

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 29 November 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

Councillor Sean Woodcock (In place of Councillor Matt Hodgson)

Also Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor John Donaldson

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Ian Middleton

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader
Susan Asbury, Safeguarding Officer

41 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

42 **Minutes**

The previous meeting of the Committee was a Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 November 2022, the day after the publication of the agenda for this meeting. The Minutes of the 22 November 2022 meeting would be submitted to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

43 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

44 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

45 **October 2022 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report which updated the Committee on the council's progress towards delivering its Business Plan priorities for 2022/23 up to October 2022.

In introducing the report, the Performance and Insight Team Leader reported that 75% of the monthly performance measures had reported green for October 2022, with 12.5% reporting amber and 12.5% reporting red.

With regards to the measures that had reported red, "Number of Homeless Households Living in Temporary Accommodation" and "Percentage of Business Rates collected, increasing NNDR rate", the Performance and Insight Team Leader explained that the number of homelessness presentations was linked to many external factors that were out of control of the Council. In relation to Business Rates collection, the Committee was advised that the council was meeting the target for year-to-date collection however October's in-month collection rates were lower than the target. The council was taking measures to prompt payment where and when necessary.

In response to questions by the Committee regarding changing the target relating to the number of households in temporary accommodation, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing advised that targets were not changed mid-year however the target would be reviewed as part of the performance monitoring for the new financial year.

In response to a question regarding the material produced from the silver caddie waste being used for green electricity, the Corporate Director Communities agreed to circulate a detailed response after the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the monthly Performance Report for October 2022 be noted and the following comments be provided to Executive to consider at their 5 December meeting:
 - Consideration would need to be given to the target “Number of households in Temporary Accommodation” in 2023/34 noting that reducing the target may have financial implications

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Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report which sought the Committee’s views on the approach officers were proposing for the council’s Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus explained that an equalities framework ‘Including Everyone’ had been agreed by the Executive, however following the Council’s decoupling with Oxfordshire County Council, officers had looked at taking a fresh approach to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan from a Cherwell only perspective. The intention was to produce action plans that underpin the three themes included in the framework; Inclusive communities, inclusive services and inclusive workforce.

The Assistant Director - Customer Focus advised the Committee that a Councillor Working Group containing representatives from both the Overview and Scrutiny and Personnel Committees would be established to review the three action plans before they were considered by the relevant Committee. The Working Group would subsequently oversee the implementation of the plan and help shape the annual improvement plans.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Chief Executive confirmed that the action plans for all three themes in the Council’s equalities framework would be presented to the Executive at the same time.

Following queries from the Committee regarding how the Council can improve the diversity of the organisation when sensitive data numbers gathered by the organisation is low as presented in a previous Personnel Committee, the Chief Executive advised that there had been an increase in data received

from staff from 48.75% to 68.73% however work is taking place to encourage more staff to provide sensitive data.

Following queries from the Committee regarding how the Council could improve the diversity of the organisation when there was a lack of data regarding ethnicity, the Chief Executive advised that it was not mandatory for staff to provide sensitive data, but work continued to encourage more staff to provide this information. As reported to Personnel Committee as part of the Quarter 2 Workforce Profile Statistics, the collection rate for sensitive data had increased from 48.75% to 68.73%.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the approach being proposed for the council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan and councillor working group be endorsed.
- (2) That, having reviewed the draft action plans for Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services, no specific comments be provided to the Executive to consider at its February meeting.

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Food Action Plan

The Chairman welcomed the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing and Councillor Rebecca Biegel to the meeting for this item.

Councillor Rebecca Biegel, chair of the food insecurity working group advised the Committee that the food working group had met on numerous occasions to work with officers to develop a CDC strategy action plan following endorsement of the county wide food strategy.

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing gave a presentation on the food strategy action plan which detailed ideas and proposals based on the five principles set out within the county strategy. The actions included a food voucher policy where by 3500 food vouchers had been issued to householders in receipt of housing benefit.

The Committee was advised that the work overlapped with the Warm Spaces Initiative that the Council had established with partners whereby warm venues were available for people to drop in and meet people. The council was also looking at the possibility of providing food and activities as well as warmth in these spaces.

In response to the update, the Committee praised the work of the group and officers on the tie in with the Warm Spaces initiative.

Resolved

- (1) That the update and progress to date be noted.

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Safeguarding Annual Audit

The Chairman welcomed the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing and the Safeguarding Officer to give a presentation detailing the annual Safeguarding Audit and work of the Safeguarding team.

The Safeguarding Officer explained that the self-assessment audit had to be completed annually and that it was a joint piece of work with the Safeguarding Children and Adults Board. This was due to be submitted to the Boards in December 2022 and a peer review would take place in February 2023.

The Safeguarding Officer reported that last year, the main focus for and improvement was increasing awareness amongst staff of safeguarding measures.

Wallet cards had been produced and distributed to Members and officers that worked out in the community, that outlined what they should do in the event of a safeguarding related issue.

Mandatory Safeguarding training for staff was provided online via the iHasco platform, to make sure that every employee was competent and could recognise signs of abuse. There had been a rise in reports made on the internal reporting mechanism 'See It Report It' which could be linked to the increase in training. All new staff inductions also included a section on safeguarding.

The Safeguarding Officer explained that the online training was also available for Members and asked the Committee for suggestions regarding the best way of increasing Member take up. It was proposed by Councillor Sean Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Sandy Dallimore that Group Leaders be advised of training levels within their respective groups.

The Committee thanked the Safeguarding team for their work collecting the data and identifying the priorities in a difficulty area.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Safeguarding Annual Audit be endorsed prior to its submission to Oxfordshire County Council.
- (2) That the importance of Members completing Safeguarding training be noted and the Safeguarding Officer and Democratic and Elections Officers be requested to liaise with Group Leaders regarding Members who have not completed Safeguarding training.

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Working Groups Update

The Chairman advised that the work of the food insecurity working group had been covered by the Food Action Plan at agenda item 8.

Councillor John Broad, Chairman of the Climate Action working group gave an update on the outcome of the meeting the previous day.

The group agreed that the Council attempting to cover all aspects of the 'One Planet Living' principles presented by Bioregional at their first meeting was impractical. The group had recognised that to achieve the priority of being net zero by 2030, it required positive policies with minimum carbon offsetting. The target of 2030 meant that policies needed to be implemented within the next couple of years.

The group had agreed that they would review the 'One Plant Living' principles to draw out the top ten items to focus on going forward and identify how they could be incorporated into Cherwell District Council policies.

Work would also be undertaken to review the evolving Local Plan Review document, to see how the revised plan incorporated One Planet Living principles.

The Chairman of the working group advised that the group would work closely with officers to make sure recommendations could be actioned as quickly as possible.

Resolved

- (1) That the Working Group updates be noted.

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Work Programme 2022/23

The Democratic and Elections Officer provided a brief update to the committee on the indicative work programme for 2022/2023,

Regarding the special meeting of the Committee on 12 December to consider the full draft Local Plan, officers had advised that housing need work would not be completed in time for consideration on 12 December. The special meetings of Overview and Scrutiny and Executive, scheduled for 12 December and 19 December respectively, would therefore not be taking place. The special meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee would take place on 11 January 2023, with Executive meeting on 19 January 2023.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Corporate Director Communities explained that there would be a full revised consultation timetable and it was hoped that Regulation 18 consultation would start before the end of January 2023.

The Democratic and Elections Officer advised that at the 24 January 2023 meeting the Thames Valley Police Chief Constable and Police Crime and Commissioner would be attending to give an annual update on policing in the Thames Valley. All Councillors were welcome to attend. Officers from Thames Valley Police had requested that questions be submitted prior to the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the change of date from 12 December 2022 to Wednesday 11 January 2023 of the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to consider the draft Local Plan, the Work Plan be noted.
- (2) That the update on items previously considered by the Committee be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.11 pm

Chairman:

Date: