it was agreed that a Survey Monkey based questionnaire put together by Councillor McHugh should be sent to all parishes in the district in January 2018, for a period of 6 weeks.
- 3.12 The survey was sent out on 12 January, and will be available for completion until Friday 23 February.
- 3.13 A meeting of the working group will be arranged following the close of the survey to discuss the findings, and an update given to the Committee at the March 2018 meeting.

Engagement with parishes

- 3.14 Following the training held in September 2017, the Committee agreed to engage with parish councils to find out if there are any subjects that they would like to refer to the Committee for discussion and/or review.
- 3.15 Officers from Democratic and Elections liaised with the Chairman, to determine the best method of contacting the parishes.

- 3.16 It was felt that written correspondence, via email where available, would be the best way of explaining to the parishes the remit of the Committee, and asking them to submit possible topics for consideration.
- 3.17 Correspondence combining notification of the Mobile Phone survey and the request for possible topics for consideration was sent to all parishes on 12 January. A copy was also sent to all District Councillors, in the event of any questions or queries as and when they attend parish council meetings.
- 3.18 Responses received will be collated and included in the work programme report at the March 2018 meeting, for Committee to take decisions on which subjects to include in the work programme for the 2018/2019 Municipal Year.

Horton Hospital Update

- 3.19 Following the update given at the August 2017 meeting by the Director of Operational Delivery regarding the Horton General Hospital, the Council was informed in late December that the Judicial Review had been dismissed.
- 3.20 Full details of the judgement can be found via the Council's [website](#)

Executive Work Programme

- 3.21 As part of the monthly work programme report, the Committee reviews the Executive Work Programme to consider whether there are any issues which they would wish to look at in more detail in advance of the Executive discussion and decision. To facilitate a thorough consideration of the topic the Committee will need to identify the Executive Work Programme items at an early stage of the decision making process.
- 3.22 The Executive Work Programme is updated and published monthly; an electronic copy is available on the council's website and all councillors are sent a prompt containing the website link. Members of the Committee are encouraged to review the Executive Work Programme outside the committee meetings and to contact the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Democratic Services Officer if there is a topic that they wish to review.
- 3.23 The Committee will wish to note any items of interest in the current version of the Executive Work Programme and consider whether to include them on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2017/18.
- 3.24 At the time of writing this report, the current version of the Executive Work Programme is February to May 2018 and can be found on the following page of the website: [Forward Plan](#)
- 3.25 Following comments made at previous meetings of the Committee, the Work Programme now contains a short description of the item to be considered, to give those reviewing the plan more information.

Future meetings Schedule

- 3.26 The meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year, and the new year from May, are listed below:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2017/18
	23 January 2018 20 February 27 March
	2018/19
	29 May 10 July 28 August 9 October 20 November 22 January '19 19 February 26 March

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations as set out in the report are believed to be in the best interests of the Council.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 None required as this is a standing 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: To agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

Option 2: To amend the recommendations.

Option 3: Not to agree the recommendations.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 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: Paul Sutton, Executive Director – Finance and Governance. 0300 003 0106, paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific legal issues.

Comments checked by: Chris Mace, Solicitor, 01327 322125, christopher.mace@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

Each scrutiny review will identify the wards affected.

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Each Scrutiny Review will identify the relevant Corporate Plan and Policy framework links.

Lead Councillor

None

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Work Programme 2017/18
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Contact Information	Tel: 01327 322043 emma.faulkner@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Work Programme - 2017/2018

Item	Description	Reason for Consideration	Contact Officer
20 February 2018			
Performance Report 2017-18 Quarter 3 (1 October to 31 December)	Performance data and if necessary officer attendance for each quarter	To flag any issues before consideration by Executive	Louise Tustian, Team Leader, Strategic Intelligence and Insight Team
Committee Work Plan	To review the work plan for the Municipal Year	Standing item	Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
27 March 2018			
Annual Report of the Committee 2017-18	To consider the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report prior to submission to Council	Constitutional requirement to submit an annual report to Council	Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Committee Work Plan	To review the work plan for the Municipal Year	Standing item	Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Items to be allocated			
Debt and Money Advice Contract – update following first 12 months (likely to be 2018/19 Municipal year)	Update following first 12 months of new contract with Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire	Request from Housing Officers for Committee to consider.	Chris Weight, Housing Partnerships Officer

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