

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 17 June 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

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

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Harry Knight

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Zoe McLernon

Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (In place of Councillor Gemma Coton)

Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Councillor Besmira Brasha (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor Gemma Coton

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus

Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

12 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

13 **Finance and Performance Monitoring Report End of Year 2024-2025**

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

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that the council had performed well against its objectives, which consisted of 36 Business Plan Measures, 15 Annual Delivery Plan actions, and 25 Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan activities. Of the 19 business plan measures 11 achieved their year-end target or were within the agreed tolerance, with the remaining eight measures missing their target and ending the year reporting red.

In response to a question relating to indicator BP 1.2.01, number of households living in temporary accommodation, and the possible reasons for the increase in demand, the Assistant Director – Housing & Wellbeing advised that many factors contributed to the increase. These included some landlords leaving the market due to the impending Renters Rights Bill, leading to a reduction in available properties; a static local housing allowance rate that wasn't keeping pace with rental amounts; ongoing cost of living implications since the pandemic; and more complex cases with health needs being presented.

In response to a question regarding the £0.663m overspend in Environmental Service which was primarily due to an increased usage of agency staff within the waste collection team, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services explained that due to the urgent nature of the service agency staff had to be used to supplement any shortages to enable the service to continue. The service had experienced an increase in sickness absence, including some long term absences, and this had resulted in additional agency staff being required.

The Corporate Director – Communities added that the way the budget was profiled across the financial year meant that the year-end report always

showed the department as having an overspend, due to the fluctuations in agency staff use across the year.

In response to a follow-up question on support available for staff with regular or long-term sickness absence, the Corporate Director – Communities explained that the team worked alongside HR to signpost services and support available via the Employee Support Programme, as well as occupational health where required.

It was recommended and agreed by Committee that as the use of agency staff within Waste Service was necessary for the service to operate 'business as usual', Executive be recommended to consider how agency staff costs are included in departmental budgets.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's End of year performance report for 2024/25 be noted.

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Work Programme Planning for 2025-2026

The Committee considered a list of suggested subjects to form the basis of the work programme for the 2025-26 municipal year.

The Chair summarised each suggested subject, taking questions, comments and views from the Committee as to whether they should be included on the indicative work programme.

Regarding Local Government Reform and whether there was a role for the Committee in the proposals, the Chair explained that officers had advised the subject would be considered by full Council, and therefore open to scrutiny by all Members. An overview on workstreams to date could be provided to the Committee if it were felt necessary.

The Committee agreed that as the subject was to be considered by full Council, it was not necessary to add it to the work programme.

Regarding a question relating to CDC employment policies, the Chair advised that the Personnel Committee and the Assistant Director of Human Resources would be better placed to address the queries in the first instance. The Committee agreed that it was not necessary to add the subject to the work programme.

In response to a question relating to the frequency of updates regarding the transformation programme, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus suggested quarterly reports may be most suitable initially but added that timing could be reviewed once work was underway.

In response to the Chair's request for any further subjects for consideration, a request was made for an item relating to housing developers' implementation

of section 106 obligations. There were many new housing developments across the district, and in some cases, developers were building the housing elements but not any of the additional facilities such as parks or other amenity infrastructure. The Corporate Director of Communities suggested that the performance of Section 106 delivery within the district.

The Chair referred to the three working groups that had been established in 2023-2024 and continued during the last municipal year: Climate Action; Food Insecurity; and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (joint with Personnel Committee) and asked for Members' views on whether the working groups should continue.

The Committee agreed that following the publication of the end of year reports, which made recommendations to the Executive, the Food Insecurity and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion groups should not continue as Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups. It was suggested that officers discuss with relevant Portfolio Holders the best way to monitor and review future progress made on these subjects.

Regarding the Climate Action working group, the Corporate Director – Communities explained that there would be a role for the group during the updating of the Climate Action Strategy, but that work was not due to start until later in the year. It was suggested that the group continue once that work was underway.

Resolved

- (1) That the list of suggested subjects for the 2025-26 work programme (annexe to minutes as set out in the minute book) be approved.
- (2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee work with officers to schedule the agreed items as appropriate.
- (3) That it be agreed that the Food Insecurity and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working groups do not continue as Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups, and relevant officers from the service be requested to discuss with relevant Portfolio Holders the best way to monitor and review progress made on these subjects.
- (4) That the Climate Action continue later this Municipal Year, once work is underway to update the Climate Action Strategy.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair:

Date: