



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15

June 2015

Foreword

This annual report for overview and scrutiny at Cherwell District Council outlines the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2014/15.

The Committee has continued to build on the work that has been done over the last few years. Whilst a number of new members have joined the Committee, bringing enthusiasm and fresh ideas, the turnover of committee membership and has been kept to a minimum in order to develop an experienced group of councillors who are building up a strong skill base and understanding of the principles of good scrutiny and at the same time a knowledge of scrutiny case history.

Following the decision of Council in May 2013 to review the scrutiny arrangements and create a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with responsibility for all overview and scrutiny activity, the Committee has continued the work done to-date, ensuring relevant topics are reviewed and challenged, and thus providing checks and balances as well as supporting the Executive in decision making.

I believe that overview and scrutiny continues to make a valuable contribution to the continuing success of this Council.

Councillor Ann Bonner
Chairman,
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2014/15

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Ann Bonner (Ch)
Councillor Claire Bell
Councillor Diana Edwards
Councillor Lyn Pratt
Councillor Dan Sames
Councillor Bryn Williams

Councillor David Hughes (Vice Ch)
Councillor Maurice Billingham
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitutes

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Rose Stratford

Guests in attendance

Lead members:

Councillor Michael Gibbard – Lead Member for Planning.
Councillor Kieron Mallon – Lead Member for Banbury Developments, Performance and Communications.
Councillor Debbie Pickford – Lead Member for Housing
Councillor George Reynolds – Deputy Leader of the Council.
Councillor Nicholas Turner – Lead Member for Joint Working and IT.
Councillor Barry Wood – Leader of the Council.

Officers:

Adrian Colwell – Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy
Michael Gogut – Consultation and Engagement Officer.
Kevin Larner – Rural Development and Countryside Officer
Marianne North – Housing Needs Manager
Jo Pitman – Head of Transformation
Louise Tustian – Acting Corporate Performance and Insight Manager

External Officers:

David Allen – Lead Officer, Transport Policy (South Northamptonshire Council)
Barbara Shaw - Chief Executive of Banbury CAB

Corporate Priorities - Links to Scrutiny Topics 2014/15

Cherwell, an Accessible, Value for Money Council	Performance Monitoring. Customer Insights Reporting. Annual Customer Satisfaction Report.
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	Business Plan 2015/16. Website - Informal Task & Finish Panel.
A Cleaner, Greener Cherwell.	Recycling – Informal Task & Finish Panel. Workplace Travel Plan 2015 Street Cleansing and Waste Collection Service Plan
Cherwell, a District of Opportunity	Equalities Self-Assessment and Action Plan for 2013/14. Youth Engagement – Informal Task & Finish Panel. Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride. Commissioning of Services to Banbury Citizens Advice Bureau.

Link to Corporate Priorities: Cherwell, an Accessible, Value for Money Council.

Performance Monitoring

Periodically throughout the year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Council's performance as measured through the Performance Management Framework. Annual Performance was reviewed in June, 2014, with Quarter 1, 2 and 3 reports being considered in September and November 2014, and February 2015 respectively. The Council's generally excellent performance was readily acknowledged and praised. Where issues or areas of concern had been identified, further information and assurance had been sought, with appropriate Lead Members and key Officers attending to provide information and explanation.

Customer Insights Reporting

During July the Committee reviewed annual Customer Insight Report, noting overall satisfaction rates; satisfaction regarding particular services; complaints; media enquiries, social media, and website interaction.

The Committee had welcomed the report but, in addition, had agreed that future reports should include statistics regarding face-to-face customer interactions; information regarding the reasons for the good, indifferent and bad customer responses; effectiveness of links within web-pages; what issues were covered by the complaint heading 'uncategorised'; a link being included between section 4.2 (Complaints by Service area) and the 'Attitude of staff' figure detailed in section 4.3; proportion of customers interacting via the Council's social media, and the uptake of services as a result. The statistics detailing the number of people watching Council webcasts (per Committee) – both live and after the event were also requested.

The Committee had also considered the use of incentives to help increase the uptake of services or increase public participation and, although it was agreed care would be needed when considering this option, it was something worth taking into consideration as part of the Committee's scoping exercise into youth engagement.

Annual Customer Satisfaction Report

During September the Committee reviewed the results of the Annual Customer Satisfaction survey. Whilst the report showed overall satisfaction with the Council and perceptions of value for money were now at their highest recorded levels, there were still notable differences across the district, and close monitoring would continue going forward. The Committee had welcomed the results but requested that, where possible, the survey results be broken-down by locality and made available to Councillors. It was also suggested that consideration be given in the future to changing some of the descriptions used in order to enable the public to have a better understanding, and it was further suggested that the survey results should be included in a future edition of 'Cherwell Link', and that they be used to help promote the district.

Business Plan 2015/16

In January 2015 the Committee reviewed the Priorities and Pledges included in the 2015/16 Business Plan. Welcoming the report, the Committee had sought clarification on some elements in the Plan, including the delivery of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); Bicester, Banbury Town and Kidlington Master Plans and SPDs for strategic sites to guide investment; 100 self-build housing projects, and whether self-build housing projects attracted s106 funding. It had also been suggested that, with respect to the Draft Pledges 2015/16, the wording be amended to reflect that some projects/undertakings were to be delivered over a period of years.

Website - Informal Task & Finish Panel.

At its meeting in January the Committee established an informal Task & Finish Panel to undertake a review of the Council's website with a remit to understand the process of determining the Who, What, and How of populating and maintaining the Council's website; understand how the general public's needs and views are collated and then assessed; understand how the Council's needs and views are collated and reviewed, and identify possible areas of improvement / change. The Panel is due to report its findings.

Link to Corporate Priorities: A Cleaner Greener District.

Recycling – Informal Task & Finish Panel.

At its meeting in October the Committee established an informal Task & Finish Panel to undertake a review of the Council's recycling performance. The Panel is currently still undertaking its investigations and will report its findings to a future meeting of the Committee.

Workplace Travel Plan 2015

During November the Committee considered the progress in completing the joint Workplace Travel Plan 2015 with South Northamptonshire Council.

The Committee had broadly welcomed the report, but some concern was expressed regarding the number of journeys made by staff between the two Councils offices, and it was suggested that information be provided regarding any increase in the use of conference calling. It was also suggested that consideration be given to providing incentives to those staff that travelled via car-sharing or alternative methods of transport; albeit that efforts should be concentrated on those alternatives that could work rather than those that were essentially non-starters.

Street Cleansing and Waste Collection Service Plan

As part of a thorough review of the Street Cleansing and Waste Collection Service Plan, the Committee held an informal meeting during February, 2015, with all Members of the Council invited to attend. The Committee had acknowledged the excellent work being undertaken by the Cleansing and Waste and Recycling services and, at its formal meeting on 24 February, had recommended that, in undertaking its annual review of Fees and Charges, the Budget Planning Committee consider the fees charged to pensioners and vulnerable persons for the removal of bulky waste. The Committee had also agreed that its Recycling Scrutiny Panel consider a publicity campaign to promote the use of Blue Bins.

Link to Corporate Priorities: Cherwell, a District of Opportunity

Equalities Self-Assessment and Action Plan for 2013-14

At its meeting in June the Committee reviewed the annual Self-Assessment undertaken by the Council against the Achieving Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Youth Engagement – Informal Task & Finish Panel.

At its meeting in October the Committee established an informal Task & Finish Panel to review the Council's activities with respect to youth engagement. The Panel is currently still undertaking its investigations and will report its findings to a future meeting of the Committee.

Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride

During September and October, the Committee reviewed the voluntary and community transport provision in the district, which included Dial-a-Ride; Volunteer Car Services; Banbury Volunteer Bureau; Royal Voluntary Service, and the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service. With regard to the Dial-a-Ride Service, the Committee were made aware of potential phased changes to the service arising from Oxfordshire County Council's Supported Transport Programme Review. As a result, it was agreed that the Council should be involved and consulted on the review, and the County Council's Theme Lead Officer was due to attend either the June or July, 2015 meeting of the Committee.

Commissioning of Services to Banbury Citizens Advice Bureau

At its meeting in September the Committee reviewed the delivery of services contracted to Banbury Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Committee supported the proposed extension of the current contract, and recommended accordingly to the Executive. It was also agreed that, in the event that the current contract was extended to March, 2017, action be taken to allow that negotiations under any subsequent tendering process took place early enough to ensure all organisations and bodies involved have sufficient time to adapt to the new arrangements.