

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 30 January 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

Councillor Sean Woodcock (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Also Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Adam Nell, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Donna Ford, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Officers:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Edward Frape, Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Tony Brummell, Building Control and Flood Risk Manager
Jan Southgate, Health Protection Compliance & Business Support Manager

53 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

54 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made one announcement:

1. Immediately prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 12 March, there would be a Housing drop-in session where Members would have the opportunity to meet officers from the different areas of the Housing Team and ask any questions in relation to the service. More information including specific timings would be sent out to all Members in due course.

56 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

57 **Attendance of Thames Valley Police Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner**

The Chairman welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Matthew Barber, Chief Constable Jason Hogg and Superintendent Jen Hogben Detective Inspector James Holden-White, Thames Valley Police, to the meeting and invited them to update the Committee regarding policing in Thames Valley.

The Police and Crime Commissioner updated the Committee on officer numbers and plans for recruitment of additional officers. These included doubling the number of neighbourhood police officers by the end of this financial year and recruiting a further 150 officers in the next financial year.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised the Committee on the measures that had been undertaken to improve the response times on the non-emergency 101 police contact service. This included the introduction of new methods of contact such as social media channels, webchat functionality and an online victim portal.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation which provided more details on the scale of the Thames Valley Police Force, the challenges it faced and the operations currently being undertaken. The Committee was also advised that a Force Review was in progress which involved a restructuring of the Force in an attempt to mitigate the current funding shortfall.

Superintendent Hogben provided the Committee with more details on some of the operations currently taking place to reduce knife crime, anti-social behaviour, retail theft and rural crime in the Cherwell district. The Committee was advised that the emphasis was on prevention of such activities and often involved a highly targeted approach working with other agencies and partners.

Following the presentation, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and Superintendent answered questions from Members of the Committee.

In response to a question regarding the approach to the carrying of knives by boys in the 10 to 17 age group, the Police and Crime Commissioner provided more details on targeted operations and intervention policies piloted by Thames Valley Police in other parts of the Thames Valley area. It was hoped that subject to funding this would be rolled out across all communities.

In response to a question regarding the theft of van tools in Banbury, the Committee was advised of the various prevention strategies in place such as tool marking schemes.

In response to a question regarding wildlife crime, the Chief Constable provided more details of the Rural Crime task force that was believed to be a deterrent to potential criminals coming in to the Thames Valley area.

In response to a question regarding retail theft, the Committee was advised that although there had been an increase in the number of offenders brought to justice more work was required in this area.

It was agreed that written responses to questions regarding the success of the Public Spaces Protection Order in Bicester, and contact details for Neighbourhood Police Officers in Kidlington would be provided after the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and Superintendent for their attendance.

Future Oxfordshire Partnership - Scrutiny Panel Update

The Chairman provided an update on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel meeting of the 22 January 2024 which he and Councillor Woodcock had attended as two of the three CDC appointed reports to the Panel.

The Committee was advised that the FOP Scrutiny Panel had considered reports on Healthy Place Shaping across Oxfordshire and the Wellbeing Board Strategy for Oxfordshire. The FOP Scrutiny Panel had recommended that appropriate Key Performance Indicators be used to measure the success of the initiatives and that there were relevant connections with the National Health Service for health care provision.

The update also included information on feedback from the main FOP Board to the Scrutiny Panel regarding Vision Zero. The Committee was informed that the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations had been rejected by the main board but these had been re-submitted for further consideration.

Councillor Wood, the CDC representative on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, advised the Committee that he had attended the FOP meeting earlier that day and that the Healthy Place Shaping initiative had been endorsed. Councillor Wood also advised that the FOP Scrutiny Panel had requested that officers initiate a review of its Terms of Reference prior to its first meeting in the 2024/25 municipal year.

Resolved

- (1) That the update regarding the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel and Future Oxfordshire Partnership meetings be noted.

Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3, 2023-2024

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director, Customer Focus, that detailed the quarter three performance for 2023/2024.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised the Committee that the Council had achieved 92% of its targets for quarter three. The Committee was advised that sixty measures had reported green, three amber and two red and all but one of the measures were expected to reach the year end targets.

The Committee asked for clarification on measure BP2.2.01 the percentage of Waste Recycled & Composted. The Performance Team Leader advised that a meeting had been arranged with the Environmental Services team to review all of the key performance indicators that were currently being used with a view to improving the measures to be used in the next financial year.

The Committee requested further information regarding the Techno Feasibility Study for a Heat Network in Banbury - Priority ADP02 on the 2023-24 Annual

Delivery Priorities. It was agreed that this would be distributed after the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2023-24 performance be noted and that no recommendations be submitted for Executive consideration.

60

Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services introduced a presentation of the draft Annual Delivery Plan for 2024-25 and explained that it supported delivery of the objectives set out in the Council's business plan.

There were 14 prospective plan priorities across the four main business plan priorities: Healthy, resilient and engaged communities; Housing that meets your needs; Enterprising economy with strong and vibrant centres; and, Supporting environmental sustainability. The 15th priority related to Corporate objectives.

The Corporate Director – Resources gave an overview of the priorities and associated milestones that had been set against each business plan priority.

The Committee raised a question regarding the possibility of creating a metric to measure the delivery of affordable housing within the District in addition to quantifying the total number of houses being built. The Assistant Director Planning and Development advised that the information had been reported to Executive in December 2023 as part of the Annual Monitoring Report.

The Committee requested that more information be provided regarding the amount of affordable housing that had actually been delivered rather than the volume planned to be delivered and on the split between affordable rents and social rents on actual completions. It was agreed that this information would be provided after the meeting.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the potential revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Kidlington and the removal of air quality monitoring tubes. The Health Protection Compliance and Business Support Manager advised that the tubes were still in place, but the data showed that air quality had improved in this area and the AQMA was no longer needed. A detailed annual report with more information would be submitted to the 4 March Executive meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25 be noted and no recommendations be submitted for Executive consideration.

Cost of Living Crisis - Action Plan Update

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing and the Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer gave a presentation on the progress made against the Cost of Living action plan that had been submitted to Executive in October 2023. The update covered the December 2023 and January 2024 period.

The Committee was advised that the Council had funded seven community food grants across the District including in Fritwell and Tadmarton with a further five grants pending award. A variety of projects had been funded including assistance on the use of slow cookers, the provision of cooking and recipe sessions and work on improving the accessibility at the venues.

The Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer outlined a new initiative that had been introduced to provide advice to residents on debt and money issues. In addition to the information available on the Council's website, leaflets had also been distributed at local GP surgeries.

The Committee was provided with details of the Household Support Equipment Grant which enabled community groups to apply for grants to purchase equipment such as blankets, thermal clothing, air fryers and other energy efficient appliances and LED lightbulbs to hand out to residents affected by the cost of living crises.

The Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer advised the Committee that there was a plan to introduce a Banbury food hub similar to the one in Botley to distribute surplus food. In response to a question from a member of the Committee querying whether Bicester would be a better location, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing advised that the Oxford food hub had proposed that Banbury should be the location of their second site due to its location in the north of the county but she would ask them to consider Bicester as an option.

In response to a question seeking clarification regarding oil co-operatives, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing advised that this was run by Community First Oxfordshire and that the Council funded the membership fee on behalf of the residents so that they did not have to pay to have the option of purchasing cheaper oil.

In response to a question regarding the effectiveness of the use of thermal imaging cameras to identify draughts in houses, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing advised that the initiative was a low cost community run project which made it a good scheme to support.

The Committee thanked the officers for all their continued hard work on the Cost of Living Action Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the Cost of Living Crisis Action Plan update be noted.

62 **Climate Action Working Group - updated Terms of Reference**

The Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead updated the Committee on the amended Terms of Reference that had been discussed and agreed by the Climate Action Working Group at its meeting on the 17 January 2024.

The Terms of Reference agreed when the group was initially established required updating, to reflect changes regarding work completed so far, upcoming work and changes in membership of the Working Group as a result of elections.

Resolved

- (1) That the amended Terms of Reference for the Climate Action Working Group be approved.

63 **Working Group Updates - January 2024**

The Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead presented the update on the work of the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Food Insecurity working groups.

Resolved

- (1) That the working group updates be noted.

64 **Work Programme 2023-24**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That the indicative work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chairman:

Date: