

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 18 July 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Guest:

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Minutes

The Chairman advised that there was spelling mistake 12 March 2024 meeting minute 71, 2024-35 should read 2024-25. This had been corrected in the minute book. Subject to this correction, the minutes of the meetings of the

Committee held on 12 March 2024 and 13 June 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

6 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

7 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

8 Performance Monitoring Report End of year 2023 - 2024

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 2023-2024.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that 26 of the 27 Business Plan measures had been achieved. The one measure not achieved was "Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell Needs" with a final figure of 792 completions, which was 70% of the set target. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that this measure had been heavily affected by the national context, circumstances such as inflation, high building costs, and high interest rates which resulted in the lower than expected number of completions.

Following a question from the Committee on how the Council's measured targets were set as and could the targets be more challenging as most targets had been met, the Performance Team Leader advised that the Council use national targets and benchmark from previous years and took into consideration local context to set ambitious targets.

In response to a question from the Committee asking why the number of housing completions target was missed by 30%, the Corporate Director of Communities advised that housing delivery had been good in respect of the requirements of the Cherwell Local Plan 2015 with an average of 1281 homes built a year. In 2023-2024, the number fell to 792 homes built however this was consistent with national figures linked to issues with house building across the country. The Corporate Director of Communities also advised that there 6000 homes had been granted planning permission within the district but had not yet been built.

Resolved

(1) That the Council's End of year performance report for 2023/24 be noted.

9 Work Programme Planning for 2024-2025

The Chairman referred to the three working groups that had been established in 2023-2024: 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 all working groups should continue and asked the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to liaise with Group Leaders regarding membership of the working groups.

The Committee asked if it was possible for experts in the topic fields to attend working group meetings to give guidance to working group members. The Chairman advised that working groups should discuss in their meetings if experts in that field would be invited to attend the working group meetings.

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance advised the Committee that within the working group meetings, targets should be decided by the working group to focus discussion and not make to topic of discussion wide.

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead presented the list of suggested topics that Officers and Members had put forward for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme. The Committee endorsed all topics and agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman work with officers to bring forward a work programme incorporating the topics to the next meeting of the Committee.

As part of the work programme planning, the Committee requested that officers be advised that presentations be kept short and more interactive for the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman work with officers to bring forward a work programme, incorporating the topics suggested, to the next Committee meeting.
- (2) That the following working groups continue into 2024/25, with authority being delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to liaise with Group Leaders regarding nominations to each group:
 - Climate Action
 - Food Insecurity
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (joint group with Personnel Committee)

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Chairman:

Date: