

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 9 September 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Zoe McLernon)
Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Zoe McLernon
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Adrian Unitt, Managing Director - Graven Hill Village Development Company
Phillip Kassiram, Finance Director - Graven Hill Village Development Company
Terry Fuller, Chair of the Board - Graven Hill Village Development Company

Officers:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

22 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

25 **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025 - 2026**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 1 2025-2026.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration advised that the Council was performing well against its quarter 1 objectives, with 82% of measures on target or within tolerance.

Out of 38 total measures 0 were red, 7 were amber, and 31 were green. On the annual delivery plan there were 23 milestones to deliver in quarter 1, 20 of which had been achieved or were within the agreed tolerance, and 3 slightly behind target. The actions with milestones behind target were Strengthen community cohesion - Produce Annual EDI General Duty Compliance report; Deliver Planning Service Improvement - establish performance improvement indicators, targets and resource needs; and Create vibrant economic centres and thriving rural villages - complete an asset register and agree future plan for each, with focus on those that are underutilised or suitable for community transfer.

Members were advised that work had begun on the milestones but was not yet completed.

Members were also advised that of the nine targeted corporate key performance indicators, five achieved their Q1 target or reported within the agreed tolerance, and four reported slightly behind target.

Officers then responded to a series of pre-submitted questions from members.

In response to a question regarding indicator BP2.2.03 the Q1 Climate Actions, and elaboration on the red status of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the report, the Climate Action Manager had provided a detailed written response, stating that since the publication of the agenda some of the action points had achieved a green status., The remaining were in progress and a comprehensive detailed response on the status of the remaining KPI's would be published after the meeting.

In response to a question regarding membership of the Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB), and were others able join it, the Corporate Director Communities explained that the CCPB was a closed officer led board, comprising of a number of assistant directors, heads of service and senior officers, used to monitor the progress of the climate action programme. Members were also advised that a Climate Action Working Group was due to be formed, at which appointed members would receive updates and have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Climate Change Programme.

In response to a question regarding educating public facing officers in British Sign Language (BSL) as part of EDI General Duty Compliance, the Performance Team Leader relayed a response from the Assistant Director of Human Resources stating that the Council's language bank had been launched and internal resources had been identified. Information had also been sought for sign language courses, including the associated costs.

In response to a question relating to indicator BP2.2.05 total greenhouse gas emissions for the year, and whether the report took into account changes made to residential properties by householders to reduce emissions as well as any retrofitting to commercial buildings, the Assistant Director Communities explained that the council monitored two distinct sets of emissions., Organisational emissions, which were those directly linked to council operations, and District-wide emissions; which included emissions from homes, businesses, transport, and other sectors across Cherwell Any changes to residential and commercial were not tracked at an individual property level, they were captured indirectly via the cumulative effect becoming visible in national and regional emissions data.

In response to a question regarding the delivery of Planning Service improvements, and whether this would diminish residents and parish council input into the planning process, and if it would also include improvements to external input from such bodies as Oxfordshire County Council Highways, the Assistant Director - Planning and Development advised that there would be no reduction in parish or resident input to the planning process. It was the responsibility of said bodies to provide their input, but the action plan for the management of strategic planning applications included more structured tracking and chasing of consultation responses in the interest of avoiding unnecessary delays.

In response to a question regarding the implementation of the Parish Liaison Flood Toolkit, the Corporate Director Communities explained that a parish flooding workshop was due to be held which would help with the creation of the toolkit.

In response to a comment from the Committee regarding the collection of council tax and business rates, the Chair agreed to record the thanks given from the committee to officers for their efforts in achieving such high collection rates.

In response to a question regarding indicator BP1.2.10, % of major planning applications overturned at appeal, and whether the Councils position had fluctuated or remained close to the stated 16% and how that effected the risk of designation from the Planning Inspectorate, the Assistant Director – Planning and Development explained that the council had been contacted regarding its previously high percentage of 10.4% over a two year period for major applications overturned at appeal., Officers subsequently submitted an exceptional circumstances case to government, which resulted in no designation being made, as recognition was given to the councils' commitment and efforts to rectifying the situation. Members were then advised that due to an error in the recording of the data the Councils' Q1 total was not 16% and was below 10%., One of the two applications overturned at appeal had been minor and not major.

In response to a question relating to the amber designation of the production of the Annual EDI General Duty Compliance Report and whether the report would be produced in time, the Performance Team Leader explained that despite a slight delay, work on the report had begun, and officers were confident that the report would be ready in time.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025 - 2026 performance be noted, and no comments be submitted for Executive consideration.

Work Programme Update

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead provided an update on the Committee's Work Programme 2025 – 2026.

Due to the impact of external factors, items due for the October meeting had had to be rescheduled, and other items from the work programme were unable to be brought forward. Therefore, the Chairman and Monitoring Officer had discussed and agreed to cancel the meeting of the committee due to be held on the 14 October 2025.

Members were advised that due to the Executive considering Simpler Recycling at their October meeting, that item and the linked Flytipping item

had been moved from the October meeting to the November meeting of the committee.

Members were informed that the Transformation programme had been renamed the Cherwell Futures Programme and would be brought to the December meeting of the committee.

Members were also advised that the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley will join our December meeting to give their annual updates. As usual, all Members would be invited to attend this meeting.

Members sought assurance and it was agreed by the Chair that the scheduled item on the performance of Section 106 (S106) delivery would be expanded to include an analysis of S106 payments for the expansion and delivery of primary care, and that officers would endeavour to ensure the report be brought to Committee during this 2025-26 municipal year.

In response to a question regarding the status of the update to the Community Safety Partnership Plan, the Corporate Director Communities advised that the action plan was produced and owned by the Community Safety Partnership, to which the Council was a member. He confirmed that an updated plan was in existence and officers were working on bringing an update to the committee as soon as practicable.

Members thanked the Corporate Director Communities for the update, and the Chair highlighted that as the CSCP action plan tied in with the police, it would be useful if the update to Committee could be scheduled to coincide with the attendance of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police in December.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Work Programme 2025 – 2026 be noted.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, 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.

Graven Hill Village Development Company Update

The Corporate Director – Resources and Transformation submitted an exempt report detailing the Graven Hill Development Company (GHVDC) Phase 2 progress, performance in 2024/25, and governance arrangements.

The Committee received a presentation from the GHVDC Managing Director detailing the Graven Hill 2024/25 Business Plan & Budget as well as providing an up-to-date position statement. In introducing the presentation, the GHVDC Managing Director advised that it had been a challenging year in the housing market, due to factors such as higher mortgage costs, slowing buyer decisions, lack of government incentive schemes and changes to stamp duty and land tax.

Officers responded to detailed pre-submitted questions from the Committee and agreed to circulate the answers after the meeting.

In response to a question regarding GHVDC's social housing policy, the GHVDC Managing Director advised that levels of Affordable Housing included initially were compliant with national policy at the time of the initial application, and future applications would continue to be compliant with appropriate national policy.

In response to a question as to whether the Integrated Care Board (ICB) could be invited to discuss Primary Care provision at Graven Hill, the Assistant Director Law and Governance, Monitoring Officer explained that health scrutiny was the responsibility of the County Council and therefore questions regarding the ICB would be best placed with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Graven Hill Village Development Company Update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

Chair:

Date: