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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, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 26 November 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor Alisa Russell (In place of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray)
Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder Healthy Communities

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder Corporate Services

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Susan Asbury, Safeguarding Officer
Ian Upstone, Waste Resource Manager
Jan Southgate, Health Protection, Compliance & Licencing Manager

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

31 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15 October and 12 November 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

32 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman drew members attention to an email sent from the Monitoring Officer regarding two webinars on Overview and Scrutiny.

The first was on Thursday 12 December run by the Local Government Association and the second was on Thursday 20 February 2025, run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Members were invited to register their interest, and details would then be forwarded by officers after the meeting.

33 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

34 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

A public supplement to the agenda was published on Monday 25 November. It was therefore not necessary to exclude the public and press for this item.

35 **Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 - Supplementary EXEMPT Documents**

The draft versions of these documents were previously published as Exempt papers with the original agenda publication, for the reasons set out in that

agenda, but have subsequently been finalised and made available for publication on Monday 25 November.

36 **Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 - Supplementary PUBLIC Documents**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development and Monitoring Officer addressed the meeting to request an adjournment of Proposed Local Plan 2042 to allow members the 5 clear days to read the public supplements published on the 25 November.

Members then discussed the officers request and agreed to adjourn the agenda item on the Proposed Local Plan 2042 to be held at a later date to allow time to review the published supplements. It was requested that officers follow up with members to arrange a date best suited to reconvene the meeting.

37 **Readmittance of the press and public**

A public supplement to the agenda was published on Monday 25 November. It was therefore not necessary to exclude and readmit the public and press for this item.

38 **Report on Safeguarding and the annual return**

Officers gave a verbal presentation on the Safeguarding Self-assessment 2024 and highlighted that it was on hold whilst the Safeguarding Partnership was agreed and that the boards would be replaced by a Designated Safeguarding Partnership & Lead Safeguarding Partnership.

Officers gave an overview of the work carried out year to date, highlighting key challenges and successes achieved as well as statistics on the internal "See it Report it" (SIRI) and the reporting of safeguarding concerns.

In response to a question regarding completion of member safeguarding training the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing explained that training was ongoing and that officers were working with members to ensure sufficient training was provided.

Members also took the opportunity to thank officers for their hard work and dedication.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Report on Safeguarding and the annual return be noted.

Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024-2025

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the council’s performance position at the end of quarter 2 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that of the 17 business plan measures with set targets, 14 were either achieved or within the agreed tolerance, one was slightly behind target, and two behind target. The two measures that were operating behind target related temporary accommodation where 77 households were reported in temporary accommodation against the maximum target of 45, and that the net additional housing completions to meet Cherwell needs where 307 housing completions (provisional) were reported against a target of at least 571 for the first half of the year.

In response to a question asking for more detailed figures in the rise of people in temporary accommodation and the support provided to single people with complex needs facing evictions from home office accommodation the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing explained that residents who have not intentionally made themselves homeless are eligible to apply for emergency temporary accommodation, and that the process was designed to aid those with complex needs. With regards to more detailed figures, it was explained that due to the complexity and flux of homelessness applications detailed figures as to specific rise in reasons for homelessness are difficult to pinpoint.

In relation to a question on unmet housing needs, noting the position of 307 provisional housing completions against the target of at least 571 for the first half of 2024, and whether it was due for concern, the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that it was a concern, and that it is due to many complex site specific challenges related to infrastructure and the housing needs of neighbouring authorities. It was also stated that the Councils position reflects national trends in unmet housing needs.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council’s Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024 - 2025 be noted.

Working Groups Update

The chair provided an update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Food Insecurity and Climate Action Scrutiny Working Groups since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2024.

The Interim Principal Scrutiny Officer, gave a brief update on the first meeting of the Climate action and EDI working groups, advising the appointment of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray as Chair and Councillor John Broad as Vice-chair of the Climate Action Working Group, and advising the appointment

of Councillor Rebecca Biegel as the Chair and Councillor Gemma Coton as Vice-Chair of the EDI working Group. An update was then provided on the focus and scope of the Working Groups for 2024 – 2025, which was set out in the respective terms of reference submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.

Members then agreed to a request by officers to alleviate the density of the remaining work programme items that dedicated sub-working groups be appointed to meet and provide updates to the committee on the following subjects –

- Planning Application Appeals
- Resettlement and Migration Annual Report

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Working Groups update be noted.
- (2) That the terms of reference for the Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group be agreed.
- (3) That the terms of reference for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group be agreed.
- (4) That a Scrutiny Working Group be established to consider Planning Application Appeals, and the terms of reference be agreed. as follows:-
 - i). To consider a report from the Assistant Director Planning and Development and on planning application appeals performance monitoring.
 - ii). To consider the main planning policy issues in relation to planning application refusals and planning decisions overturned at appeal.
 - iii). To consider the main reasons for planning application refusals for planning decisions overturned at appeal.
 - iv). To consider the cost implications to the Council.
 - v). To consider any lessons learned from planning applications that might inform planning policy and practise.
- (5) That a Scrutiny Working Group be established to consider Resettlement and Migration, and the terms of reference be agreed. , as follows:-
 - i). To consider a report of the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing on resettlement and migration.

- ii). To consider the Council's resettlement activities throughout the year to identify successes and challenges in the council's policy and approach.

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Work Programme 2024 - 2025 Update

The Chair provided an update on Committee's Work Programme 2024-25 advising that due to time constraints and officer availability there had been some changes to the proposed Work Programme the changes were set out as below –

- New Council Offices at Castle Quay (Exempt item) - Moved from 26 November to 28 January 2025
- Transformation Programme - Moved from 28 January 2025 to 11 March 2025
- Planning Application Appeals – delegated to dedicated sub-working group meeting TBC
- Resettlement and Migration Annual Report – delegated to dedicated sub-working group meeting TBC

Resolved

- (1) That the updated Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/2025 be agreed. as set out in the report, with the following amendments:-
 - i). To include an item on the sale of Bodicote House with the report from the Corporate Director for Resources and Transformation for consideration at the next meeting.
 - ii). To remove the item on Council Owned Companies (Graven Hill and Crown House) from 11th of March 2025 and referred for possible consideration by the committee in the next municipal year.
 - iii). In addition to the new scrutiny working groups already agreed on Planning Application Appeals and Resettlement and Migration to agree the work programme as set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 7.44 pm

Chairman:

Date: