

Council Minute Book
Monday 21 October 2013

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 1 July 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Norman Bolster, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy

Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures

Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning

Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Public Protections

Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing

Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers

Also Present: Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group

Apologies for absence: Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Nigel Morris, Lead Member for Clean and Green
Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Officers: Sue Smith, Chief Executive
Calvin Bell, Director of Development
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Adrian Colwell, Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy (for agenda items 8 and 10)
Jo Pitman, Head of Transformation (for agenda Item 16)
Nicola Jackson, Corporate Finance Manager
Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services (for agenda items 9 and 15)
Helen Town, Strategic Housing Officer (for agenda items 6 and 7)
Marianne North, Housing Needs Manager (for agenda item 7)
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

14 Declarations of Interest

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

15 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

16 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

17 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Graven Hill Acquisition Update**

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which sought consideration of the next steps towards the acquisition of Graven Hill Executive and provided an update on the progress being made with the acquisition of Graven Hill.

Resolved

- (1) That Full Council be recommended to add the acquisition and redevelopment of Graven Hill and prudential borrowing into the Policy Framework and make available the capital sums required as part of the budget.

Reasons

To ensure that the Council is following correct procedures in making key decisions

Options

Option One: To approve the recommendation

Option Two: To reject the recommendation

19 **Cherwell Housing Strategy and Tenancy Strategy 2012-17**

The Head of Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the Housing Strategy 2012-17 and Tenancy Strategy 2012-17.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Housing report on the work being done in the District by the council and partners to deliver affordable housing, housing related support and to prevent homelessness and improve housing standards.

Housing Services had enabled the delivery of 113 new affordable homes in 2012/13 by supporting Registered Provider's (RP's) and working with

planners and developers and the Council's 'Build' Programme had delivered 7 refurbished properties for single people.

The Lead Member for Housing explained that the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which had introduced major changes to the social welfare system would mean a fundamental change for housing organisations and for those receiving benefit. In terms of the social sector size criteria, which affected over 900 social tenancies in Cherwell, the Council had worked with Registered Providers to minimise the effects by changing the priority for downsizers in the Allocations Policy, by the use of Discretionary Housing Payments and through the development programme providing a greater number of one and two bedroom homes. Officers were working with Sanctuary Housing to monitor the impact.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report and progress to date in delivering the Council's Housing Strategy and the Council's Tenancy Strategy be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to submit a further update in twelve months' time.

Reasons

The Council's Housing Strategy contains six main priorities that the Council identified it would deliver over the period of the Strategy.

The Council's Tenancy Strategy provides guidance for Registered Providers operating in the Cherwell area.

Options

None

20

Criteria for Local Heritage Assets Register

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which sought consideration of the criteria for a District wide Local Heritage Assets Register.

Resolved

- (1) That the criteria for the selection of Local Heritage Assets be approved.

Reasons

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to ensure that local heritage is protected. This is done by understanding local heritage assets and managing change to ensure that the significance is not harmed. The criteria for assessing Local Heritage Assets is therefore important to ensure that local heritage assets are appropriately managed and

their significance is not harmed. The criteria from Cherwell District Council will help provide long term protection for the heritage of the District.

Options

Option One: To accept the document as criteria and process for the purposes of planning.

Option Two: To decline the document as criteria and process for the purposes of planning.

21

Carbon Management

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report which sought consideration of the progress the Council's Low Carbon Management Plan and well as other low carbon related projects.

Resolved

- (1) That the achievements of the ongoing delivery of the Carbon Management Plan be noted.
- (2) That the success of the investment in solar panels on key buildings be noted.
- (3) That the results of the Energy & Environment Survey be acknowledged.
- (4) That Cherwell's sign up to the national Climate Local Commitment be supported.

Reasons

The Low Carbon Environmental Strategy is key to reducing energy costs and emissions along with the Carbon Management Plan

The work already achieved by the Use of Natural Resources Group needs to continue to deliver the Carbon Management Plan.

Key to the internal and external environmental work of the council is to understand residents' opinions and expectations regarding climate change and energy efficiency and to engage with them.

Options

Option One: To approve the forward plan for the Use of Natural Resources Group for 2013/14, to note the results of the Energy & Environment Survey and to support Climate Local

Option Two: To reject either all or some of the proposals under Option One

Option Three: To ask officers to modify either all or some of the proposals under Option One

22

Enabling Business Investment in Cherwell

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which sought consideration of how to use recent research to enable business investment in Cherwell.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Estates and the Economy explained that independent research had been undertaken across England, the results of which could contribute towards the planning and economic development objectives of the Council.

Local Futures' Place Profiles were computer-generated reports that provided a high-level analysis of an area and told a 'story of place'. The reports provided a quick, easy to understand and yet comprehensive analysis of an area in relation to a national index by using standard data sources. Cherwell had been examined in terms of its attractiveness to inward investors and businesses considering the District as a location.

The overall analysis revealed that, despite some areas of weakness, Cherwell performed extremely well overall and had the highest Business Location Index when compared to surrounding districts and compared very strongly at an English level. Cherwell ranked 11th out of all 325 local authority areas in England.

Resolved

- (1) That agreement be given to share this research and engage with members of the Cherwell-M40 Investment Partnership (CHIP) to identify competitor locations and points of Cherwell's competitive advantage to form the basis of a promotional campaign to strengthen the economic base of the District and attract inward investment and this should also assist the retention of local SMEs and support them to prosper, all of which will contribute to growth in business rates and the vitality of Cherwell.
- (2) That new District- wide promotional material to secure new investment including Investor Profiles for our portfolio of major sites, setting out location, characteristics of the population, local demographics etc. be commissioned.
- (3) That agreement be given for Cherwell District Council to lead new initiatives in 2013/14 including a bulletin for businesses to promote investment, and a District wide business forum to enhance the networks the IoD, FSB and local Chambers within the District as a whole.

Reasons

The Cherwell Economic Development Strategy (2011-16), adopted by both the District Council and the Local Strategic Partnership, identifies the importance of a strong and resilient economy for the future of north Oxfordshire. By leading and enabling investment in three broad areas: people, business and place, specific commitment was given to take action on the following inter-related themes:

- a) Promote business & cluster development
- b) Attract new investment
- c) Promote employment sites & premises

Options

Option One: To take no action and retain the funding for other purposes.

Option Two: To implement the plans described in the recommendations.

Option Three: To alter and implement the plans described in the recommendations.

23 **Joint Arrangements Steering Group (CDC/SNC/SDC) Terms of Reference**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report which sought agreement to adopt formal terms of reference for the “three way” Joint Arrangements Steering Group involving members and officers of Cherwell District Council, South Northamptonshire and Stratford on Avon.

Resolved

- (1) That the terms of reference for the “three way” Joint Arrangements Steering Group (JASG) be adopted.

Reasons

As discussions on shared working with SDC bear fruit and significant progress is made towards recommended implementation of proposals it is important to define the role and responsibilities of the “three way” JASG in a way which is consistent with the existing terms of reference for the SNC/CDC JASG.

Options

Option One: To approve the recommendation.

Option Two: To amend the proposed terms of reference, but this is not recommended as they have the support of all three sets of Council members on the body and are consistent with the existing terms of reference for the CDC/SNC JASG.

24 **Transformation Challenge Award**

The Head of Finance and Procurement submitted a report which outlined proposals for bidding against the transformation challenge award and detailed the process and timetable for completion.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report and the purpose of the transformation challenge award be noted.
- (2) That the areas suggested for collaboration with South Northamptonshire and Stratford upon Avon Councils be endorsed.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Head of Finance and Procurement and the Leader of the Council to finalise submissions ahead of the deadline date of 14 July 2013.

Reasons

Through the Transformation Challenge Award the Government is making funding available to support local authorities that are at the cutting edge of innovation for service transformation so that they are going further and faster in re-engineering service delivery and achieving efficiency savings.

The 3 way Joint Arrangements Steering Group has recommended areas the 3 councils could bid for funds together and independently. In order to satisfy the bidding criteria we need to be able to evidence that the areas for collaboration have political support and the JASG is asking the Executive to confirm this support.

Options

Option One: Implement as per recommendations

Option Two: To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

25 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

Shared Services - Environmental Services

The Head of Environmental Services submitted an exempt report which sought approval of the implementation of Stage 1 of a shared service covering Environmental Services in Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the implementation of Stage 1 of a shared service covering some elements of Environmental Services be approved.
- (2) That it be noted that a report covering Stage 2 of a shared service will come forward later in the financial year.

Reasons

This report is presented to provide information on Stage 1 of a shared service. The impact on staff is very low and the savings proposed are achievable and some need to be delivered in 2013/14.

Stage 2 business case will be developed later during 2013.

Options

Option One: To approve the implementation of the shared service.

Option Two: To not approve the implementation of the shared service.

Option Three: Investigate other options

27

Proposal for a Shared Human Resources Service with South Northamptonshire District Council and a Collaborative Approach to the Delivery of HR Services with Stratford On Avon District Council

The Head of Transformation submitted an exempt report which sought consideration of the proposal for a shared Human Resources service with South Northamptonshire District Council and a Collaborative Approach to the Delivery of HR Services with Stratford on Avon District Council

Resolved

- (1) That the responses to the consultation process with the affected staff and trade union representatives be noted.
- (2) That the approval of the Personnel Committee of the staffing aspects in relation to the proposal for a Shared HR Service with SNC be noted.
- (3) That the proposal to work in collaboration with Stratford on Avon District Council in relation to the delivery of HR Services be approved.

- (4) That the proposed final business case to share an HR Service between CDC and SNC be approved and implemented, subject to similar approval by SNC Cabinet and Full Council.

Reasons

The introduction of a shared HR Service will continue to build upon the Shared Service model between CDC and SNC, whilst supporting the principle of collaborative working with SDC.

It will provide increased resilience to all partners and ensure that specialisms and best practice can be developed internally to be shared across all partners.

It will deliver service improvements, increase efficiency, avoid duplication and deliver financial savings for CDC.

Options

Option One: To reject the proposal meaning the two services continue to operate independently. This would not deliver the benefits or financial savings to CDC identified in the business case.

Option Two: Approve the business case as attached

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 2 September 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Norman Bolster, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures
Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Public Protection
Councillor Nigel Morris, Lead Member for Clean and Green
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers

Also Present: Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group

Apologies for absence: Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Officers: Calvin Bell, Director of Development
Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment
Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Adrian Colwell, Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

28 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

29 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

30 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

31 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32 **High Speed 2 (HS2) Update**

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which provided an update on the High Speed Rail - HS2 scheme and Cherwell District.

Resolved

- (1) That the process that has been introduced by HS2 Ltd for Safeguarding be noted.
- (2) That the CDC response to the HS2 Environmental Statement be noted.
- (3) That the on-going Legal Challenge to the HS2 scheme and next steps be noted.

Reasons

Cherwell District Council continues to take appropriate steps to respond to the HS2 scheme. This includes supporting legal challenge when necessary and engaging directly with HS2 Ltd to secure the best possible mitigation for the District should the scheme be approved by Parliament.

Options

Option One: To note the recommendations relating to CDC actions and discretion.

Option Two: To reject these recommendations.

Option Three: To propose an alternative approach.

33 **District Wide Programme of Article 4 Directions to Protect Heritage Interest**

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which sought consideration of the introduction of a District wide programme of Article 4 Directions to preserve the Character and Appearance of Areas with Heritage Significance.

Resolved

- (1) That the process of rolling-out a programme of Article 4 Directions be approved

- (2) That officers be requested to include an article in Cherwell Link on Article 4 Directions.

Reasons

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to ensure that local heritage is protected. This is done by understanding local heritage assets and managing change to ensure that the significance is not harmed. The criteria for Article 4 Directions are therefore straight-forward and transparent to aid both Cherwell District Council and the local community in managing local heritage assets appropriately thereby ensuring that their significance is not harmed.

To increase public awareness.

Options

Option One: To accept the programme of Article 4 Directions with phased implementation.

Option Two: To decline the programme of Article 4 Directions as described.

34 Funding Provision for Enforcement Action in Connection with Work-in-default and with Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which sought support in principle for the establishment, through the annual budget setting process, of a capital budget against which the Housing and Regeneration Service could draw when taking enforcement action to bring empty homes back into use, or when needing to undertake Works-in-Default following the failure of a notice recipient to comply with an enforcement notice requiring remedial works.

Resolved

- (1) That the establishment of a capital budget, through the annual budget setting process for 2014-15, and in successive years, that will enable enforcement powers delegated to the Head of Regeneration to be utilised effectively, and without the need for the necessary funding to be sought separately in each particular case be supported.

Reasons

Members' concern about the waste represented by long-term empty homes, and their desire to get them back into use is underpinned and ultimately dependent upon the Council's preparedness to take enforcement action in appropriate cases. It is effectively a last resort, but one that will not only get specific properties back into use, but also demonstrate very clearly to other owners of empty property that the Council is serious about reducing the number of empty home in the district. Without recourse to enforcement, where appropriate, the Council could appear toothless.

The Council is responsible for taking action to address unsatisfactory housing conditions and uses a variety of enforcement notices to achieve that. In cases where those notices are ignored the Council needs to be able to undertake Work-in default to ensure compliance.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing is authorised to take empty-dwelling enforcement action (EDMOs), to serve notices to remedy unsatisfactory housing and to undertake Work-in-default action arising, but requires funding to be available it that is to happen.

The most efficient and effective means of providing the necessary funding is by establishing a specific budget and having funds in place at the beginning of each year.

Options

Option One: Support the principle that a capital budget should be established so as to facilitate and enable effective housing enforcement action; and also support the principle that this budget should be determined, on an annual basis, through the budget setting process.

Option Two: Decline to support this approach and require the Head of Regeneration and Housing to seek funding, on a case by case basis, by means of reports to the Executive (as is currently the situation).

35

South West Bicester Sports Village Progress Update

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which provided a progress report on the Bicester Sports Village project.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress on the construction of Phase 1 (grass pitches, cycle track and landscaping) and the progress on the procurement process for Phase 2 (design and construction of a pavilion and car park) be noted.

Reasons

This is a Project Board update report. There are no Key Issues or decisions required at this stage. Project Issues are captured on the Issues log and reviewed by the Project Board.

Options

Option One: The Project has been approved and is progressing in accordance with these approvals. There are no other Options being considered.

Performance Management Framework 2013/14 First Quarter Performance Report

The Head of Transformation submitted a report which presented the Council's performance for the period 01 April to 30 June 2013 as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

Resolved

- (1) That the following achievements be noted:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- Processing of major applications within 13 weeks has significantly improved to 68.75% this quarter, compared to 25% at the end of Quarter 4, exceeding the target of 50%.
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has reduced to well below target. 34 have been placed in temporary accommodation with an expected target of 41. Work is further progressing with partners (Registered Social Landlords) to ensure delays in 'move-ons' and 'turn arounds' is kept to a minimum.

A Cleaner Greener Cherwell

- The amount of waste recycled this quarter has improved to 58% compared to the last quarter of 55%, the target for this year is to maintain above 57%. The Street cleansing team have completed a 'Litter Blitz' week with the community of Hardwick. This involves road shows, swap shops, collection of large bulky items for free and more importantly engaging with the community and educating about recycling.
- EcoTown work is due to start on site at the initial housing development at Northwest Bicester in September. A2 Dominion will begin construction of the spine road to serve the development. The construction of the first homes is expected to begin in early 2014.

A Safe, Healthy and Thriving District

- The new sports pitches at South West Bicester are making progress, the contractor has completed the sports pitch construction including the drainage, next stage is to seed the pitch. The cycle track will then be constructed in August/September.
- Supporting the local health sector in building a new community hospital in Bicester has progressed; construction is underway of the new facility.

An Accessible Value for Money Council

- Improvements to the website have started with a new online form systems being implemented; this will allow the customer more options and a customer friendly online form to report issues. This will also extend to include more of the Councils services online.

- (2) That the following performance related matters for review or consideration in future reports be noted:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- Processing of Minor Applications within 8 weeks is reporting as Red, this is 51.72% compared with 73.74% last quarter. The target is 65%. Processing of Other Applications within 8 weeks is

reporting as Amber, this is 76.56% compared to 86.28% last quarter, the target is 80%. This is due to the focus concentrating on the submission and process of Major applications which takes longer to complete. Priority action is being enforced by seconding the Development Management Staff; this together with new appointments to the team will ensure maintaining throughput of applications and ensuring they are manageable moving forward.

A Cleaner Greener Cherwell

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill is reporting as Red, 6566 tonnages against the target of 5900. The landfill tonnages are ahead of expectation. The waste and recycling team are working on reducing this for the next quarter.
- The number of Flytips is reporting as Amber, across the District there have been 100 flytips in quarter 1, only 4 flytips over target which is 96. We are experiencing an increase in either single item or small flytips in garage areas. A joint approach with the housing associations to tackle the issue is underway, this includes education of areas and also signage to discourage the flytipping.

A Safe Healthy and Thriving District

- Reducing domestic burglary incidents by 2% is reporting as Amber, Cherwell has received 50 reports of Burglary compared to 44 reports. This slight increase at this time of year is a common trend however, joint working with Thames Valley Police through the Joint Agency and Tasking Co-ordination (JATAC) meeting is underway to promote securing homes and sheds during the holiday period.
- Maintaining current levels of visits/usage to district leisure centres is reporting as Amber, 295,570 visits compared with 309,900 at Quarter 1 in 2012/2013. This is due to the teaching swimming pool being closed in Bicester which is having an adverse effect. Spiceball and Kidlington levels have increased and slightly exceed the target.

An Accessible Value for Money Council

- Implementing and embedding shared back office systems and services to secure efficiencies is reporting as Amber, this was also Amber at the end of the last quarter. Work is progressing in this area with the Human Resources Business Case having been approved and the 3 way ICT business case is also being developed.
- The percentage of housing benefit recovered, including outstanding is reporting as Red, 15.82% has been recovered compared with Quarter one 2012/2013 of 12.56%. The team are looking into this area to ensure targets are achievable. Invoices being paid within 30 days is reporting as Amber, 96.05% have been paid within 30 days against a target of 98%. This reduction in performance is due to missing information on the invoices which is delaying the process. Proactive steps have been taken with regular communication of requiring all information, this has been sent to all staff via email.

- (3) That the progress on issues raised in the Quarter two report be noted.

Reasons

This report presents the Council's performance against its corporate scorecard for the first quarter of 2013/14. It includes an overview of successes, areas for improvement and emerging issues to be considered.

Options

Option One: 1. To note the many achievements referred to in paragraph 1.3.; 2. To identify any performance related matters for review or consideration in future reports identified in paragraph 1.4; 3. To note progress on issues raised in the Quarter four performance report highlighted in paragraph 1.5.

Option Two: To identify any additional issues for further consideration or review.

37

Quarter 1 2013/14 Finance and Procurement Report

The Head of Finance and Procurement submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital performance for the first 3 months of the financial year 2013/14 and projections for the full 2013/14 period. These were measured by the budget monitoring function and reported via the Performance Management Framework (PMF) informing the 2013/14 budget process currently underway.

The report also presented information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy during 2013/14 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Resolved

- (1) That the projected revenue & capital position at June 2013 be noted.
- (2) That the quarter 1 (Q1) performance against the 2013/14 investment strategy and the financial returns from the two funds be noted.
- (3) That the contents and the progress against the Corporate Procurement Action Plan and the Procurement savings achieved at June 2013 be noted.

Reasons

This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2013/14 Financial Targets for Revenue, Capital, Treasury and Procurement Monitoring.

Options

Option One: To review current performance levels and considers any actions arising.

Option Two: To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman:

Date:

COUNCIL

RECORD OF LEAD MEMBER DECISIONS FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO OCTOBER 2013

21 October 2013

Area of Responsibility	Decision Subject Matter
Leader of the Council	Appointment of Member Champions
Leader of the Council	Appointment of Representatives to Partnerships and Outside Bodies 2013/14
Leader of the Council	Appointment of Representatives to Partnerships and Outside Bodies 2013/14
Lead Member for Planning	Local Validation Checklist

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Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 18 September 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Ray Jelf
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford

Substitute Members: Councillor Ken Atack (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Guests: Alastair Rankine, Ernst & Young, External Audit
Maria Grindley, Ernst & Young, External Audit
Chris Bastion, Ernst & Young, External Audit

Apologies for absence: Councillor Trevor Stevens
Councillor Barry Wood

Officers: Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Nicola Jackson, Corporate Finance Manager
Denise Taylor, Corporate Accountant
Chris Dickens, Chief Internal Auditor
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Sharon Hickson, Assistant Democratic and Elections Officer

16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest

17 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

18 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

19 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 **Statement of Accounts 2012/13**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement which sought agreement of the audited Statement of Accounts 2012 – 13.

In introducing the report, the Corporate Finance Officer explained that 2012/13 was the first year that the accounts had been prepared by a shared finance team. All statutory deadlines had been met and it was anticipated that an unqualified audit opinion would be received.

The Committee was advised that the majority of changes to the “subject to audit” version of the accounts were presentational with the only major change being the change of the asset date to 31 March 2013.

Resolved

- (1) That the amendments to the 2012/13 financial statement be approved.
- (2) That the 2012/13 Financial Statements be approved, and the Statement of Accounts be duly signed by the Chairman and the Director of Resources.
- (3) That it be noted that the 2012/13 Summary Accounts were currently being prepared and, when finalised, would be circulated to Members in due course.

21 **External Audit Results Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement which sought consideration of the Ernst and Young LLP Results Report which included comments on the audit of the 2012/13 Statement of Accounts.

In introducing the report, the External Auditors reported that the audit had been carried out over a number of areas with no irregularities to report. The external auditors thanked the Finance team for the quality of work and assistance given informing the Committee that the same quality of work had been maintained throughout the successful first joint CDC & SNC year-end process.

The Committee was advised that all outstanding actions had now been completed and once the Letter of Representation had been received, an unqualified audit opinion would be issued. An unqualified value for money

conclusion would be issued as the external auditor was satisfied the arrangements were adequate and the criteria met.

In response to Members' requests for clarification on the External Auditor assessment of the Councils Managing Finances as adequate, the Corporate Finance Manager informed the Committee that recommendations had been given by the External Auditor which would assist the Council in improving the assessment. It was agreed that these recommendations would be brought to the next meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the matters raised in the External Audit Results Report be noted, prior to approval of 2012/13 financial statements.
- (2) That the adjustments to the financial statements be noted.
- (3) The letter of representation on behalf of the Council be approved.

22

Risk Management - First Quarter Review of Risk

The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Performance Manager which updated the committee on the management of strategic, corporate and partnership risks during the first quarter of 2013/14 and highlighted any emerging issues.

The Corporate Performance Manager circulated a copy of a Risk Heat map and Full Risk log which covered both CDC and South Northamptonshire Council. The Committee was advised that a number of entries on the Heat Map had been assessed as joint risks therefore may not be a true indication of the severity level at each individual authority. It was agreed that future reports to the Committee would only highlight CDC risks and identify change within the risk.

Resolved

- (1) That the quarter 1 Strategic, Corporate and Partnership Risk Register be noted.

23

Q1 Treasury Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement on the Council's treasury management performance and compliance with the treasury management policy for the first quarter of 2013 – 14 including an update for position as at 31 August 2013 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 1 (Q1) Treasury Report be noted.

- (2) That the 2012/13 Annual Treasury Report which was presented to Council in July 2013 be noted.

24 **Use of Purchase Orders**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement on the Council's use of Purchase Orders.

In introducing the report the Corporate Accountant reported that there had been improvement in the use of Purchase Orders but further improvement was still required. A service analysis would highlight sections that were proficient identify those areas where further training was required. The Corporate Accountant reported that the move to "no tolerance" no Purchase Order no payment, would impact on the speed of the payment of invoices.

The committee requested that a further report be submitted to the December meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the report on the progress the Council is making to improve the use of purchase orders be noted

25 **Internal Audit Progress Report**

The committee considered a report of the Chief Internal Auditor which provided an update of the work of Internal Audit since the last meeting.

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that the profiled work was on track with discussion with the areas in the Council that would be audited underway.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted

26 **Review of Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Work Programme 2013-14. The Corporate Finance Manager reported that Purchase Orders & IT access issues would be added to the agenda for the December meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme 2013-14 be noted

27 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of that Act.

28 **Q1 Treasury Management Report - Exempt Appendix 1 and 2**

The Committee considered the exempt annexes to the report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement on the Council's Quarter 1 Treasury Management Report.

Resolved

(1) That the exempt appendices be noted.

29 **Karen Curtin, former Head of Finance & Procurement**

The Committee noted that Karen Curtin, former Head of Finance and Procurement, had been appointed to the new post of Director (Bicester) at Cherwell District Council.

Members thanked Karen Curtin for her hard work in the finance department and support to the Committee and wished her all the best in her new role.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 23 July 2013 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Melanie Magee (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Ann Bonner
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor G A Reynolds
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members: Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes (In place of Councillor Lynda Thirzie Smart)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Patrick Cartledge
Councillor Alaric Rose
Councillor Lynda Thirzie Smart

Officers: Sue Smith, Chief Executive
Lesley Shore, HR Project Co-Ordinator, West Midlands Employers

13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

14 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2, of Schedule 12A of that Act."

15

Recruitment Process for Director (Bicester Regeneration Projects)

The committee considered the application that had been received for the post of Director (Bicester). The committee saw the applicant and asked a number of questions.

Following the interview the committee evaluated the application and considered the supporting information from the assessment centre.

Resolved

- (1) That Cherwell District Council appoint Karen Curtin be appointed Director (Bicester).

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 11 September 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Ann Bonner
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Alaric Rose
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
Councillor Lynda Thirzie Smart
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Gordon Ross

Apologies for absence: Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor G A Reynolds

Officers: Jo Pitman, Head of Transformation
Paula Goodwin, Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager
Louise Aston, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

17 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

18 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

19 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2013 and the Special Personnel Committee held on 23 July 2013 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

20 **Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy**

The Head of Transformation submitted a report on the revised Joint Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy.

In introducing the report the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager advised the committee that the Council and Employee Joint Committee had also considered and endorsed the revised policy at their meeting of 4 September 2013. The SNC equivalent Committees had also considered and endorsed the report on 10 September 2013 with the policy being taken to Council at SNC on 23 October 2013.

The Joint Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy had been revised due to the single council position at Cherwell District Council not being covered by the old policy and whilst these changes were being made, it was decided that it was an opportunity to create greater resilience.

Resolved

- (1) That the views and recommendations of the Council and Employee Joint Committee be noted.
- (2) That the revised Joint Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy be approved authority delegated to the Head of Law and Governance to make any consequential changes to the Constitution.

21

Employment Statistic - Quarter 1 2013/2014

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager presented the report of the Head of Transformation which detailed the employment statistics, by Directorate, for information and monitoring purposes.

The committee requested that future reports for vacancies include a column showing when they became vacant and a commentary column.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.03 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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 2 July 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)
Councillor Daniel Sames (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson

Substitute Members: Councillor Gordon Ross (In place of Councillor Sean Woodcock)

Also Present: Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor D M Pickford

Apologies for absence: Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers: Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

11 **Minutes**

That, subject to the amendment detailed below, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 May, 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Minute 6 – Air Quality across the District.

Penultimate paragraph – amend first sentence to read:

‘Committee Members raised extreme concern and disappointment that, even after detailed assessment, the declaration of an AQMA, and even the implementation of an Air Quality Action Plan, it appeared there was little the Council could do itself to ensure improvements were achieved.’

12 **Banbury Brighter Futures**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures, Councillor Debbie Pickford, Lead Member for Housing, and Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Community and Environment detailing the performance of the Brighter Futures in Banbury Programme 2012/13 and advising priorities for 2013/14 and other associated Banbury matters.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures (BBF) and the Director of Community and Environment emphasised the positive progress made to date. The direction of travel on all themes was good, with all partners fully engaged.

The only area where progress had not been as great as it might have been in respect of education. This was mainly due to changes in personnel and efforts were underway to increase the pace of improvement and have educational achievement at or above the average for the County as a whole.

Regarding areas of concern previously identified by the Committee in respect of Air Quality and recycling rates, although the former was not directly linked with the BBF programme, the Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures undertook to investigate whether there were any areas where there were links and help might be given. Regarding recycling rates, a lot of work had been undertaken in the area with blitz teams and through education. With a high number of flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation, there were particular challenges, and although the area was kept tidy, more work was needed to increase recycling rates. As the Committee’s Work Programme included items in respect of all of the areas of concern, and the Director of Community and Environment undertook to feed into those items as information became available.

The Committee noted the good progress, but did raise some concerns regarding education and emphasised the importance of engaging with Head Teachers and School Governors regarding educational issues; the rolling-out of experience and good practice elsewhere across the District, and regarding the provision of housing accommodation.

In response to the Committee's comments, the Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures undertook to investigate engaging directly with School Heads and Governors. The Director of Community and Environment added that the Chairman of the Banbury Schools Partnership had previously been involved, and further involvement could now be investigated.

The Committee was advised that the areas of greatest need in the district remained the Wards covered by the BBF Programme, and resources should therefore remain focused on these. Nonetheless, rolling-out experience gained and good practice was happening, particularly through Connecting Communities Events (one was planned for Bicester later in the year). The Thriving Families Programme, Early Intervention hubs in Banbury, together with Job Clubs and work done with NEET's, had all produced lessons which could and were applied elsewhere. This was not a formal process and some Theme Leads were less able to progress matters than others.

The Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures advised that public perception of progress made in the Wards covered by the programme was very positive. The Connecting Communities events provided opportunities for public feedback, and a BBC Radio Oxford outside broadcast event in Bretch Hill had demonstrated a positive appreciation from residents.

The Lead Member for Housing advised that, through partners such as Sanctuary Housing, careful monitoring was taking place to ascertain the impact of changes to the Benefits rules, and whether the types of housing accommodation being provided was appropriate. It was, however, important that decisions were taken only when clear evidence was available to ensure the right type of accommodation was provided for local needs. Notwithstanding this, the target for the provision of affordable housing had been exceeded, and the transfer of land from Oxfordshire County Council would enable further provision. The Director of Community and Environment added that there were a higher number of development sites within the Banbury Brighter Futures programme area than anywhere else in the District.

The Director of Community and Environment confirmed that a Credit Union had now been established. Recruitment was underway, and the facility would become operational in 2014.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Members and the Director of Community and Environment for advising the Committee and taking on-board the issues raised. She concluded that excellent progress had been made during the first three years of the programme, but it was important that there be no loss of momentum. It was acknowledged that all partner organisations remained fully engaged, albeit efforts should be made to identify and engage with new partners (e.g. School Head Teachers and Governors). The knowledge and experience gained and good practice identified through the BBF programme should, wherever possible, be utilised elsewhere across the District, and a focus on housing was to be encouraged. Progress towards the establishment of a Credit Union was welcomed, as was the commitment to work with officers on the issue of Air Quality.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the points made in the conclusion detailed above, the progress and 2012/13 performance of the Brighter Futures in Banbury programme be noted.
- (2) That the forthcoming activities of the Programme be noted.

13 **Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Law and Governance presenting the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 be noted.
- (2) That, subject to the further comments of Members of the Committee being considered and incorporated into the report, delegated authority be granted to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the former Chairman of the two former scrutiny Committees, and current Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to complete the forward and make any minor amendments to the annual report before submission to Full Council.

14 **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 items in the Executive Work Programme for July to October, 2013 that they wished to include on their Work Programme in 2013/14.

Potential Work Programme Items

The Committee noted that scoping documents were being worked on with respect to a number of topics identified on the Work programme, and these would be submitted to the Committee for consideration at the August meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that plans were in-hand for a joint visit with South Northamptonshire Council's Scrutiny Committee to the Houses of Parliament during the autumn to observe the Select Committee process.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

- (2) That no items in the current version of the Executive Work Programme (July to October 2013) be included on the Work Programme for 2013/14.

The meeting ended at 7.46 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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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 6 August 2013 at 6.30 pm

- Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)
Councillor Daniel Sames (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock
- Substitute Members: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (In place of Councillor Rose Stratford)
- Also Present: Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customer
Councillor James Macnamara (for agenda item 8)
- Apologies for absence: Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
- Officers: Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader
Kevin Larnar, Rural Development and Countryside Officer
Louise Tustian, Senior Performance & Improvement Officer
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

15 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

8. Work Programme Briefing Note - Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride.

Councillor Alastair Milne Home, Non Statutory Interest, as he had sat on the board of the former BCTA.

Councillor Nigel Randall, Non Statutory Interest, as a trustee of a charity that had also bid for the contract.

16 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

17 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 July 2013 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Performance Monitoring - Q1 2013/14 Exceptions Reporting**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers, the Corporate Performance Manager, the Community Intelligence and Performance Analyst, and the Development Control Team Leader to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers advised that there were currently only two performance indicators reporting red exceptions. These were Processing of minor planning applications within 8 weeks (target 65%; actual 55%) and Planning appeals allowed against decision of Committee (target 30%; actual 33%)

With respect to the processing of minor planning within 8 weeks, the Committee was advised that, in the previous quarter, the indicator had been green at 75%. However, the current slip in performance had occurred due to a general increase in applications and, in particular, an increase in the number of major applications received. These generated additional work and drew resources that would otherwise be used to progress minor applications (there had been a corresponding improvement in the figure for processing major applications within 13 week; target 55%, actual 68.75%).

Measures were in-hand to address the back-log, and it was believed resources were sufficient to maintain the standard, once the back-log had been addressed. The Committee agreed to re-visit the issue at a future meeting and, if felt necessary at that time, recommend that the Lead Member look at additional measures. The Lead Member undertook to report the Committee's comments at the September meeting of the Executive.

Regarding the number of Planning Appeals allowed the Committee acknowledged that due to the small number of appeals, one appeal against a decision made by Planning Committee being allowed would have a significant impact on the performance figure. The Committee considered that this was essentially a matter for the Planning Committee and it was acknowledged that an independent Planning Committee would, on occasion, make decisions against Officer advice. It was also acknowledged that, once adopted, the Local Plan would support decisions of the Planning Committee challenged at appeal.

The Committee was pleased to acknowledge a number of areas of improved performance. These included Households living in temporary accommodation; time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims, and time taken to process a change in circumstances to an existing claim (Housing Benefit). All had previously reported red, but were now showing green.

Responding to a query regarding the amber status, the Lead Member for Performance and Customers undertook to look at the point where an indicator changed from green to amber, as this would help identify where a service was just beginning to drop in performance.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Member for Performance and Customers and Officers for their presentation and advice.

19 **Business Planning and Service Plan Process 2014/15**

The Corporate Performance Manager gave an overview of the Business Planning and Service Plan process.

The Committee was advised that key elements would be the new Medium Term Financial Strategy, outcomes from the Customer Satisfaction and Budget consultation processes, impacts from the census, and any other known impacts on services.

The results of the customer insights feedback would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September, with a draft of both the Business Plan and Service Plan being submitted to the November meeting. Development of the Service Plan would overlap with the Business Plan process and be completed in January.

An important aspect would be reviewing how the delivery of a service plan progressed during the year and, in this respect, a Service Manager could be invited to advise the Committee accordingly.

In light of this and the Committee's previous consideration of the Enforcement Service Plan in January 2013, Members agreed that the Head of Development Management be invited to the November meeting to advise the current position.

The Lead Member for Performance and Customers suggested that, in light of the work that would be done by the Budget Planning Committee on the budget, consideration might be given to holding a joint meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Work Programme be amended to reflect that the Head of Development Management would be invited to attend the November meeting of the Committee to advise on the delivery of the Enforcement Service Plan.

20 **Work Programme Briefing Note - Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride**

The Chairman welcomed the CDC Countryside and Communities Manager and the Oxfordshire County Council Transport Coordinator (Community Transport and Concessionary Fares) to the meeting.

The Countryside and Communities Manager advised on the operation of the 'Dial-a-Ride' service, the development of Community transport, and the operation of the Oxfordshire Community Transport Advisory Group (OCTAG).

The Committee noted that the Dial-a-Ride service was well used across the district, and that the top-up provided by the Council for the years 2012/13 and 2013/14 was helping to maintain the service at the level required by users. However, following advice from the Transport Coordinator that, during the autumn, the County Council would be reviewing the future of the service as part of its overall budget setting process, concern was expressed that any future additional contribution by the district council could only be considered if it was known the service as a whole was to continue.

The Chairman thanked the Countryside and Communities Manager and the Transport Coordinator for their advice, and requested that they attend a future meeting of the Committee to advise on the outcome of the County Council's review.

Resolved

- (1) That the item be retained on the Work Programme, and that the CDC Countryside and Communities Manager and the Transport Coordinator (Oxfordshire County Council) be invited to attend a future meeting to advise on the future of the scheme.

21 **Concessions Policy - Scoping Document**

The Committee considered a scoping document prepared by Councillor Randall proposing a Scrutiny Review with respect to the value or otherwise of the Council adopting a formal concessions policy.

In presenting the scoping document Councillor Randall commented that, in light of the relatively small sums involved, the first question to address would be whether a policy was actually required. If deemed desirable, then having a single clear policy would be of benefit to residents accessing services.

The Democratic and Elections Team Leader advised that, following advice from the Corporate Finance Manager, it would be appropriate for the recommendations of any Scrutiny Review to be subsequently referred to the Budget Planning Committee when it considered Fees and Charges.

Resolved

- (1) That an informal working group comprising Councillors Jon O'Neill, Nigel Randall and Lawrie Stratford, together with appropriate officers,

undertake a Scrutiny Review regarding the introduction of a Concessions Policy.

- (2) That the findings and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review be submitted to the Budget Planning Committee for consideration as part of that Committee's deliberations regarding fees and charges.
- (3) That progress be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the regular Work Programme report.

22

Wind Turbines - Scoping Document

The Committee considered a scoping document prepared by Councillor O'Neill proposing a Scrutiny Review with respect to the introduction of a robust policy regarding the future development of wind farms in the district.

In presenting the scoping document, Councillor O'Neill advised that it was vital that the Council had a policy that would stand up to the planning appeals process, and thus protect communities throughout the district.

The Democratic and Elections Team Leader advised that the revised Local Plan was due to be considered by the Executive and then Council in October. It would then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for final adoption. This would set the framework for any subsequent revised policy regarding wind turbines. A Scrutiny Review would take into consideration what other authorities had in the way of policy guidance and, with input from appropriate officers, a draft revised policy could be subsequently put before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

At the discretion of the Chairman Councillor Macnamara addressed the Committee and reminded Members that the Council had been one of the first authorities to address the issue of wind turbines when the current policy had been adopted in February 2011. However, there had been considerable policy change since that time and a revised document was now needed. He hoped the Committee would undertake a Scrutiny Review, and that this would produce a new policy that was both reasonable in terms of guidance, and sat with and complimented the adopted Local Plan.

Some Members suggested that no action should be taken until after the Local Plan had been adopted, and there was some evidence that a revised policy specific to wind turbines was required. It was however agreed that action was required and there should be a Scrutiny Review on the issue.

Resolved

- (1) That a Scrutiny Review be undertaken to review the Council's current policy in respect of wind turbine developments, with a view to developing and subsequently introducing an updated policy.

- (2) That the Scrutiny Review be undertaken by Councillors Ann Bonner and Jon O'Neill supported by other Members, Planning and other officers as appropriate.
- (3) That progress be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the regular Work Programme report.

23

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 items in the Executive Work Programme for August to November, 2013 that they wished to include on their Work Programme in 2013/14.

Potential Work Programme Items

The Committee noted that the Work Programme would be updated to reflect the decisions earlier in the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.
- (2) That no items in the current version of the Executive Work Programme (August to November 2013) be included on the Work Programme for 2013/14

The meeting ended at 8.33 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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 24 September 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Ann Bonner (Chairman)
Councillor Daniel Sames (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Melanie Magee
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson

Substitute Members: Councillor Gordon Ross (in place of Councillor Sean Woodcock)

Also Present: Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management

Apologies for absence: Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers: Tim Madden, Interim Head of Finance and Procurement
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Ryszard Filipiak, Service Assurance Team Leader
Hedd Vaughan Evans, Research and Intelligence Officer
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

25 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

26 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 August 2013 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

27 **Welfare Reform Update**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management, the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement and the Service Assurance Team Leader to the meeting.

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement advising progress in respect of national changes in the welfare system.

At the request of the Committee, the Service Assurance Team Leader undertook to circulate information regarding the number of mutual exchanges that had taken place since the introduction of the Spare Bedroom Subsidy rule.

Regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, it was noted that, to date, there had been no appeals against any decision. This compared to perhaps 2 or 3 appeals per month under the former Council Tax / Housing Benefit scheme and, whilst this might be because claimants were satisfied with the outcome of their application, it might also be because they were unaware of the way the new system operated.

The Committee expressed concern that, with regard to the localisation of the Social Fund, more elderly applicants might be reluctant to make an application. Concern was also expressed regarding the limited hours during which Auriga provided a service. In response, the Service Assurance Team Leader advised that, to date, the limited hours service did not appear to have been an issue, and the local Citizens Advice Bureau had also reported this to be the case. Regarding the introduction of the Benefit Cap, 36 households in the District had been affected. Some outreach work would take place during October, and if any households were found to be in need of assistance then this would be provided.

Responding to concern regarding the potential for an underspend on the Discretionary Housing Payments budget, the Lead Member for Financial Management advised that the system did seem to be operating well, and there was every intention to spend the budget by the end of the year. In this respect, consideration would be given to adjusting the application criteria later in the year to ensure budget spend. He added that it was important to be very clear and straight with applicants and, thus far, he was happy that the process was working well.

The Committee commended the work of the Local Government Resources Review Project team both in anticipation of the changes and currently as these were rolled out. It was agreed that information on the team and the work stream groups be included in the Members Bulletin.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That, in future, monitoring of the Welfare Reforms be undertaken through the Performance Management process, with appropriate Officers being required to report to the Committee where an indicator showed red.

28

Customer Insight Report

The Chairman welcomed the Corporate Performance Manager and the Research and Intelligence Officer to the meeting.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Performance Manager reviewing the quarter 1 Customer Insight Report, noting overall satisfaction rates; satisfaction regarding particular services; complaints; media enquiries, social media, and website interaction.

The Committee noted that a new, two stage complaints process was now in place, and the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to circulate details, together with information regarding the 16 Ombudsman cases dealt with during 2012/13. She also acknowledged that there was a data quality issue with respect to recording complaints correctly and consistently and the recording of response dates. However, moving the complaints process into the Performance Team later in the year would help address these issues. She also undertook to investigate providing Members with a means of forwarding complaints that they had received direct to the complaints system. With regard to the three consultation exercises, the Research and Intelligence Officer undertook to circulate members with details of the number of participants.

Responding to Committee concerns regarding the Council's website and the relatively low customer satisfaction level, the Corporate Performance Manager advised that this area had already been identified for improvement as the website was particularly important if future plans to 'channel shift' customers to web transactions (from face-to-face or telephone contact) were to be successful.

Regarding webcasting, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to supply Members with details of the Committees watched, the number of people accessing the system, and whether they had watched live or after the event.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That consideration of future reports be added to the Work Programme.
- (3) That information regarding the recording of responses to complaints; a means of enabling Members to refer complaints; Consultation

participant numbers; and Ombudsman and webcasting information as referred to above, be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting.

29

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 items in the Executive Work Programme for September to December, 2013 that they wished to include on their Work Programme in 2013/14.

Potential Work Programme Items

The Committee noted that the Work Programme would be updated to reflect the decisions earlier in the meeting. In addition, the following updates were noted:

Air Quality – the report would now come to the December meeting.

Wind Turbines and their Locations – Review likely to commence in early November.

CDC Employment Initiatives – Councillor Magee would be preparing a scoping document.

Contract Scrutiny: Landscape Maintenance Contract – Councillor Lawrie Stratford would be contacting the Head of Environmental Services.

Concessions Policy – Councillor Randall had met with the Portfolio Holder and Service Manager and would seek to progress a report in due course.

The Committee was informed that arrangements were in-hand for a joint visit with South Northamptonshire Council's Scrutiny Committee to the Houses of Parliament. As the date for the visit clashed with the next scheduled meeting of the Committee, consideration would be given to rescheduling the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.
- (2) That no items in the current version of the Executive Work Programme (September to December 2013) be included on the Work Programme for 2013/14.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 9 July 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Tim Emptage
Councillor Russell Hurle
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Substitute Members: Councillor Rose Stratford (In place of Councillor Ken Atack)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Barry Wood

Officers: Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement
Nicola Jackson, Corporate Finance Manager
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

11 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 June, 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Implications of Comprehensive Spending Review on MTFs Latest Position (including New Homes Bonus Funding)

The Head of Finance and Procurement reported on the Government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcement, covering the financial period 2015-16.

With respect to next financial year 2014-15, the Council had already been informed of the provisional settlement figure, and there was currently no indication that this would be changed as a result of the CSR and current assumptions were already included in the medium term financial forecast.

The CSR also highlighted that spending in 2015-16 would reduce in total by £11.5bn, which would in turn allow increased capital spending plans of £3bn per year, thereby boosting investment in infrastructure to support economic growth. However, the Review referred only to the year 2015-16, and the figures quoted in the media related to 'real term' reductions. As CDC had built inflation into its financial modelling, the key interest was in the cash reduction which, in percentage terms, was slightly less than the real term reduction quoted.

In cash terms, CDC was expecting a cut of 15% in 2014-15. This provisional figure had been provided in January 2013 when the financial settlement information for the current financial year had been received. There was no indication that this amount would change as part of the spending review.

The overall spending limits for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for 2015-16 announced as part of the Review showed a decrease in real terms of 10%, and in cash terms by 8.2%. The Committee noted that these were the national figures and whilst no information was included to translate into the local position, the assumptions in the council's medium term financial forecasts continued to look reasonable

The Head of Finance and Procurement advised the Committee that DCLG would now determine how monies would be allocated going forward across all Local Government Services. As Social Services and Education usually received protection at the expense of District Council services, it would be prudent for CDC to factor in a greater reduction for 2015-16 than was currently projected. Exact figures would not be known until December 2014 which was close to when the 2015-16 budget would be being finalised.

The Head of Finance and Procurement advised that CSR also included further pay restraint, setting out that public sector awards should be limited to 1% in 2015-16, additional funding to be made available to freeze Council Tax for two more years (2014-15 and 2015-16) and set the council tax referendum threshold at 2%. The Government would provide £100m of funds to help local authorities to cover the initial costs of progressing joint working arrangements, such as new IT systems.

With regard to New Homes Bonus (NHB), the Head of Finance and Procurement advised that there had been no specific announcement on New Homes Bonus, and the Council would therefore need to continue to allocate funds carefully and retrospectively until more details were available. It was

however now apparent that a considerable percentage would be top-sliced and given direct to the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's). Whilst this would have an impact on the council's resources, this element had not been included in the base budget. The Committee expressed concern that NHB monies were to be top-sliced and allocated to the unelected LEP's, and agreed that a draft response to the Government be considered at the next meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to submit a draft response to the Government outlining the Committee's concern to the proposal to top-slice New Homes Bonus monies and allocate to Local Enterprise Partnerships for consideration.

13 **Business Rate Growth Monitoring**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance and Procurement which provided an update on business rate growth, and the likely financial impacts for the Council. The Committee was advised that, since 31 March, 2013, there had only been a slight change in the total number of NDR (Non Domestic Rates) premises as follows:

31 March – 4481 premises with a total rateable value of £164.7m (producing £74m in NDR income).

Mid June – 4476 premises with no change in total rateable value or anticipated income.

It would be important to keep records of NDR premises constantly up-to-date, particularly with regard to new businesses. Members input in this respect would be extremely helpful, and an article would appear in the next Members' Bulletin. The Collection Rate was equally important and, in this respect, the Council had ranked equal 10th best authority during 2012/13. For the current year, the collection rate was 1% higher than anticipated.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the potential loss of businesses to locations outside the District, and also to the advantages enjoyed by out-of-town locations compared to High Street premises. In response, the Head of Finance and Procurement advised that discussions were taking place with the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy with a view to identifying possible Business Rates incentives, both in respect to retaining businesses in the District, and with a view to helping High Street businesses. A report would be submitted to the next meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

Impact of Welfare Reform on Funding

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance and Procurement which provided an update on welfare reform and the likely financial impacts for the Council.

Referring to the benefits cap, the Head of Finance and Procurement reported that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had informed the Council that there were 52 claimants in the District who were affected. Both the DWP and the Council had contacted the claimants to offer advice and assistance prior to the implementation of the cut. 25% had subsequently contacted the Council. The Citizens Advice Bureau was offering help with budgeting, but initial monitoring indicated that applications to the Council for a Discretionary Housing Benefit grant were already double compared to the previous year. The situation would be kept under review, and if demand continued to increase, additional budget monies sought.

In response to Members' concern regarding the introduction of a single, once a month benefit payment and the requirement to make applications on-line, the Head of Finance and Procurement explained that the Government had been lobbied regarding the monthly payments model, as pilots had shown this was an issue. Regarding the use of ICT, the Government had modified its position in this respect, but there would still be a presumption that this would be the main channel for applications. The Council would be able to provide IT facilities at its offices, but providing staff to assist claimants would be a challenge, with cost implications.

In response to Members' queries regarding the council's contract with Capita, who was responsible for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, and the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefits for the district, the Head of Finance and Procurement advised that the contract had just entered its fourth year. The contract was a 5 year contract, with an option to extend by up to 2 years. It was based on volumes of business, and contained clauses to allow for early renegotiations, which could present an opportunity to secure savings for the Council. The Strategic Board together with the Lead Member for Financial Management and the Lead Member for Housing would give initial consideration to the matter in September. It could potentially be an issue for consideration by the Committee with regard to Welfare Reform and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Head of Finance and Procurement agreed to provide Committee Members with details, on a ward-by-ward basis, of the 905 properties across the District affected by the new size criteria for Social Housing rules and the properties affected by the benefits cap.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

15 **Budget Monitoring Position: May 2013 Revenue & Capital 2013/14**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance and Procurement which provided an update on the Council's 2013/14 budget monitoring position as at 31 May 2013.

The Head of Finance and Procurement advised the Committee that the current report was a snap-shot after two months of the financial year. It was likely that the £162k underspend currently showing would reduce when the next report was considered in September.

In relation to the performance of the Council's in-house investment team and Investec, the Council's Fund Provider, the Head of Finance and Procurement advised that reported that the performance of Investec was being appraised by Sector (Sector Treasury Services Ltd) and a report would be submitted to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee in due course.

In response to Members' questions regarding Capital Programme items, the Head of Finance and Procurement explained that Executive had agreed to earmark capital receipts to fund the Electronic Document Recognition Management System (EDRMS). However, the ICT team was currently investigating alternatives that might reduce half the cost. An update item regarding the project would be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

In response to Members' concerns raised by the Chairman, the Head of Finance and Procurement confirmed that whilst the delay in the Biomass Heating scheme for the Bicester Leisure Centre had impacted on the payback period, in reviewing the project she had determined that it was still viable and should proceed. The Committee was advised that whenever the Council entered into a contract, if it was found that the costs or savings were not as originally reported, an exception report had to be submitted to the Head of Finance and Procurement.

Members noted that a number of vacant posts were reported in the budget monitoring position and requested that a report be submitted to the Budget Planning Committee identifying vacant posts, and providing justification for their retention on the establishment.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a report be submitted to the Budget Planning Committee identifying vacant posts, and providing justification for their retention on the establishment.

16 **Work Programme 2013/14**

The Committee reviewed the Work Programme 2013/14.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted.
- (2) That the following topics be added to the Work programme:
 - CTRS Update re Hertfordshire and Warwickshire
 - Consultations on Spending Review
 - Business Rates Growth comparative picture – different multipliers
 - EDRM Project
 - Financial Implications of Welfare Reform

The meeting ended at 8.22 pm

Chairman:

Date: