



SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Council

18 December 2023

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If you need any further information about the meeting please contact Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

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DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Council Minute Book

Monday 18 December 2023

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 2 October 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy
Councillor Adam Nell (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Donna Ford, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Green Communities
Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Property
Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Also Present:

Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor John Broad, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Jean Conway, Ward Member for Kidlington West (for agenda item 8)
Councillor Lesley McLean, Ward Member for Kidlington West (for agenda item 8)
Councillor Dorothy Walker, Ward Member for Kidlington West (for agenda item 8)

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Tony Brummell, Building Control Manager
Colm Hughes, Procurement Consultant
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive

Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager
Michael Sullivan, Procurement and Contracts Manager

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chairman advised there were no petitions but there were a number of speakers.

Linda Newbery, the organiser of the petition that was submitted to the July Council meeting, would be speaking on item 6, Response to Petition on Food Choices.

Councillor Woodcock would be speaking on item 7, An Action Plan Regrading the Cost of Living Crisis, as he proposed the motion to Council.

Councillors Mclean, Walker and Conway would speak on item 8, Sandy Lane, Yarnton to Kidlington, as local ward councillors.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was attending to observe as there was no feedback from the Committee on any of our agenda items this evening, but should indicate if he wished to speak.

31 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman advised that he had agreed to amend the order of the agenda. Item 8, Sandy Lane, Yarnton to Kidlington, would be taken as the first item of business after his announcements.

The Chairman advised Executive that he had attended a meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) on 26 September 2023. At the meeting, there had been a review of the Growth Deal Programme, which remained on course. FOP had also considered the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) Strategic Economic Plan, which was also included on the Executive agenda for consideration later in the meeting, and received updates from each of the Advisory Groups.

Sandy Lane, Yarnton to Kidlington

The Assistant Director – Planning and Development submitted a report to advise the Executive of the considerations associated with the Council resolution on Sandy Lane.

At the 17 July 2023 Council meeting, a motion relating to the closure of Sandy Lane, Yarnton was considered. It was resolved to adopt the motion and the Council asked the Executive to, *"...give careful consideration to keeping this vital link open, especially knowing that Oxford University Developments are proposing to fund and build a new road bridge on their site as part of their overall vision."*

In introducing the report, the Chairman advised that arrangements were in hand for a meeting between the local Ward Members, representatives from Network Rail and Oxford University Developments and council Planning Officers to enable discussion between stakeholders.

Councillors McLean, Conway and Walker, local Ward Members for Kidlington West, addressed Executive seeking Executive support to keep the Sandy Lane crossing open. In the course of their addresses, the local Ward Members highlighted the importance of the crossing for residents in the area and the traffic and environmental impacts if the crossing were closed.

The Chairman thanked the Ward Members for their comments. In response to the addresses, the Chairman explained that the Local Plan consultation was an opportunity for residents to have input into the way in which the new Local Plan would affect them. It was also crucial for all stakeholders, including Oxfordshire County Council Highways, to work together for a solution and an update would be provided to Executive following the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That it be noted that a development brief and planning application for site PR8 (Land East of A44) will be presented to the Planning Committee for consideration in due course.
- (2) That it be noted that the wording of a formal response to an application expected to be submitted by Network Rail to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Transport and Works Act Order will involve consultation with the Planning Committee Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development in due course.

Reasons

The Council has a clear and tested Local Plan position for development in the vicinity of Sandy Lane. It is not the decision-maker for the closure of the level crossing. However, there is an opportunity for the Planning Committee to give careful consideration to the planning of development to the east of A44. A development brief and major planning application will be presented to the Committee in due course. Consideration of the application by this Council and

the County Council will involve close examination of transport, travel and accessibility issues and the mitigation required. This provides the most appropriate opportunity to consider the acceptability of proposals for new residents and the potential impacts on existing residents and businesses.

The TWAO process provides an opportunity for the Council to present concerns and objections, albeit potentially in contradiction to Local Plan policy. The precise wording of a response, in the context of development proposals, can be discussed with the Planning Committee Chairman and Portfolio Holder in due course.

The applicant for site PR8 has recognised that future Network Rail proposals may emerge and has made some accommodation. Any future proposals would need to be considered on their own merits in due course.

Alternative options

Option 1: The Council could, if it so desired, choose to revise or replace Policy PR8 of the Local Plan through the on-going Cherwell Local Plan Review process. This would give the Executive the opportunity to consider planning policy affecting Sandy Lane.

This approach is not recommended as officers consider the policy to be 'fit for purpose' and do not recommend its revision. To do so would create significant uncertainty for the local community and the developer at a time when a development brief is being finalised and a planning

34

Response to Petition Received on Food Choices

The Corporate Director Communities and Climate Action Manager submitted a report to set out the council's response to the petition received at the 17 July 2023 Council meeting asking the council to support the raising of awareness of the links between food choices, individual carbon footprints and biodiversity loss and sought approval of Executive for its proposed resolution.

The wording of the petition was:

"We, the undersigned, petition Council to use its website and leaflets to households on recycling and food waste to raise awareness of the links between food choices, individual carbon footprints and biodiversity loss.

We ask Council to encourage residents to consume less meat and dairy and to support local growers and farmers by choosing seasonal, local produce. "

Linda Newbery, the organiser of the petition, addressed Executive.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities thanked Ms Newbury for her address.

Resolved

- (1) That it be acknowledged that the council has already taken considerable steps to support the need for changes in the way food is produced in order to reduce its impact on the climate and biodiversity.
- (2) That it be acknowledge that the council is continuing to support the district in reducing its carbon emissions and seek opportunities to enhance local biodiversity and is working with a range of partners on several initiatives to make this possible.
- (3) That the work of the Food Insecurity Working Group and the development of a food strategy locally through Good Food Oxfordshire be acknowledged.
- (4) That the Corporate Director Communities be asked to respond to the petitioner setting out the council's position.

Reasons

This report has set out how the council already recognises the impact of food choices on the climate and the natural environment, and has already taken steps to initiate positive change.

Several policy areas contribute to this theme, including the Climate Change Framework 2020, the adoption of *One Planet Living*, council support of the Climate Action Oxfordshire website and the developing Climate Action Plan.

Changes to methods of food production and in public behaviour around food choices need action across both the public and private sectors. This includes Cherwell District Council, which will continue to work on reducing emissions, protecting the natural environment and improving the sustainability of the district of Cherwell.

Alternative options

Option 1 – Take the steps to encourage all residents to reduce their consumption of meat and dairy, as sought in the petition. This option is rejected as the council is already taking several steps to encourage residents to understand the implications of their food choices and therefore meeting our responsibilities to raise awareness of these issues as part of a programme of climate change activity.

35

An Action Plan Regarding the Cost of Living Crisis

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report which presented both the activities Cherwell District Council was currently engaged in to support residents experiencing difficulties because of the rising cost of living and provided an update on a range of new actions designed for this winter and so complete the action agreed by Full Council on 17 July 2023
“This council notes the ongoing pressure on the budgets of local residents

and calls on the Executive to draw up a cost-of-living action plan within 100 days.”

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities thanked the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, the Wellbeing Team and the Food Insecurity Working Group for their ongoing hard work in this area.

Councillor Sean Woodcock, who had proposed the motion at the 17 July 2023 Council meeting addressed Executive, commending the work that had been undertaken to date and stressing the importance of keeping the work under review to ensure support for residents continued.

Resolved

- (1) That £100,000 investment in the additional activities programmed for winter 2023 be approved.
- (2) That the development of an evaluation framework that captures the impact of these actions be approved and officers be requested to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2023 and January 2024 on progress made.

Reasons

Working in partnership across the district with statutory and voluntary sector organisations, both strategically and on a hyperlocal basis, officers will continue to ensure that Cherwell residents can access support and secure help when needed.

The council recognises that the response to the cost of living crisis is iterative and will need to be flexible to best meet changing needs of residents.

The broad range of everyday activity currently running is intended to support residents' wellbeing across the five key themes identified, recognising the interplay between them and their respective impact on the lived experience of residents.

Alternative options

Option 1: To review all programmes and reduce expenditure to statutory levels only.

Rejected: The Council takes its community leadership role seriously and works in partnership with voluntary organisations, charities, and other administrations to provide help and support to residents at their most vulnerable and challenging times. Cutting services and support at this time would not be in that interest.

Option 2: To expand the provision of support.

Rejected: The Council would have to use reserves to commit to a wider support package which is not prudent in the current financial climate

36 **Building Control Enforcement**

The Assistant Director - Planning and Development submitted a report to formalise an Enforcement Policy for Building Control.

On behalf of Executive, the Chairman thanked the Building Control Manager and team for their work developing the Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Building Control Enforcement Policy be endorsed.

Reasons

The need to formalise our enforcement process and practices has been brought sharply into focus by the emergence of the Building Safety Act 2022. To have a Policy will not only help the public but also our officers who come across breaches or have to respond to requests that enforcement is taken. Additionally, having a formal policy is very likely to become a requirement of the Building Safety Regulator.

Alternative options

Option 1: To continue without a formal policy. This would undoubtedly attract criticism from the Building Safety Regulator. It is also not equitable that the public continues to have no reference to the circumstances under which enforcement will be triggered.

37 **OxLEP's Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan 2023 - 2033**

The Assistant Director - Growth and Economy submitted a report to consider the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership's (OxLEP's) Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire (SEP) 2023 – 2033 and provided an update on the progress to date in drafting the document. The report also outlined the SEP's forward trajectory in relation the path it would follow both through Cherwell District Council's democratic processes and through other organisations involved. This included, for example, the OxLEP Board, other local authorities (reporting through their respective democratic processes) and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP).

Resolved

- (1) That the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership's (OxLEP's) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2023 – 2033 be endorsed.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director – Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, to engage in

the development of the detail of the SEP, including any future action plans which might emerge.

Reasons

The SEP will contribute to the delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Strategic Vision. It provides a ten-year framework to maintain the conditions for growth, regeneration, attracting new inward investment and enabling opportunities for jobs to be created for local residents.

In proposing a collective vision for the future of the County's economy, the SEP is currently in draft form. The Council's officers have been engaged as a consultee during its development.

Alternative options

Option 1: To adopt the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan. This was rejected, because it would be premature at this stage and it is possible, despite officers' best efforts, that the final version of the Plan might not sufficiently address issues and opportunities relating specifically to Cherwell district.

Option 2: Not to endorse the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan. This was rejected because it would contradict the Council's interests to support the broad partnership framework proposed by the Plan.

38

OxLEP's Oxfordshire Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan 2023 - 2028

The Assistant Director – Growth and Economy submitted a report to consider Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership's (OxLEP's) Oxfordshire Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan 2023 – 2028.

Resolved

- (1) That Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership's (OxLEP's) Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan 2023 – 2028 be noted.

Reasons

The Council has been engaged as a consultee in the development of OxLEP's Visitor Economy Vision and DMP and, together with the FOP; the LVEPs; and the other Oxfordshire local authorities, the Council has been identified as a lead partner within it.

It is recommended that Executive notes OxLEP's Visitor Economy Vision and DMP, with the understanding that at this stage the document sets out a strategic direction and defines priority areas for action, without identifying clear operational delivery responsibilities and funding resources.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to note OxLEP's Visitor Economy Vision and DMP. This is rejected because it would contradict the Council's objective to "work with partners to promote the district as a visitor destination and attract investment in our town centres". (Cherwell District Council Business Plan 2023 – 2024).

39 **Procurement Strategy (incorporating Social Value)**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer submitted a report to provide an overview of a new Procurement Strategy, with background context to its aims and objectives, for adoption by the Council.

On behalf of Executive, the Chairman commended officers for their work on developing the Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Procurement Strategy be approved.

Reasons

The Procurement Strategy – incorporating social value - will complement deployment of the portal and drive individual procurements and contract management requirements for effective outcomes of price, quality, quantity, place and time. This strategy – and the included action plan - will form the basis of a continuous improvement approach to drive efficiency and effectiveness.

Alternative options

Option 1: No Procurement Strategy. This is rejected as an absence of a new strategy may result in a lack of clarity and direction for the development of procurement and contract management within the Council.

40 **Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report August 2023**

The Assistant Director Finance and Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report which provided an update on how well the council was performing in delivering its priorities, managing potential risks, and balancing its finances during August 2023.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's Performance, Risk and Financial report for the month of August 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the Risk Strategy 2023 – 24 be approved.

- (3) That the change in the reporting cycle for the five monitoring only measures from monthly to quarterly be noted.
- (4) That the use of reserves (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (5) That £0.108m additional grant funding for the Disabled Facility Grant Capital Project be approved.

Reasons

This report provides an update on progress made during August, to deliver the council's priorities, manage potential risks and remain within the agreed budget.

Alternative options

This report summarises the council's performance, risk, and financial positions for August, therefore there are no alternative options to consider. However, members may wish to request further information from officers for inclusion.

41 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

42 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

43 Town Centre House

The Corporate Director Resources submitted an exempt report regarding Town Centre House.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt minutes.

(2) As set out in the exempt minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt minutes.

The meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 6 November 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Barry Wood (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy) (Chairman)
Councillor Adam Nell (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance) (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Donna Ford, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities
Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Property
Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development
Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Opposition, Progressive Oxfordshire Group
Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor John Broad, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Vice-Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Ian Middleton, Deputy Leader, Progressive Oxfordshire Group

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Kevin Dawson, Corporate Project Manager

44 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Hingley, Leader of the Opposition – the Progressive Oxfordshire Group, Councillor Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group and Councillor Middleton, Deputy Leader of the Progressive Oxfordshire Group, Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cllr Creed, Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered item 6, 12-Month Climate Action Plan 2023-2024, and item 10, the performance aspects of the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Quarter 2 2023/2024 but made no specific recommendations to Executive on either item.

Councillor Creed, Chair of the Climate Action Working Group, would address Executive on item 6.

46 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

48 **12-Month Climate Action Plan 2023 - 2024**

The Corporate Director Communities and Climate Action Manager submitted a report to set out the background and content of a newly produced 12-month Action Plan for climate change, which is based on our 2020 Climate Change Framework.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities commended the Climate Action Manager for his hard work

producing the Action Plan and thanked the Climate Action Working Group for their invaluable contribution and work with the Climate Action Manager.

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities explained that the 12-month Action Plan had been written to detail the actions that needed to be taken over the next year, to help the council achieve the ambitions of the Climate Change Framework. These included CDC becoming a carbon net zero organisation by 2030, and CDC supporting the wider district in its journey to become carbon net zero. The Plan recognised that more work was required to embed climate activity into how the council developed and implemented its policies.

Councillor Creed, Chair of the Climate Action Working Group, addressed Executive commenting that the cross-party group had worked very well with the Climate Action Manager through the process of developing the Action Plan.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Creed for her valuable contribution Chairing the Working Group.

The Leader of the Opposition and Progressive Oxfordshire Group, commented it was positive there was cross-party and ongoing support to tackling climate issues.

Resolved

- (1) That the ambitions of the Climate Action Plan 2023-2024 be accepted.
- (2) That it be recognised that the implementation of the Action Plan will have on-going resource implications for council budgets and that additional requests would be forthcoming, as and when business cases were developed, e.g. for the provision of additional Solar PV to reduce energy bills, and each business case would be assessed and brought forward if affordable.

Reasons

The Action Plan is an ambitious set of actions that sets both the council and the district on the right pathways to reach carbon net zero. The Plan recognises that more work is required to embed climate change into the council's approach and operations, but equally, that a significant amount of work is already being done by the council to support the net zero targets.

The report begins with the actions to achieve six key goals that will lead to reductions in council emissions, across our fleet, our corporate estate and our operations. This is followed by a further eleven key goals with actions, set out to achieve a reduction in the district's emissions. The actions in green are those which our consultant recommends should be prioritised.

The Actions reflect activity which should take place right across the authority if the council is to be successful and fulfil its ambitions to be a climate leader.

The references to Carbon Saving and Relative Cost are included to help prioritise actions, although both of these are only high-level assumptions and further work and analysis would be needed if additional details were requested.

The Climate Change Framework 2020, included the council ambition to be a net zero organisation by 2030. Then, as now, this remains a very ambitious challenge requiring concerted and on-going efforts to achieve emissions reductions across our corporate estate and our fleet. Without a coherent plan, it is unlikely that the council will achieve its 2030 target or that we will in a position to support the district in also achieving significant reductions in emissions.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to adopt the Climate Action Plan but this leaves CDC with little chance of achieving its 2030 net zero target.

Option 2: Adopt a more ambitious Plan than this iteration, however that is unlikely to be affordable with current budget pressures.

49

Voluntary Sector Wellbeing Grants Statement 2023 -2025

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to provide and approve the statement on the provision of grants to the voluntary sector organisations.

Resolved

- (1) That the Wellbeing Grants to voluntary sector statement 2023-2025 be approved.

Reasons

The adoption of this Statement and subsequent publication will improve transparency for organisations who are seeking funds.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to have a statement sharing the framework.
Rejected as the publication of the framework makes it easier for community and not-for-profit organisations to understand what and how we fund activity in communities as a council.

50

Garden Waste Charges 2024/2025

The Assistant Director Environmental Services submitted a report to set the garden waste collection charges for 2024/25.

Resolved

- (1) That a single Garden Waste Subscription charge of £49 for 2024/25 effective from 4 December 2023 be approved.

Reasons

The new garden waste subscription fee for 2024/25 will come into effect from 4 December 2023 to give residents certainty on prices in 2024/25 and to smooth demand for licences over a reasonable period.

Alternative options

Option 1: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 from a later date with revised prices. This has been rejected as it compresses timescales and makes administration of the process more difficult.

Option 2: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 with unchanged prices. This has been rejected due to the rising costs of service delivery, especially fuel costs.

Option 3: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 with higher prices than set out. This has been rejected as subscriptions are likely to fall resulting in less overall income to the Council.

51

Environment Act 2021 and Biodiversity Net Gain Preparation

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report to advise Members of the forthcoming statutory requirements in respect of biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021 and of the on-going preparation for meeting those requirements.

Resolved

- (1) That the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 in respect of biodiversity and the on-going preparation for the introduction of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements be noted.
- (2) That the preparation of a revised Community Biodiversity Plan in the interest of meeting the statutory general biodiversity objective, to monitor the progress in delivering that Plan and to keep it under review be approved.

Reasons

The Council needs to be ready to conform with the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 in relation to biodiversity. Additional ecologist resource has been acquired and officers are preparing for the expected introduction of the statutory requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain. The delay in

implementation to January 2024 provides some additional time but there is a need to continue preparation at pace, albeit while further guidance is awaited. It should be noted that January 2024 will be the real start of the process. To assist meeting the Council's obligations and to ensure an integrated approach to achieving the biodiversity objective, it is recommended that a revised Community Biodiversity Plan is prepared.

Alternative options

The Council must complete its first consideration of what action it can properly take to further the general biodiversity objective by 1 January 2024 (i.e. one year after Section 102 of the Act became effective). It must agree the policies and objectives for taking action as soon as practicable after this which might include revising existing policies and objectives. It must then take the action to meet the biodiversity objective. The Executive could decide that the preparation of a revised Community Biodiversity Plan is not the action it would wish to take to further the general biodiversity objective by 1 January 2024. However, the Council's Community Nature Plan 2020-22 provides a clear starting point for review and should Members decide to take alternative action, this action would need to be determined by 1 January 2024.

52

Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2023

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to update Executive on how well the council was performing in delivering its priorities, managing potential risks, and balancing its finances for 2023/24 up to the end of Quarter 2 2023.

Resolved

- (1) That Council's Performance, Risk and Financial for the current financial year up to the end of Quarter 2 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the following use of reserves be approved:

Directorate: Resources
Type: Earmarked
Description: Elections Reserve
Reason: To cover election costs
Amount £m: 0.070

Directorate: Resources
Type: Earmarked
Description: Market Risk Reserve
Reason: Over-recovery of Treasury Income
Amount £m: (0.448)

- (3) That £0.030m grants funding for the UKSPF Community Facilities be approved.

- (4) That the S106 funding for Longford Park Sports Pitches amounting to £0.050m be approved.
- (5) That the S106 funding for Deddington Parish Council projects amounting to £0.040m be approved.
- (6) That the increase in Building Safety Regulator hourly rate to £71.32 be approved.
- (7) That the following write offs of £0.787m be approved and it be noted that they would be funded by the bad debt provision:

Debt to be written off	£m
Sundry debts over £0.005m to be written off	0.774
Housing Benefit Overpayments to be written off	0.013
Council Tax to be written off	0.000
Total write offs for approval	0.787

Reasons

This report provides an update on progress made during Quarter 2, to deliver the council's priorities, manage potential risks and remain within the agreed budget.

Alternative options

This report summarises the council's performance, risk, and financial positions up to the end of Quarter 2, therefore there are no alternative options to consider. However, Members may wish to request further information from officers for inclusion.

53 Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2023 - Exempt Appendices 6 and 7

There being no questions on the exempt appendices, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public for their consideration.

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt appendices be noted.

54 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that

exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

55 **Relocation of CDC administrative headquarters from Bodicote House to Castle Quay - Exempt report and appendix**

The Corporate Director of Resources submitted a report which sought approval of the Business Case to commence work on the project of relocating the Council's administrative headquarters from Bodicote House to Castle Quay.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Property explained that there was a public version of the report and a private version with exempt appendices which would be considered at this time with the meeting in private session.

56 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

57 **Relocation of CDC administrative headquarters from Bodicote House to Castle Quay**

The press and public having been readmitted to the meeting and the recommendations proposed and seconded, the Chairman moved to the vote.

Resolved

- (1) That the Business Case for the relocation of the Council Offices from Bodicote House to Castle Quay be approved.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property, to initiate a project to relocate the administrative offices of the Council to Castle Quay
- (3) That Council be recommended to approve an increase in the Capital Programme of £4.5m towards the delivery of this project in order to authorise expenditure for the project

Reasons

The Council has reviewed the existing office provision over a number of years, cumulating with this final review. It has been ascertained that the most economically advantageous provision of office accommodation would be to relocate to the Castle Quay Shopping Centre. Whilst this is financially the

most appropriate provision of accommodation, it also aligns to the aspirations of creating a multi-use hub at Castle Quay, acting as a catalyst for the regeneration of Banbury Town Centre. The option also has the potential to redevelop the current Bodicote House site (separate decision) and works towards the Council's environmental aspirations in enabling a more efficient office environment with greater public transport connectivity to the site

Alternative options

A number of alternative options were considered and deemed to be less favourable than the recommendation herein, particularly from a financial perspective; these options and reasons for rejection are detailed at length in the exempt Business Case.

58 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

59 **Sale of Bodicote House Site, White Post Road, Bodicote, OX15 4AA - Exempt report and appendices**

The Corporate Director of Resources submitted a report which advised that Bodicote House site had been marketed for sale, to facilitate the Council moving to new offices. The report sought delegated authority and approval to enter into negotiations to agree the Heads of Terms.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Property explained that there was a public version of the report and a private version with exempt appendices which would be considered at this time with the meeting in private session.

60 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

61 **Sale of Bodicote House Site, White Post Road, Bodicote, OX15 4AA**

The press and public having been readmitted to the meeting and the recommendations proposed and seconded, the Chairman moved to the vote.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property and the S151 Officer, to enter into negotiations to agree the Heads of Terms with Company C.

Reasons

The bid from Company C (the preferred bidder) offers the best value, meets the Council's affordable housing policy, offers the likelihood of achieving the highest density of units and obtaining planning permission for the redevelopment indicated in the bid.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do Nothing

- The property continues to be a significant cost to the Council.
- There is substantial excess space which is not well utilised and difficult to sublet.
- Surplus to requirement space will continue to need to be maintained for the duration of any occupation.
- Significant capital costs are required to maintain the building.

This option is therefore not considered a viable alternative.

Option 2: - Sale by Auction.

- This site is not considered appropriate for sale by Auction. Our retained agents have advised that a more favourable outcome would be obtained in the open market.

This option is therefore not considered a viable alternative.

Option 3: Sale and leaseback

- The Council could potentially stay as a tenant of the new purchaser whilst arrangements to move are finalised.
- It is considered that developers would not want the complication of having a sitting tenant, regardless of the income whilst working up their scheme.
- This type of sale could potentially rule out interested parties.
- Best Value considerations could be compromised and have an adverse effect on bids.
- This option would significantly increase the Council's outgoings for:
 - Rent
 - Rent for space not fully utilised.
 - Costs of upkeep and long-term maintenance

This option is therefore not considered a viable alternative.

Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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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 27 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Ian Middleton
Harry Lawson (Independent Person – no voting rights)
Sarah Thompson (Independent Person – no voting rights)

Substitute Members:

Councillor Mark Cherry (In place of Councillor Andrew Crichton)
Councillor Adam Nell (In place of Councillor Simon Holland)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Andrew Crichton

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Alison Kennett, Audit Manager UKI Assurance

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Alex Rycroft, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
David Rogers, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader
Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager (internal Audit)

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

25 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that a Treasury Management training session would be held after the Committee meeting.

27 **Statement of Accounts 2021/22**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that updated Members on the draft statement of accounts for 2021/22, the draft audit results report of the external auditors and a draft letter of representation.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance explained that there were six technical changes to the statement of accounts between the draft published in July 2022 and the version presented to the Committee. The Head of Finance updated the Committee on figures in the consolidated income and expenditure statement and balance sheet.

The Committee was advised that the external audit was not yet complete, but no further material changes to the statement were anticipated and therefore delegation to sign off the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 at the appropriate time was sought.

In response to questions regarding Castle Quay, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Nell, clarified the accounting position highlighting that the Committee was considering the draft accounts for 2021/22 and it was appropriate to focus on the values for that year rather than previous years. The accounts had been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Practice. The Portfolio Holder for Finance added that this committee received quarterly reports on levels of debt. Budget Planning Committee and Executive received regular reports on the in-year budget position.

The Committee thanked and commended Finance Officers for their hard work producing the Statement of Accounts 2021/22.

Resolved

- (1) That the revised Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) and Balance Sheet (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) in comparison to the published Draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be noted and the documents be endorsed along with necessary changes to supporting statements and notes.
- (2) That it be agreed that, once the final audit opinion is received, the Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (or Vice Chair in case the Chairman is unavailable), be authorised to make any further material changes to the accounts agreed with the auditors and sign the accounts.
- (3) That it be agreed that the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Deputy Chair in their absence), can make any further changes to the letters of representation agreed with the auditors that may arise during completion of the audit.

28 **External Audit update**

The External Auditor provided a verbal update. Fieldwork was ongoing and a formal consultation with Finance officers was needed for each adjustment. The significant risks identified in the planning report remained the same.

The External Auditor advised the Committee that it was anticipated that the audit would be completed in late October. In light of the delegation to sign off the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 agreed under the previous agenda item, the External Auditor explained that she would send the external audit results to Committee members and, subject to the majority of Committee members responding they were satisfied, the delegation to sign off could be fulfilled.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

29 **Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that updated the committee on Internal Audit progress for 2023/24.

In introducing the report, the Chief Internal Auditor advised that two audits had now been completed: Community Development Projects and Climate, both with overall conclusions of Amber. There were three audits currently being undertaken and the remaining three were planned for later in the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24 be noted.

30 **Risk Monitoring Report July 2023**

The Assistant Director - Customer Focus submitted a report that updated the Committee on how well the Council was managing its Strategic Risks.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for July 2023 be noted.

31 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2022/23**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided Committee with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report on Cherwell District Council for the financial year 2022/23.

Resolved

- (1) That the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2022/23 be noted.

32 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

33 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance updated the Committee on the Work Programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.12 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 31 October 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Patrick Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Adam Nell
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Sean Woodcock)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Lynsey Parkinson, Strategic Business Partner – Corporate

18 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

19 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman advised that she had agreed to re-order the agenda. Agenda item 8, Budget Consultation, would be brought forward and heard before agenda item 6. The rest of the agenda order would stay the same.

21 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

22 **Budget Consultation**

The Assistant Director Customer Focus gave a presentation on how the council's budget consultation was prepared and undertaken.

The Assistant Director Customer Focus explained that the budget consultation would explain the council's budget situation and what the budget gap was. The budget proposals put forward intended to minimise the impact on residents whilst bridging the budget gap.

The Assistant Director Customer Focus advised that the consultation approach would differ from the previous year as each proposal listed in the questionnaire would require the respondent to tick whether or not they agreed with the saving proposal. If a proposal was not supported, the respondent would be asked to provide reasons and have an opportunity to suggest alternative proposals to bridge the budget gap.

The consultation would be promoted through the council's regular communication channels. The availability of alternative formats on request would be advertised.

Resolved

(1) That the presentation be noted.

23 **Local Government Finance**

The Chairman advised that further to a request at the previous Budget Planning Committee, Members would receive presentation on local Government finance.

The Head of Finance explained that local Government finance was currently made up of four key elements: council tax, business rates, new homes bonus and revenues support grant. Forecasting these elements for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was complicated and the council therefore

used Pixel Financial Management, a funding advisory service that advised the council on modelling of business rates and council tax.

The Head of Finance, introduced Adrian Jenkins, Founder and Chief Analyst of Pixel Financial Management, who gave a presentation which provided an overview of council funding, including central funding, business rates and other income.

Adrian advised the Committee that for councils to forecast what would happen was difficult due to planned changes not taking place as expected and subsequently not knowing when they would take place. For example, changes to business rate retention and no full four year run of spending reviews since 2015.

Adrian advised that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) determined a lot of funding within local government and was the measure to set the business rate multiplier and increase revenue support grant. The CPI for September 2023 was 6.7% which meant there would be a 6.7% increase in core grants received however other aspects remained above CPI. Therefore, even though there will be an increase in core grants received there will likely be larger pressures from inflation in public sector pay awards.

Adrian explained that there had been big increases in social care grants with £80million taken from local government service grants being put into social care grants. This meant that council's without social care responsibilities would receive a reduced service grant.

The Committee was advised that the local government finance settlement for 2024/25 would be announced in mid-December as had been the case in previous years, which did not assist council's in their own budget setting. A policy statement was released by the Government prior to the provisional settlement which did not include exact figures but provided an overview of what would be included.

Adrian explained that it was expected that CPI would fall relatively quickly in the coming months so the Government should meet its goal of halving inflation by the end of year.

Adrian Jenkins explained that the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) had advised that over the next four-year spending review period from 2025/26, public sector spending would increase by 1% in real terms but it was anticipated this would be in areas such as social care, defence and the NHS so may lead to reduced spending in other areas, including local government.

In response to a question regarding the plan to push back the reset of the Business Rates baseline, Adrian advised that 2026/27 was the first year that it could happen, however this would be dependent on whether whomever formed a Government following the General Election was prepared to use political capital to put through the reset. Responding to a further question regarding if there would be a Government consultation on the methodology for the business rates reset, Adrian advised that it was anticipated there would be

a consultation in stages which would allow local authorities an opportunity help shape the reset.

In response to a question seeking details of funding received by Cherwell District Council over the last five to ten years, Adrian advised he would liaise with the Head of Finance to circulate further information after the meeting. He explained that overall spending fell by 20% to 30% in the early 2010s but since 2015 there had been growth with a bigger increase in core spending power and core grants had been increased with inflation.

Following a comment by the Committee regarding the potential end of new homes bonus, Adrian advised that the new homes bonus, a bonus given to councils for every house built within the authority area would likely continue until 2025/26.

The Chairman thanked Adrian for the informative presentation.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.

24 **Monthly Finance Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that summarised Cherwell District Council's (CDC's) forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2023/2024 as at 31 August 2023.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Nell, explained that the revenue outturn position for 2023/24 was currently forecast as an overspend of £0.656m. Planning and Development had the top variance, 31.9% due to income projections being lower than expected and agency costs.

In relation to the capital budget, the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that there was a forecast in-year underspend of £7.165m of which £7.121m was to be reprofiled into future years due to changes in programme timetables. There was an overall forecast decrease in the total cost of schemes.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

25 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls gave a verbal update of the committee work advising that at the next scheduled meeting on 31 October 2023, the Committee would consider 2024/25 Budget Proposals for Revenue and Capital and Fees and Charges.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the Committee Work plan be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.35 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, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 24 October 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

Councillor George Reynolds (In place of Councillor Ian Harwood)

Also Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Simon Holland

Officers:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Tony Brummell, Building Control and Flood Risk Manager
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

33 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

34 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 September 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

35 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

36 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

37 **Sanctuary Housing**

The Chairman welcomed the following officers from Sanctuary Housing: Regional Director, Katie Poole; Head of Neighbourhood Operations, Yvonne Crinean; Head of Development, Sophie Bell; Head of Property Services, Joanne Stringer; Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager, Charlie Heritage; and, Regional Customer Service Manager, Ranjit Sall, who would be giving a presentation regarding the association's work in the Cherwell area.

The Head of Neighbourhood Operations gave an overview of the range of services offered by Sanctuary Housing within the Cherwell district and a summary of the work currently being undertaken by the association. The Head of Neighbourhood Operations explained the various communication methods available for tenants to contact the association and the metrics that were used to measure performance in communication..

In response to Members' comments regarding direct communication between elected members on behalf of residents and Sanctuary Housing, the Regional

Director explained that a Regional Customer Service Manager role had been established in recognition of the need to improve contact. The Regional Director confirmed that Sanctuary Housing officer roles and contact details would be circulated.

The Head of Development provided the Committee with an update on the approach taken by Sanctuary Housing in relation to new housing schemes, with a particular focus on sites that were currently under development within the Cherwell area.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Development explained that more information on the specification of houses would be circulated. Builders and contractors were required to sign up to Sanctuary standards.

The Head of Property Services provided an overview of Sanctuary Housing's strategy regarding investments to the existing housing stock and explained the approach taken to prioritising improvements to properties. Information was also shared on the management of empty homes and Sanctuary Housing's approach to dealing with reported damp and mould in its properties.

The Regional Director reported on Sanctuary Housing's approach to sustainability. A Sustainability Report has been published in the summer and would be circulated to Committee members. The Regional Director advised that currently just over 50% of the Sanctuary social homes within the Cherwell District Council area required some form of retrofit works to ensure that they met the target Sanctuary Housing had set itself to achieve an EPC rating of A-C in all Sanctuary social homes by 2030.

The Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager gave an overview regarding Community Investment in Cherwell. The Committee was advised that Sanctuary's strategic focus was on building connection and resilience for its customers and communities. This generally involved working alongside organisations including Cherwell District Council and other local charities and partners.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Sanctuary Housing for their attendance.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation from Sanctuary Housing be noted.

38

Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2023-24

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director, Customer Focus, that detailed the quarter two performance for 2023/2024.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Assistant Director Customer Focus gave an overview of the processes for setting and changing the key performance indicators during the financial year.

The Committee was advised that all 26 performance indicators had been achieved or were within tolerance and most of the milestones had been met. It was anticipated that the milestones that had not been achieved by quarter two should be met by the end of the financial year.

Members of the Committee had submitted questions in advance of the meeting which duly responded to.

In response to a question on indicator BP1.2.01, an increase in the number of homeless households, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing Wellbeing advised that unfortunately this was not just a local issue but part of a wider national trend. The Committee was advised that the aim was to relocate families that were housed in temporary accommodation in to self-contained housing options as soon as possible. The intention was to then move these households in to a permanent home within the prescribed three month target. However, the shortage of affordable housing with the Cherwell area presented a significant challenge to achieving this objective. The Head of Housing outlined the actions being taken to alleviate the lack of supply of affordable housing in relation to demand for such properties. An update on the number of properties becoming available was also provided to the Committee.

The Assistant Director of Finance, responded to the question regarding indicator BP1.2.07, as to whether the targets for housing benefit and council tax event changes should be more challenging, explaining that the goals set by the Council were already much higher than those set nationally by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Committee was also advised that forthcoming changes regarding Universal Credits may potentially impact on the current claim processing timescales and, as such, the existing performance indicators would be sufficiently challenging.

In response to the question regarding six-week mental health activity programmes for 14 to 16 years olds with behavioural difficulties, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, advised that the course was not designed to be a clinical intervention and that the students were able to refer themselves with the aim of improving their mental health. The current measurement of success was comparing the outcome of surveys undertaken at both the beginning and end of the six-week period. The Committee was advised that additional performance measures were being considered.

The Chairman raised a question regarding the process of deciding the performance indicators and associated target measures that the Council had implemented for the current year. The Assistant Director, Customer Focus explained that the Executive agreed the measures at the start of the fiscal year and as had been outlined, there were mechanisms in place for revising the measures if necessary.

In response to a question regarding indicator BP1.2.08, the percentage of Major Planning Applications determined within the National Indicator, the Head of Development Management advised that metric was set at national level and that the Council had repeatedly exceeded the target in recent years.

In response to a question on indicator BP1.2.13, Net Additional Housing Completions, the Assistant Director of Planning and Development explained that the targets had a 20% margin built in to allow for market fluctuations. The Committee was advised that the quarter two target was within the margin but the year-to-date figure was a red indicator.

Councillor Okeke In response to a request for clarification on the format of the EDI Quarter 2 update, particularly regarding how the in-progress status was shown on the report, the Assistant Director, Customer Focus explained that these were milestone actions and as such were under constant review. They were due to be discussed at the next EDI working group meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Quarter 2 2023-24 performance be noted and no recommendations be submitted for Executive consideration.

39

12-Month Climate Action Plan 2023 - 2024

The Climate Action Manager and Corporate Director Communities submitted a report which set out the background and content of the newly produced 12-month Action Plan for climate change, which was based on the council's 2020 Climate Change Framework.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities commended the Climate Action Manager for his hard work progressing the Action Plan and thanked the Climate Action Working Group for their ongoing valuable contribution. The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities reminded the Committee that the Action Plan was a baseline and would be an iterative process. It therefore distinguished between actions which were already planned and those which were aspirational.

The Assistant Director for Environmental Services explained that the specialist external consultants BioRegional, had carried out a detailed review, including a gap analysis and an assessment of the actions in terms of those which were most impactful and those over which the council had the most influence.

In response to a question regarding an increase in emissions in 2021/2022 the Assistant Director Environmental Services, explained that figures for 2020/2021 had been lower than usual due to Covid related closures of leisure centres and reduced vehicle usage. The increase coincided with the re-opening of leisure centres and people returning to work. Councillor Middleton referred to a list of questions he had submitted in advance of the meeting and confirmed he was happy to receive responses after the meeting.

The Committee echoed the comments of the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities and thanked the Climate Action Manager for his work in producing the Action Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's 12-month Climate Action Plan 2023-24 be noted and no recommendations be submitted for Executive consideration.
- (2) That having given due consideration, the potential resource implications relating to the implementation of the Council's 12-month Climate Action Plan be noted and no recommendations be submitted to Executive for consideration.

40 **Working Group Updates**

The Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead gave an update on the work of the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Food Insecurity working groups.

The Committee was advised that following the adoption of the Motion regarding Retrofitting of properties at the meeting of full Council on the 16 November 2023, there may be a requirement for the Committee to review the terms of reference of the Climate Action working group. Officers would have detailed discussions with the Climate Action working group and report back to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the working group updates be noted.

41 **Work Programme 2023-24**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That the indicative work programme be approved.

The meeting ended at 9.15 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 12 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Amanda Watkins (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Andrew Crichton (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)
Councillor Simon Lytton (In place of Councillor Chris Pruden)
Councillor Andrew Beere (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager

12

Appointment of Chairman

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee having stood down from the Committee, the Principal Officer – Electoral Services Lead opened the meeting and call for nominations for the appointment of Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Webb that Councillor Pratt be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

It was subsequently proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Beere that Councillor Watkins be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

There being two nominations for Chairman of the Personnel Committee, it was put to the vote. There were five votes for Councillor Pratt and five votes for Councillor Watkins with no abstentions, resulting in a tie. (Councillor Lytton arrived after the vote had taken place)

Councillor Pratt and Councillor Watkins confirmed they did not wish to withdraw their nomination for Chairman.

The Committee endorsed the suggestion of the Governance and Elections Manager that the Assistant Director of Human Resources, for impartiality, draw a name to appoint the Chairman. The Assistant Director of Human Resources drew Councillor Lynn Pratt's name.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Lynn Pratt be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

13 **Appointment of Vice-Chairman (if required)**

The Vice-Chairman having been appointed Chairman, it was necessary to appoint a new Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Beere that Councillor Watkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Amanda Watkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

14 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

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 of the Committee held on 13 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

19 **Workforce Profile Statistics**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to provide the Personnel Committee with an update on the council's workforce, including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that the workforce profile report provided commentary and data for quarter 1 of 2023/24 and that ongoing work was being undertaken to monitoring workforce data as it helped the council measure how well it is supporting staff.

In response to queries from the Committee, the Assistant Director of Human Resources agreed that future reports would display statistics in a format that captured the data to the best affect.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the workforce date for Quarter 1 of 2023/24 be noted.

20 **Policy Updates**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that the HR team were systematically working through all policies and refreshing them where required, to simply and make them more user friendly.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Health and Safety Manager explained that the Lone Working Policy was being reviewed and updated as there were now more employees lone working.

The Chief Executive assured Councillors that Lone Working was taken very seriously and that the Lone Working policy needed to reflect the modern times. The Chief Executive thanked the Health and Safety Manager for the work undertaken to update the Lone Working Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation:
- Exit Interview Policy
 - Criminal Record Checking Policy and Procedure
 - Politically Restricted and Politically Sensitive Posts Policy
 - Lone Working Policy

The meeting ended at 7.16 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 1 November 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Amanda Watkins (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members:

Councillor Rob Pattenden (In place of Councillor Fiona Mawson)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (In place of Councillor Bryn Williams)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Bryn Williams

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

23 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

25 **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 item of business, on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

26 **Shortlisting for the Post of Chief Executive**

Julie Towers, Penna, the external recruiter running the recruitment process and the Assistant Director Human Resources gave an exempt update on the outcomes of the longlisting for the post of Chief Executive to enable the Committee to identify the candidates who would be on the shortlist.

Having considered the exempt update, based on their merit, Members agreed the candidates who should proceed to the interview stage.

Members subsequently considered and confirmed the process for the shortlist and interview stage.

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt update from Penna Consulting and the Assistant Director Human Resources on the outcome of the longlist process be noted.
- (2) That based on their merit, the candidates to proceed to the interview stage be agreed.

(The Governance and Elections Manager and the Webcast Operative left the meeting for the duration of this item)

27 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

28 **Workforce Profile Statistics**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to provide the Committee with an update on the council's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the workforce data for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 be noted.

29

Policy Updates

The Chief Executive submitted a report to seek approval of new HR policies and on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

In response to Members' questions on the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that at a number of additional techniques could be used but, at present, there was no alternative to interviews as part of the recruitment process.

In relation to advertising vacancies, the Assistant Director Human Resources advised that, as set out in the Policy, all vacancies were advertised on the website and, where appropriate, online job boards and relevant specialist publications. The new Recruitment training module would capture how new employees came across roles which would inform how the reach of vacancies could be expanded.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation:
 - Recruitment and Selection Policy
 - Armed Forces and Reservist Policy

30

Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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