



Council Minute Book

Monday 16 October 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 3 July 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 of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Also Present:

Councillor John Broad, Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer

Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

Officers in attendance virtually:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Manager

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Broad would be speaking on Item 6 – Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report – End of Year 2022-23 and Item 7 – Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report - May 2023.

3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

5 **Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report End of Year 2022 - 2023**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report which updated the Executive on the council's performance, risk, and financial positions for the period up to the end of the financial year 2022-2023.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee addressed the Executive. Cllr Broad reported that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had asked general questions of clarification on the report but had no specific comments to make to Executive and had noted the report.

Resolved

- (1) That the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report for End of year 2022- 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the Annual Report 2022 – 2023 be noted.
- (3) That the carry forward of funding into reserves be approved and the allocations being released for use in 2023/2024 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be agreed.
- (4) That the capital carry forwards (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (5) That the Use of / Contributions to Reserves (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

- (6) That the outturn underspend for 2022/2023 be noted.

Reasons

This report provides a summary of the council's delivery against its business plan priorities including its, risk, and financial positions for the 2022/23 financial year.

Alternative Options

This report summarises the council's performance, risk and financial positions for the 2022/23 financial year, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

6 Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report May 2023

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to update the Executive on the council's performance, risk, and financial positions for the 2023/24 financial year to the end of May 2023.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee addressed the Executive. Councillor Broad reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked questions of clarification regarding the performance measures, and whether the quoted targets were local or national.

Regarding indicator BP4.1.02, Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed whether the indicator should be geared towards the prevention of anti-social behaviour, rather than intervention.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to make the following comment to Executive: 'That Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour'.

Resolved

- (1) That the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report for May 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the Budget Management Report be noted.
- (3) That the proposed changes in use of reserves (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved,
- (4) That the Virements agreed under Section 151 Officer delegations be noted.

Reasons

This report provides an update on progress made during May 2023, to deliver the council's priorities through reporting on its performance, risk and financial positions.

Alternative Options

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

7 Cherwell Digital Futures Strategy

The ICT and Digital Lead submitted a report to present the Digital Futures Strategy, a forward-thinking blueprint designed to greatly improve the experience for all stakeholders - citizens, businesses, partners, visitors, staff, and elected members. The Strategy deviated from traditional IT strategies because instead of centring on specific technology implementations, it prioritised identifying innovative technologies and approaches that align with the ambition to become the best version of ourselves. The aim was to leverage digital advancements to foster an improved, engaging, and seamless experience for all.

Resolved

- (1) That the Digital Futures Strategy be approved.

Reasons

Embracing the digital approaches proposed in this strategy will align our services with the evolving expectations and daily digital interactions of our customers. By automating routine tasks, we empower our council officers to devote their expertise to more complex cases and to community members who would benefit from a more personal touch. Our commitment to gradual and strategic "evolution" rather than abrupt "revolution" allows us to manage the cost implications effectively. As such, most expenses related to the digital transformation will seamlessly integrate within our existing transformational budget or coincide with our planned system replacement schedules. This thoughtful approach ensures a smoother transition towards our digital future, minimising disruption while maximising benefits and value for our community.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To request the creation of a more traditional IT Strategy. Due to the drivers for transformation, a traditional IT Strategy would not provide the framework required to support radical change if needed.

8 Discretionary Housing Payments Policy reviewed 2023/2024

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to inform the Executive of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and proposed updates.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be noted.
- (2) That policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be approved.

Reasons

Discretionary Housing Payments are vital for residents in the current economic climate and help to support our most vulnerable residents with housing costs. It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to continue delivering support to these customers.

Alternative Options

Option 1: Returning the funds to Department for Works and Pensions and Oxfordshire County Council has been rejected as this would not be in line with Cherwell's objectives of responding to the cost of living crisis and working to prevent homelessness.

9 Implementation of Car Parking Pricing

The Assistant Director Environmental Services submitted a report to inform Executive of the changes proposed to the implementation of car park price increases during summer 2023 and provided the rationale for the revised implementation.

The new scheme did not raise prices beyond those approved by Council. It set out an implementation plan which ensured the Council's car park charges strike a balance between the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) priorities and being responsive to the current economic climate.

Resolved

- (1) That the following proposed car parking changes be noted:
 - Increase the 1st hour from £1.10 to £1.20. This will increase income broadly in line with inflation.
 - Keep the 2nd and 3rd hour unchanged as parking usage has demonstrated that use has declined and is not competitive with alternative car parking offers.
 - Increase the daily charge from £5.00 to £5.50 – an increase of 10p per hour - in line with inflation and as long stay car parks are showing increasing demand from increasing numbers of workers returning to office.

- Increase the ultra short stay from £1.10 to £1.20 for ½ hour. Increase the hour rate from £1.60 to £1.70 in ultra short stay car parks, where it is evidenced that there is increasing demand.

(2) That the publishing of the revised charges be approved.

Reasons

The proposed changes protect against inflation pressures of car parking operational costs and income, and to reflect market forces and changes in use.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To raise charges in line with the MTFP. This is not recommended as it is anticipated to have an adverse impact on use and therefore income due to competing offers from other car park providers in Banbury and Bicester, and to a lesser extent from competing towns outside of Cherwell.

10

Budget and Business Planning Process 2024/25 - 2028/29

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to inform Executive of the proposed approach to the 2024/25 Budget and Business Planning Process and provided context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on the latest Government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Budget and Business Planning Process for 2024/25 be approved.
- (2) That the base assumptions to be used for the 2024/25 budget be approved.
- (3) That a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2028/29 be approved.
- (4) That the revised Reserves Policy (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and ensure it maintains a suitable level of reserves each year. The process laid out in this report will allow CDC to develop budget proposals that will allow it to meet these legal obligations.

Alternative Options

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and evaluate its level of reserves to ensure they are held at a suitable level. Therefore, there are no alternative options other than to carry out a budget process that reviews the levels of reserves and identifies a budget proposal that can be delivered within the overall level of resources available to the Council.

11 **Award of Contract for the Repair and Refurbishment of Town Centre House**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek delegated authority to the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing to award the contract to the successful tender for the repair and refurbishment of Town Centre House.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing to award the contract for the repair and refurbishment of Town Centre House in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to enter into the agreement with the successful tenderer.

Reasons

To agree to delegating authority for procuring contractors and entering into a contract to complete the necessary works on Town Centre House following a competitive tendering exercise and formal costed evaluation of the bids received.

Alternative Options

Option 1: Do not award a contract over the summer. This option has been rejected because Cherwell District Council must meet its financial and housing obligations in order to receive the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) grant.

Option 2: Not to take the LAHF grant This option has been rejected because Cherwell District Council is committed to supporting refugees as well as delivering where possible quality homes at local housing allowance rents.

12 **Updates to Terms of Reference of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to set out and seek approval of adjustments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference following recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

Resolved

- (1) That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding be approved.

Reasons

The revised governance documents are required to set out how the councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will meet the requirements set out in the DLUHC letter dated 5 December 2022, securing the final £30 million of funding for infrastructure to support the accelerated delivery of new homes.

Alternative Options

Option 1: Do not approve the adjustments to the Terms of Reference. Rejected as it would not meet the requirements set out by central government to secure the funding for infrastructure. It would mean that the Council would not benefit from the opportunities that are presented from joint working with other councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

13

Pledges to Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter

The Assistant Director - Growth and Economy submitted a report that advised on the use of the delegated authority granted in January 2023 for the Council to make Pledges towards the implementation of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter.

Resolved

- (1) That Cherwell District Council's commitment to the adoption of twelve pledges (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) aligned with Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) 2023-24 and to support delivery of the pledges through appropriate services areas.
- (2) That engagement with and membership of the OIEP Steering Group and Working Groups on behalf of the Council be delegated to the Corporate Director – Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

Reasons

The OIEP has developed a Charter as a statement of shared commitment to creating a more inclusive local economy, reflecting the ambitions of partners from throughout the county to enable everybody to be economically active within stronger, more sustainable communities. To enact the Charter, partners are invited to make pledges towards it and this Council has led by example.

The Council's Inclusive Communities plan will ensure that the Council can commit to delivering its pledges in 2023-24.

By implementing these pledges, the Council will demonstrate good practice and encourage other organisations and businesses through continuing its active participation in the OIEP.

Alternative Options

Option 1: Not to pledge towards delivering Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter. This was rejected because it would suggest that the Council is not committed to the creation of an inclusive economy. By not gaining external recognition of its own inclusive policies, it would also miss an opportunity to encourage others to engage and would therefore restrict its ambition to tackle the significant issues being faced by residents who are not currently benefitting as fully as they might from any increasing prosperity within the local economy.

Option 2: To make alternative pledges to Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter. This was rejected because the Council should firstly identify pledges that are realistically achievable within existing resources. It is expected that in future years, additional pledges could be considered, subject to resource availability.

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Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.11 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 4 September 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 Greener Communities

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Property

Also Present:

Councillor John Broad, Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor George Reynolds

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Opposition, Progressive Oxfordshire

Councillor Ian Middleton

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing

Christina Cherry, Interim Planning Policy Team Leader

Maria Dopazo, Principal Planning Policy Officer

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
James Wilson, Interim Manager Bicester Garden Town Programme
Chris Thom, Principal Planning Policy Officer

15 **Declarations of Interest**

11. Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report April to July 2023.
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Other Registerable Interest, as a trustee of Tooley's Boatyard.

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

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Broad would be speaking on Item 6 – Cherwell Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation; Item 8 – Tenant's Charter; and Item 11 – the performance aspects of the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report – April to July 2023.

The Chairman advised that he had agreed to requests from Councillor Reynolds and Councillor Middleton to address the Executive on Item 6 - Cherwell Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation.

17 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman referred to the recent press coverage regarding school closures due to safety concerns regarding the type of concrete, reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) used in buildings. The Chairman advised that Oxfordshire County Council had confirmed that it had undertaken an audit process of all maintained schools 18 months ago and was confident that no maintained schools in the county were affected.

19 **Cherwell Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to present, for consideration, a draft of the emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 for consultation purposes.

Prior to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development presenting the report, the Chairman invited Councillor Reynolds, Councillor Broad and Councillor Middleton to address the meeting.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, summarised the feedback from the Committee which had considered the draft Local Plan at their special meeting on 16 August. The Committee had resolved to make the following comment to Executive: In line with the motion that had been adopted at the February 2023 full Council meeting on housing affordability mix, the Local Plan should be stronger in terms of the desirability of having more affordable housing in the allocated sites.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made a number of detailed comments and observations which had been published as an appendix to the Executive report. Proposed changes to the Local Plan in response to the Committee's comments had also been published as an appendix to the Executive report.

The Chairman thanked Councillors Reynolds, Broad and Middleton for their comments and thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their detailed scrutiny and subsequent feedback.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development explained that the council had a legal requirement to review its Local Plan every five years and update if appropriate. This current review of the Local Plan provided the opportunity to establish a new set of policies for addressing housing and other development needs, for climate action, for healthy place-shaping, for biodiversity net gain, for our urban centres, rural areas and in response to new Government policy and guidance.

Following the resolution of Executive in January 2023 to defer the consultation on the draft Local Plan at that time, officers had taken the opportunity to undertake a wide review of the scope and presentation of the draft plan. It had been redrafted with a greater emphasis on consultation, with feedback being more explicitly encouraged and with specific questions added. Where possible the language had been made more accessible and information had been presented in a simpler, more understandable, and transparent way.

The version submitted to Executive was a consultation draft of the emerging Plan under Regulation 18 of the Local Plan regulations (the issues and options stage of plan-making). The 6-week consultation was supported by a communications plan and would provide an opportunity for local communities, interest groups, statutory bodies, infrastructure and service providers, development promoters and other stakeholders to comment on emerging thinking and make suggestions on how the Plan should be developed further.

This stage was extremely important as the council still retained the flexibility to amend the emerging Plan in response to the consultation responses and further evidence. Responses to consultation at the next proposed or pre-submission stage (Regulation 19) were submitted with the Plan for Examination. In line with the Government's current proposals, Plans prepared

under the current Local Plan system should be submitted for Examination by 30 June 2025.

Resolved

- (1) That public consultation on the draft Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved, subject to the changes presented in response to the resolution of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 16 August 2023 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director - Planning and Development to make any minor amendments and corrections to the draft document he considers necessary prior to formal publication and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director – Planning and Development to finalise and publish supporting documents in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.

Reasons

The Council has a legal requirement to review its Local Plan every five years. A new Local Plan is required to meet Cherwell's needs, protect its environment and secure sustainable development. The process for preparing a new local plan is prescribed by legislation. This current Plan is a consultation draft prepared to prompt discussion and feedback on its vision, objectives, spatial strategies, and new planning policies. When adopted, the Local Plan will guide the delivery of sustainable development across the district. The Executive is invited to approve a consultation to support further plan development.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to progress a Cherwell Local Plan Review at this time. The Council has a legal requirement to review its Local Plan every five years, and update it if appropriate. There is therefore an expectation that most plans will need to be updated every five years. Progressing the review of the Local Plan is required to ensure a plan-led approach to development in Cherwell.

Option 2: Delay progress on a Cherwell Local Plan Review. The Local Plan programme has already slipped, principally due to the decision in August 2022 to cease work on the Oxfordshire Plan which was expected to set the strategic level of growth across the County. More recently, following consideration of a previous version of the draft local plan in January 2023 the Executive resolved, "...*Consultation be deferred until a later date....in light of the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive to allow officers to consider these comments*". Further delay would create significant uncertainty about maintaining a plan-led approach to development in Cherwell.

Option 3: Do not consult on an emerging Plan at 'Regulation 18' stage
There is no specific requirement to publish a draft Plan under Regulation 18 of the Local Plan regulations. There have been two issues and options consultations in 2020 and 2021 and the Council could wait until it publishes a proposed / pre-submission Plan under Regulation 19. However, there is time to undertake consultation now which would provide further opportunity for community engagement, benefit Plan development and ensure as many issues as possible are considered before a proposed Plan is prepared under Regulation 19.

20 **Local Development Scheme**

The Assistant Director – Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to produce the Council's key planning policy documents.

Resolved

- (1) That the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Annex to the Minutes, as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

An updated LDS has been prepared taking into account the significant change in circumstances since the last LDS was adopted in 2021. It provides a broad programme for completion of the on-going Local Plan review and a potential Community Infrastructure Levy. The Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare and maintain an LDS. The LDS will be used by officers, the public, partners and developers and other stakeholders to monitor the production of documents and to plan for associated consultations. Approval of the LDS is needed to assist project management and ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities for plan-making. The LDS will be reviewed again if there is a further, significant change in circumstances.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to approve the LDS

The Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain an LDS. If the Council did not prepare its own LDS the Secretary of State could impose one. Aside from legal duty, not to approve the LDS could undermine the confidence of the public and stakeholders about the Council's plan-making programme. The LDS would need to be re-presented to the Executive at a future meeting.

Option 2: To reconsider the content of the LDS

The LDS has been prepared having regard to the Council's statutory responsibilities and current resources. It is considered by officers to be appropriate for the present and foreseeable circumstances.

21 **Tenant's Charter**

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to consider and approve the Council's new Tenants Charter for the tenants that live within its rented stock portfolio.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio for Housing thanked the Housing Team for their work, tenants who had responded to the consultation and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had considered the draft Strategy at their 1 August meeting.

Councillor Broad addressed Executive and advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had commended the Strategy and planned publicity and promotion. The Committee had highlighted the importance of ensuring the information and language in the Charter was accessible to all. The Committee had recommended the draft Tenants Charter for adoption by Executive, subject to their comments on consideration of the language used in the Charter, ensuring the final draft was accessible to all tenants, and additional clarity on how residents could raise issues with the Council as their landlord.

Resolved

- (1) That the Tenants Charter (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), which sets out a new service standard that all tenants can expect to receive from the Council whilst they are living within properties the Council manages, be approved.
- (2) That the planned publicity and promotion to ensure a raising of the standards of rented properties within the District, following the motion at the Council meeting on 17 July 2023 that called on the Executive to reiterate the basic rights of tenants across Cherwell and the responsibilities of landlords and run a public awareness campaign of the Charter, encouraging tenants to be aware of their rights and where local sources of advice and support can be found, be approved.

Reasons

The Council is committed to improving the standards of accommodation and the experience of tenants within the District, and the new Tenants Charter and its commitments provide a framework for ensuring this is realised and also assists the Council in its leadership role in driving improvements in standards.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward a Tenants Charter

This option would be contrary to a Motion from Council and a previous Executive decision.

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to increase the delivery of housing and support for the ARAP scheme (Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Programme) in Cherwell. The original figure was to accommodate 10 families in MOD housing which has now been achieved. The request is to increase our offer of accommodation for a further 6 properties making 16 in total by early 2024.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Housing highlighted that this was pioneering work between the council and the MOD with funding provided by the Home Officer. The Chairman reiterated the comments and asked officers to write to the Minister of State (Minister for Veterans' Affairs), the Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP, to invite him to visit the work the council was undertaking.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing in consultation with Portfolio Holder Housing to:
 - a. agree variation to existing agreement to extend the offer of accommodation from 10 properties to 16 properties for the period as deemed appropriate.
 - b. agree and utilise future accommodation for the same purpose.

Reasons

The ARAP scheme offers priority relocation to eligible current or former Afghan nationals who were locally employed staff by the British military forces and who are assessed to be under serious threat to life. CDC currently leases 10 properties from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for housing Afghan refugees under the Government's ARAP scheme. CDC has been offered a further six properties to resettle more Afghan families who worked with British forces during the war in Afghanistan.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not offer to partner the Home Office in their commitment to settle families in the UK who were part of the United Kingdom military operation in Afghanistan. Rejected because Cherwell District Council considers itself part of the UK response to supporting refugees

Option 2: Provide accommodation through our regular housing register. Rejected By partnering with the MOD we are able to provide a resource not usually available to non-service personnel and so protect the applicants on the housing register from an increase in people seeking homes through that route.

The Assistant Director – Growth and Economy submitted a report to provide the Executive with the background and context for this capital project; to set out the business need for the Bicester Market Square enhancement proposals; to gain approval to appoint consultants to undertake feasibility studies, further design work and consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public; and, to provide the Executive with an understanding of the governance of the project and gateways to full scheme approval.

Resolved

- (1) That the business need for transformational public realm improvements at Bicester Market Square be confirmed.
- (2) That the expenditure (up to a level of £180k) required for consultants to undertake detailed design through to planning permission and consultation with stakeholders be approved and it be noted this will include associated studies on;
 - the relocation of parking and wider impacts of parking within Bicester
 - traffic movement and flows through Market Square and around the Town Centre, including access for existing businesses/users
 - a full design of the Market Square public realm improvement project with full business case for the capital expenditure and future revenue impact from changes to car parking income and any future costs
- (3) That it be noted the governance of the project to monitor and review development of the full business case which will return to Executive for approval prior to delivery of the project.

Reasons

Significant resources (£4.25m) have been made available to progress this project through the Council's capital programme and officers are now seeking to bring forward more detailed plans in consultation with stakeholders and the public for members to approve.

Therefore, officers are seeking to have the business need for delivering this project at the market square in Bicester affirmed and for authorisation to expend up to £180k of the anticipated £900k professional fees on relevant studies, consultation and detailed design (to the point of planning application submission) to enable a further report to members recommending approval for the final scheme and how it will be delivered.

Alternative options

Options would be evaluated as part of the consultation process

The Assistant Director – 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 July 2023.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee addressed the Executive. Cllr Broad reported that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had asked general questions of clarification on the report but had no specific comments to make to Executive and had noted the report.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's Performance, Risk and Financial report for the current financial year up to the end of July 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the inclusion of a capital budget under officer delegated authority of £0.160m to provide a grant to the Canal & River Trust funded through S106 developer contributions in recognition of our commitment to the canal as an important asset in the district be noted.
- (3) That £0.112m for the Digital Transformation Capital Project be approved.

Reasons

This report provides an update on progress made between April and July, 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 July, therefore there are no alternative options to consider. However, members may wish to request further information from officers for inclusion.

25

Summary of Debt Write Offs

The Assistant Director Finance submitted a report to provide members with a summary of the accounts proposed for write-offs and to request approval for the write-offs. These were debts where all avenues for collecting the debt have been exhausted and it is good practice to write these debts off. All of the debts proposed for write off would be funded from the Council's Bad debt Provision.

£1.042m Council Tax and £1.002m business rates were proposed for write off. These debts ranged from 2001/02 to 2023/24. Over this period bills of £1.809bn had been raised for Council Tax and £1.559bn for business rates. As a result 0.06% and 0.06% of the value billed over this time frame is recommended for write off.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Chairman thanked Finance Officers for their diligent and hard work in undertaking the review.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the proposed bad debt write offs summarised in exempt Annex A to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) which details debts recommended for write-off relating to Council Tax debts where the value exceeds £5,000, be approved.
- (2) That, having given due consideration, the proposed bad debt write offs summarised in exempt Annex B to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), which details Business Rates debts recommended for write-off where the values exceeds £10,000, be approved.
- (3) That the proposed write off of debts where the value is less than £5,000.00 for Council Tax and less than £10,000. for Business Rates but all recovery methods have been exhausted, which have been reviewed by the S151 Officer and are available to be reviewed on request, be approved.
- (4) That it be noted that the constitution gives a delegation to the S151 Officer to write off bad debts for Business Rates up to the value of £10,000 and up to the value of £5,000 for non-business rates bad debt and that following this review the S151 Officer will operate under this delegation and periodically update the Executive on the actions taken.

Reasons

The Council's financial procedure rules require that recommended write offs with an outstanding balance of £5,000 and above for Council Tax, Overpayment of Housing Benefit or Sundry Debtors, and £10,000 and above for Business Rates must be approved by the Executive

Alternative options

Option 1: To not write off the debt. This old and irrecoverable debt places additional administration on the team as periodically, it is required to be reviewed and pursued. By writing off the debt, more time will be able to be focussed on reviewing debt that is more likely to be recoverable.

26 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

27 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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

28 **Summary of Debt Write Offs - Exempt appendices**

There being no questions on the exempt appendices, they were considered as agreed as detailed under Minute 25.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Council

Record of Portfolio Holder Decisions for the period 8 July 2023 to 6 October 2023

Area of Responsibility	Decision Subject Matter
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services	Approval of The Customer Complaints Procedure and The Unacceptable and Unreasonable Behaviour Procedure

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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, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 26 July 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Simon Holland (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Ian Middleton
Harry Lawson (Independent Person – no voting rights)
Sarah Thompson (Independent Person – no voting rights)

Substitute Members:

Councillor Sean Woodcock (in place of Councillor Besmira Brasha)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Harry Knight

Also Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Officers:

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
Sandra Ganpot, Benefits Services and Performance Manager
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Jacey Scott, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Declan Brolly, Counter Fraud Team Manager (Internal Audit)
Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager
Sharon Hickson, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager
Shona Ware, Assistant Director of Customer Focus

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

5 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 22 March 2023 and 23 May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 **Chairman's Announcements**

In relation to agenda item 10, the Chairman advised the Committee that Ernst & Young, the council's External Auditors would not be providing an update. The meeting would therefore move straight from item 9 to item 11.

7 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

8 **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Risk Based Verification**

The Assistant Director Finance submitted a report that provided Members with details of the Risk Based Verification (RBV) policy and to seek approval for the reviewed RBV Policy for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted
- (2) That having given due consideration, the Risk Based Verification Policy for the financial year 2023/2024 be approved.

9 **Annual Governance Statement 2022-23**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report setting out the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the Council for 2022-23 for approval. The AGS summarised the key governance issues for the Council and the actions required to address these.

In introducing the report, the Interim Legal Services Manager advised that the AGS is required to be approved by those charged with governance, the Accounts Audit & Risk Committee, under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the Monitoring Officer making any necessary amendments in the light of comments made by the Committee, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer that the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be approved.
- (2) That the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of Cherwell District Council.

10 **Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1, 2023**

The Assistant Director, Customer Focus submitted a report that updated the Committee on how well the council was managing its Strategic Risks and to seek the committee's views on the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 2023 be noted
- (2) That the Councils current Risk Management Strategy 2022/23 be noted and no improvements or comments be referred to Executive for consideration.

11 **External Audit Update**

As advised under the Chairman's announcements, External Audit had advised they would not be providing a verbal item to the meeting.

12 **Annual Report of the Chief Internal Auditor 2022/23**

The Chief Internal Auditor submitted a report which summarised the outcome of the Internal Audit work in 2022/23, and provided an opinion on the Council's System of Internal Control.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Annual Report of the Chief Internal Auditor 2022/23 be endorsed

13 **Internal Audit Strategy and Plan 2023/24**

The Chief Internal Auditor submitted a report which presented the internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2023/24 be noted.

14 **Internal Audit Charter**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report on the Internal Charter and Internal Audit Quality Assurance programme for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Internal Audit Charter be approved.
- (2) That the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme be noted.

15 **Update on Counter Fraud Annual Plan 2022/23 and presenting the Counter Fraud Annual Plan 2023/24**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report which summarised the activity against the Annual Plan for the Counter-Fraud service at CDC for 2022/23, which was previously presented to the Accounts, Audit & Risk at the July 2022 meeting. The report also presented the new Counter Fraud Plan for the year 2023/24.

The Plan supported the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy by ensuring that the Council has in place proportionate and effective resources and controls to prevent and detect fraud as well as investigate those matters that do arise.

In introducing the report, the Chief Internal Auditor highlighted to members that a large piece of work carried out for Cherwell, the National Fraud Initiative was close to conclusion, Figures and details would be reported to the committee at the November meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of activity against the Annual Counter Fraud Plan for 2022/23 be noted.
- (2) That the Counter Fraud Plan for 2023/24 be noted.

16 **Treasury Management Report - Annual Performance Report 2022/23 (March 2023)**

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer submitted a report that gave information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2022-23 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Report – Annual Performance Report 2022/23 be noted.

17 **Treasury Management Report - Q1 2023/24 (June 2023)**

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer submitted a report that gave information on the treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2023-24 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

All treasury management activities undertaken to date during the financial year 2023-24 complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy, and all Prudential Indicators were met during the reporting period.

Over the course of the year, there was an overall forecast underspend of £0.376m.

Resolved

- (1) That the Q1 2023/24 Treasury Management Report be noted.
- (2) That the strategy for future borrowing requirements be noted

18 **2022/23 Accounting Policies**

The Assistant Director of Finance and S151 Officer submitted a report for the Committee to review and approve the Accounting Policies for inclusion in the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. The Council was required to set accounting policies which set out the specific principles, bases, conventions, rules, and practices applied by an authority in preparing and presenting financial statements. The accounting policies describe how the Council has interpreted and applied the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. There have been no material changes to the Accounting Policies.

In addition, the Committee was advised and requested to note that the 2022/23 Draft Statement of Accounts were not published by the 31 May 2023 deadline, due to delays in the audit of the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the accounting policies as approved by the Chief Finance Officer be approved
- (2) That it be noted the 2022/23 Draft Statement of Accounts were not published by the 31 May deadline be noted.

19 **Support to Subsidiaries**

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer submitted a report that informed the Committee of the overall level of support provided to the councils subsidiaries and how this is considered as part of the external audit.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

20 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance updated the Committee on the work programme

Resolved

- (1) That the work Programme be noted

21 **Exclusion of 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(s) of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, 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.

22 **Support to Subsidiaries - exempt appendix**

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt appendix be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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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 25 July 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Patrick Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Adam Nell, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Jacey Scott, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Sandra Ganpot, Benefits Services and Performance Manager
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 7 March 2023 and 23 May 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

5 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

6 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

7 Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director of Finance to enable members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction for 2024-25.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained the existing income banded scheme was introduced in April 2020 and in general had received good feedback from residents.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that the Council tax reduction scheme had remained the same but adjusted for inflationary purposes and that the scheme had set a maximum level of Council Tax reduction based on net income of the applicant and household members.

Following questions from the Committee, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that the reduction scheme had increased in line with the Council Tax increase.

It was proposed by Councillor Sean Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Matt Hodgson that Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes) be retained for 2024/25.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That, having given due consideration, the Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes) be retained for 2024/25.

8 Budget Process 2024-25

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director of Finance that summarised the approach Cherwell District Council (CDC) intended to

take in order to set its 2024/25 budget and 5-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period to 2028/29 and revises the Reserves Policy.

The Head of Finance advised that the Medium-Term-Financial Statement covered a five-year timeframe therefore the MTFS approved in February 2023 was to be extended by one year to cover the 2028/29 financial year.

The Head of Finance advised there was a current trend for external audits to extend beyond the end of the financial accounting year that could have an impact on the usable reserves. Because of this, section 6.2 had been introduced in the revised Reserves Policy to allow the Section 151 Officer delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio holder of Finance, to manage such impact of changes to ensure the long-term resilience of the Council.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the actions that the Section 151 Officer could take if section 6.2 of the Reserves Policy needed to be used, the Head of Finance advised that, as the final use of reserves was reported to Executive in June/July in the Outturn Report, to use reserves to address audit issues in prior years after this point under the original policy could cause time delays in getting the accounts signed off. The revision to the policy gave the S151 Officer the flexibility to manage audit issues and protect the general fund balance.

Following questions from the Committee as to whether all fees and charges would be uplifted by 10%, the Head of Finance advised that all budget holders had been encouraged to look at their fees and charges where they could be set by the Council, to ensure that costs were recovered as far as possible to reflect the inflationary rises.

Following questions from the Committee regarding whether the Leader or Portfolio holder for Finance had lobbied central government about decreases in government funding, the Head of Finance advised that they would seek a response and update to Committee members after the meeting. Following on from the response from the Head of Finance, Councillors Hodgson and Woodcock urged the Portfolio Holder to write to central government asking them to address the level of funding, if such correspondence had not already been sent.

In response to further detailed questions from the Committee, the Head of Finance advised that responses would be sought from the relevant departments and circulated to Committee members after the meeting:

- A breakdown of the increase in the 'Corporate Changes' cost of £0.909m for 2024/25 on Table 1 of Appendix 1.
- A breakdown of the reduction in business rates income of £2.495m forecast for 2024/25 on Table 1 of Appendix 1

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

9 **Monthly Finance Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to the Committee that summarised the Council's outturn position for revenue and capital for 2022/2023.

The Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls explained that the outturn position showed an overall underspend of £1000 which had been achieved against a backdrop of financial challenges under the current economic circumstances. The January monitoring report advised a forecast of £38,000 overspend so a small movement to the end of March position.

The Capital budget had ended the year with a £14.958m underspend, however £14.273m of this has been requested to be reprofiled into future years. The Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls advised that £685k had not been utilised in the financial year and would not be carried forward into future year's budgets.

In response to further detailed questions from the Committee, the Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls advised that responses would be sought from the relevant departments and circulated to Committee members after the meeting:

- The number of transfers from the reserves General Balance into revenue that have occurred over the last few years.
- An explanation of the Castle Quay capital projects that had been paused.
- Data in car park usage to understand the drop in income from car parks.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

10 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls presented the Budget Planning Committee Work Plan.

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls advised the Committee that at the next scheduled meeting on 26 September 2023, the Committee would consider the monitoring report for Q1, June 2023 and details of ongoing and upcoming central government consultations regarding budgetary matters. The Committee would have an opportunity comment and feed into the consultation responses where appropriate.

Following a question as to whether the Committee could be given the opportunity to consider the planned budget consultation activities for the

2024-25 budget process for the council, the Chairman advised the Committee that he would discuss the possibility with officers.

Resolved

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

The meeting ended at 7.11 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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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 26 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Patrick Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Adam Nell
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members:

Councillor Rob Pattenden (In place of Councillor David Hingley)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor David Hingley

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12 Minutes

Following a comment from Councillor Hodgson regarding Minute 8, Budget Process 2024-25, in relation to the discussion on government funding, it was agreed that this would be discussed at agenda item 8, Review of Committee Work Plan.

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023 were agreed record and signed by the Chairman.

13 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

14 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

15 **Monthly Finance Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that summarised the council's forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2023/2024 as of 31 July 2023.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding if officers had prepared or were putting plans in place to address a potential loss of income if the government changed the law to replace glass bottle bank recycling with kerbside collection, Councillor Nell, Portfolio Holder for Finance, advised that there were regular discussions on the price of recycled glass and that officers would provide a written response to the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee asking for the background to why the property area was showing the greatest change for the worse in the report, the Strategic Business Partner advised the Committee that the main reason is that there was currently a dependency on the use of agency staff in certain areas however recruitment is currently on going in this area.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the use of grants in how the capital programme would be financed and what grants specifically these were, the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that there were many grants. Officer would provide a written response to the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

16 **Upcoming Consultations**

The Head of Finance gave a verbal update to the committee on upcoming consultations from central government regarding budgetary matters and advised that there were none to report at this time.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

17 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls presented the Budget Planning Committee Work Plan. At the next scheduled meeting on 31 October 2023, the Committee would consider the monitoring report for Q2. The 2024/25 Budget Proposals - Revenue and Capital and Fees & Charges would be submitted to the 5 December 2023 meeting.

In the course of discussion at the earlier agenda item 3 regarding government funding to the Council, the Leader, Councillor Wood, had suggested that officers give a presentation at a future committee meeting giving an overview on council funding, including central funding, council tax receipts and other income.

Members endorsed the suggestion and highlighted other areas the Committee could include on its work programme at the appropriate time: innovation in relation to the budget and financial affairs of the council and possible future ideas that the Committee could contribute to; housing; car parking, and refuse.

Resolved

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

The meeting ended at 7.31 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 27 June 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Tom Gubbins, Sport & Recreation Physical Activities Manager

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 14 March 2023 and 23 May 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

6 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

7 **FAST Programme Review**

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager gave a presentation on the FAST (Families Active Sporting Together) Programme and explained the positive impact it had on families across Cherwell over last four years and had enabled family provision to be upscaled across the county through Public Health funding.

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager advised the Committee that the FAST programme began in 2018 and ran until March 2023. The aim of the programme was to make it easier for families to be physically active together, promoting positive experiences of physical activities by providing free or discounted activities.

The Sport and Physical Activity Manager explained that the FAST programme had finished however because of its success. Public Health England had funded the new initiative 'You Move' across Oxfordshire. "You Move" was aimed at families who access free school meals but the whole family could access the activities provided under the scheme.

Following questions from the Committee, the Sport and Physical Activity Manager advised that 16% of people who had signed up to the FAST programme were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and additional work had been undertaken in the local community by the Leisure team to promote the programme.

Resolved

(1) That the presentation be noted.

8 **Overview of the Housing Register**

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to provide the Committee with an overview of the Cherwell District Council Housing Register and allocations process.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that the council operated a waiting list for those seeking social housing. The housing allocation scheme used was called choice-based lettings. There were eight steps to the housing application process for applicants seeking social housing.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that in the near future there would be a review of the parameters for the four housing needs bands that applicants could be allocated to. This would be carried out to assess whether the parameters were correct and if people were within the correct banding.

Following questions from the Committee regarding properties owned by Housing Associations that may be empty for a period of time, the Head of Housing advised that he engaged with Sanctuary Housing on a regular basis to address the matter. However, as they were an independent organisation, the council could only advise and work in partnership to try and get houses that may be empty occupied again.

In response to a query regarding the selection process for advertised social houses, the Head of Housing advised the system created a shortlist of applicants based on who had bid for a particular property, in order of banding and length of time on the register. Officers in the Housing team then assessed the need of each shortlisted applicant against the specific property, to ensure the property was offered to a suitable applicant, e.g. checking that the if the applicant used a wheelchair, the access at the property wasn't via steps.

Following questions by the Committee regarding the difference between social and affordable housing in new developments, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing advised that social housing was houses that were purchased by a registered housing provider. The council speaks to registered providers to ask if they would be interested in taking on available houses however the Section 106 agreement that was agreed in the planning process for housing developments dictated how many housing units were provided as affordable and social housing.

In response to Members' questions regarding disproportion of numbers within each banding on the waiting list, the Head of Housing advised that the proposed review of the bands would make sure that applicants in the highest need were placed in the highest band, and not competing with applications where needs were not as high.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the description of band four as 'no housing need', the Head of Housing clarified that the band covered applicants who were eligible to join the register, but didn't have urgent needs as covered by the other bands. The Head of Housing explained that each council could make their own decisions as to whether applicants with 'no housing need' were allowed on the housing register or not.

Resolved

- (1) That how the Council administers applications it receives to the Housing Register and enacts its Housing Allocations Scheme be noted.
- (2) That the basis for a review of the Council's allocations and banding scheme to ensure that the scheme was working correctly in prioritising and meeting local housing needs now and in the foreseeable future be noted.

9 **Wellbeing Strategy**

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing gave a presentation outlining the proposed new Wellbeing Strategy for Cherwell for 2023 – 2027.

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing advised that the council had previously had an 'active lives' strategy however the Wellbeing Strategy was broader and looked at the factors that come together to give individual residents or the whole community good wellbeing.

The Strategy focused on areas for improvement where the district compared less favourably to other districts in the county or nationally. These included loneliness, diet and exercise.

The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing confirmed that a public consultation and focus groups would take place after the draft Strategy had been presented to Executive in September.

Following questions from the Committee regarding the 'happy healthy workplace' scheme, the Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing advised that there had been a similar national scheme for employers, however it had been withdrawn and had not yet been relaunched. The council had decided to run its own equivalent scheme that, if successful, could be used as an example for private employers across the district to follow.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted.

10 **Year End 2022/2023 and May 2023 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to give the Committee a summary on the council's performance against the Business Plan priorities for 2022/23 up to the end of the financial year.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus reported that out of 33 measures for the yearly performance, 32 measures reported as green and one measure reported as amber. In relation to the measure that

reported amber, percentage of waste recycled and composted, the Committee was advised that the council reported percentage was 9 percent higher than the average of England which was 44 percent.

Following questions from the Committee regarding how the targets were set, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus explained that some of the measures had to be reported on nationally to government, so the indicator was how the Council performed against other councils, or how the council had performed in previous years.

In response to comments from the Committee that no detail was included as to how the council would meet the target of promoting the green economy, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that she ask officers to provide additional narrative.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Performance Report for End of year 2022/2023 be noted and no comments be passed to the Executive for consideration at their 3 July meeting.
- (2) That the Annual Report 2022/2023 be noted.

11

May 2023 Performance Monitoring Report

The Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to give the Committee a summary on the council's performance against the Business Plan priorities for 2023/24 as of end of May 2023.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus reported that of the eight measures with monthly targets, seven measures were on track to be achieved and one measure was reported as amber and slightly off track. The measure reported as amber was percentage of electric vehicles in the fleet. The Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that the service reported that additional electric vehicles had been ordered for in year delivery and subject to no supply chain issue the target was expected to be achieved by year end.

In response to Members' comments regarding the performance measure BP4.1.02, Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour and that the measure seemed to relate to intervention and not prevention., the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that consideration would be given to introducing more tangible quarterly measures.

It was proposed by Councillor Broad and seconded by Councillor Walker that the comment 'The Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.' The Committee voted unanimously in favour.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the monthly Performance Report for May 2023 be noted and the following comment be made to the Executive for consideration at their 3 July meeting: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.

12 **Working Groups Update**

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead explained that in 2022/23 there were three scrutiny working groups: Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (joint group with Personnel Committee) and Food Insecurity working groups. The Committee was asked to consider whether these working groups should continue during the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Committee agreed that all three groups should continue and requested that the Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead ask existing working group members, where appropriate, if they wished to continue being on the relevant working group.

Resolved

- (1) That the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (joint group with Personnel Committee) and Food Insecurity working groups continue.
- (2) That the Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead be requested to ask existing members of each working group, where appropriate, if they wish to continue on the relevant working group.
- (3) That the following additional Overview & Scrutiny Committee members be appointed to working groups:
 - Climate Action – Councillor Isabel Creed,
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Lynne Parsons, Councillor Rob Pattenden.
 - Food Insecurity – Councillor Isabel Creed, Councillor Dorothy Walker.

13 **Work Programme 2023/24**

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead presented the indicative Committee work programme for 2023/2024.

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead included anticipated dates and items that were usually presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work programme was a live document and would be regularly

reviewed with the Chairman and submitted to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead advised that discussions were ongoing with Planning Policy officers and the Chairman regarding an additional meeting in August for the Committee to consider the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation documents prior to Executive consideration on 4 September.

In liaison with the Chairman, consideration was being given to the 24 October to be an 'external partners' session. External partners, such as registered housing providers, would be invited to the meeting to explain their work with the council and to give Committee members the opportunity to ask questions.

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing added that the Tenants Charter would be submitted to the 1 August meeting for the Committee to consider and comment before it was submitted to the 4 September Executive meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the indicative work programme 2023/2024 be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.23 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 1 August 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

Councillor George Reynolds (In place of Councillor Douglas Webb)
Councillor Sean Woodcock (In place of Councillor Isabel Creed)

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Isabel Creed
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Douglas Webb

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Robert Jolley, Assistant Director Growth & Economy
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus

14 **Declarations of Interest**

7. Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2023/24.
Councillor Lynne Parsons, Other Registerable Interest, as a volunteer for Citizens Advice Bureau, which was mentioned in the performance measures.

15 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Patrick Clarke, following the announcement at Full Council that he would be replacing Councillor Maurice Billington on the Committee.

17 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

18 **Tenants Charter**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing that gave an overview of the proposed Tenants Charter.

Councillor Nick Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing, introduced the report, explaining that the Charter had been produced following a Motion to Full Council and a commitment being given to implement a Charter for residents that rent via the Council.

Councillor Mawer explained that the Charter outlined the expected relationship between the Council as a landlord and its tenants, and complimented wider legislation changes as a result of the ongoing Renters Reform Bill that was currently progressing through Parliament, and the Social Housing Regulation Act that had received Royal Assent.

Council has a wider strategic and statutory role within housing standards across the district. Encouraging good landlord and tenant relations. Survey of tenants, high response rate and overwhelmingly positive.

Councillor Mawer added that commitments were made during debate on the motion at Full Council, to raise awareness of the Charter across the district. The Council was unable to make private landlords or Registered Social Providers adopt the Charter for their own tenants, however it was hoped that it could be used as a starting point for private residents to refer to in the event they needed to seek advice for their own tenancies.

The draft Charter had been subject to consultation with residents, and had achieved a high response rate that was overwhelmingly positive.

The Head of Housing added that a detailed public awareness campaign would be drafted ready for presenting to Executive alongside the draft Charter, with the proposed publicity following the three commitments detailed in the Charter.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the language used in the Charter and it needing to be accessible to all Council tenants, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing advised that the team would work with colleagues from Communications to ensure the final document was accessible to everyone.

With regard to comments from the Committee requesting additional information as to how tenants could raise grievances or issues with the Council as their landlord, the Head of Housing highlighted references to the Council complaint process and the Local Government Ombudsman should complaints not be resolved satisfactorily. It was agreed that further consideration could be given to making the section clearer.

In response to comments regarding the Charter being made available in relevant languages, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing assured the Committee that the team would work with Communications colleagues to ensure information was provided in all required languages.

It was proposed by Councillor Sean Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Patrick Clarke that the draft Tenants Charter be recommended for adoption by Executive, subject to comments on consideration of the language used in the Charter, ensuring the final draft was accessible to all tenants, and additional clarity on how residents could raise issues with the Council as their landlord.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the draft Tenants Charter be recommended for adoption by Executive subject to the following comments
 - a. Consideration of the language used in the Charter, ensuring the final draft is accessible to all tenants
 - b. Additional clarity on how residents can raise issues with the Council as their landlord
- (2) That the comments regarding the comprehensive communications plan to be presented to Executive alongside the draft Charter be noted.

19

Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2023/24

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

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, and explained that the Council had in place a comprehensive and robust performance management framework. For Quarter one, 82% of measures had achieved their target.

With regards to Peer Reviews actions, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus clarified that 15 of the actions had been achieved during quarter one, rather than 14 as stated in the report.

In response to questions asked by the Committee in relation to indicator BP1.2.04 Number of affordable homes delivered, the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy confirmed he would seek a detailed response for circulation after the meeting.

Regarding indicator BP1.2.13 Net additional housing completions to meet Cherwell needs, the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy advised the Committee that the Council had an annual obligation to report details of the number of houses completed. The annual target was 1142, which meant a quarterly target of 286. Quarter one had come in slightly under target with 173 completions, however the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy explained that historically quarterly figures fluctuated dependent on outside influences such as market conditions and developer activity. For 2022/23 the Council had achieved 1318 completions across the year, exceeding target.

A number of detailed questions were asked in relation to indicators BP1.2.10 and BP1.2.11, % of major and non-major applications overturned at appeal; BP2.2.01 % waste recycled and composted; BP3.2.01 and BP3.2.02 % of Council tax collected, increase council tax base and % of Business rates collected, increase NNDR base; and the measure relating to illegal flytips. Officers agreed to circulate written responses on the questions after the meeting.

Resolved

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

20

Working Groups Update

The Committee received verbal updates on the work of the Climate Action and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working groups.

Speaking on behalf of the Climate Action working group, Councillor Broad explained that the group had a good debate at its last meeting, and would be

meeting later in August to determine what actions the Council could focus on in relation to the climate emergency.

Regarding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group, Councillor Parsons reported that Councillor Gemma Coton had been elected Chair of the group, and it had been agreed that robust targets and milestones were needed for the high level actions agreed previously as part of the EDI action plans.

The Food Insecurity working group were due to meet later in August, and an update would be provided at the September meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

(1) That the working group update be noted.

21

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 8.05 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 16 August 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Douglas Webb

Substitute Members:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (In place of Councillor Isabel Creed)
Councillor Andrew Crichton (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)
Councillor George Reynolds (In place of Councillor Bryn Williams)
Councillor Sean Woodcock (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Isabel Creed (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Bryn Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development
Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Christina Cherry, Interim Planning Policy Team Leader
Chris Thom, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Maria Dopazo, Acting Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager

22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

23 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

25 **Draft Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 (Regulation 18) Consultation**

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development submitted a report which presented the draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 for scrutiny ahead of its consideration by the Executive on 4 September 2023.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development introduced the draft Local Plan 2040 (Regulation 18) Consultation and advised that the plan had been drafted using a wide range of information including evidence, work with stakeholders and responses from previous consultations.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development explained to the Committee that the Regulation 18 consultation was an opportunity to present the draft I plan to residents and stakeholders, and to receive meaningful contribution and comment on the details from the interested parties. Engagement would continue over the course of the Local Plan process and further documents to support the Local Plan would be published as part of the public consultation. The responses received during the consultation would be considered by officers and inform any changes prior to the Regulation 19 stage consultation.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development confirmed that the three key themes listed in the draft local plan had not changed since the last consultation on the Regulation 18 draft plan in January 2023, however minor amendments had been made.

It was advised by the Assistant Director for Planning and Development that if Executive approved the draft for consultation at their meeting on 4 September, the public consultation would start in mid-September and last for six weeks. A communications plan had been established with the Council's communications team to ensure that there was wide engagement in addition to the statutory consultation requirements.

Following concerns from the Committee regarding distribution of the draft Plan and the amount of information, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that the Members Advisory Group had held meetings and invited all members of the Committee to attend. The early draft version of the plan had been discussed, and subsequently distributed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.

Following a question from the Committee as to whether a feasibility survey had been carried out regarding use of solar power, further to an assessment being referenced in the documentation suggesting wind power was not feasible within Oxfordshire, the Interim Planning Policy Team Leader advised that an assessment had not been carried out and advised that Oxfordshire County Council were carrying out work ongoing work on climate change. The Interim Planning Policy Team Leader also advised through the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) workstreams, more work was being carried out to investigate the use of solar power.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding if the Council had scope to include storage of grey water for new developments within the plan, the Interim Planning Policy Team Leader advised that there were elements within the housing policies that covered grey water as well as water efficiency in terms of building standards. The Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that core policy 8 on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) stated that the use of SuDS in all developments was required for management of surface water run-off.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding suggestions in the draft plan that biodiversity net gain would be offsite, the Interim Planning Policy Team Leader advised that sometimes it was more advantageous to have the biodiversity net gain offsite and members advised it would be better that the offsetting was carried out locally instead of nationally.

Following a comment from the Committee suggesting developments within air quality management areas should be carefully considered due to the potential impact on air quality, the Interim Planning Policy Team Leader advised that Environmental Health Officers who monitored air quality were consulted when applications and allocations were considered.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding core policy 21 on sustainable transport and connectivity and the availability of public transport in rural areas, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that the council must be realistic on what could be achieved and provide choice for residents. The Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised the policy was aimed more at a strategic level and not an exclusion policy.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development, in response to questions regarding the possibility of greater housing density on sites being allocated for housing on greenbelt land, advised that views on the loss of green belt land for development would be sought as part of the consultation.

Following questions from the Committee regarding justifications on the housing need numbers stated within the draft plan, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) was a document commissioned jointly by the council with Oxford City Council that was published in 2022, which recommended the housing need be understood on the basis of the projected share of employment across the county by 2040. Different scenarios for housing need were outlined within the plan under core policy 34, and this included the government policy guidance.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding other districts view on developments to meet the Oxford unmet housing need, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that each Council made their own decisions as to what they would be including in their Local Plans and there was clear policy within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) about addressing identified unmet housing need of neighbouring authorities.

The Interim Planning Policy Team Leader, in response to a question from the Committee regarding infrastructure of local NHS services, advised that they were aware of long term plans from the Oxfordshire University Hospital Trust being developed, and advised if these were available in time they would be reflected within the Local Plan.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding Junction 9 of the M40, development around that area and the impact on the transport network, the Principal Planning Policy Officer advised that the Council were at the early stages of the making of the plan and potential sites being put forward for consultation. Some initial work had been carried out on transport impact including an assessment of the existing transport network. As sites are proposed for allocation then transport modelling would take place. Work would need to be carried out with National Highways to address work around the three junctions of the M40 that were within the district.

In response to concerns from the Committee regarding some villages appearing to be referenced as part of Kidlington within the draft plan, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development clarified that the Kidlington area strategy focussed on Kidlington and surrounding villages. Parish boundaries were not considered material to Planning issues, however the Assistant Director for Planning and Development understood that it would be

more helpful for communities in the area of Kidlington to be referenced accurately within the plan.

In response to questions from the Committee on core policy 87 and concerns regarding the time lag between end of year and production of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which was used to establish whether the plan was being effectively actioned, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that the AMR was produced for the previous financial year and was typically published at the end of the calendar year so an AMR was yet to be produced for the period ending 31 March 2023. The Assistant Director for Planning and Development stated that the AMR helped the Council assess the development within the district.

In response to Members questions regarding the motion passed at the Council meeting in February 2023 regarding housing affordability on new developments, the Committee commented that the Executive should consider including an affordable element of at least 50% within future housing developments and that this should be included in the draft Plan. The Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised that the Council wanted to push the increased percentage and would attempt to add in supportive text to strengthen the message.

It was proposed by Councillor Sean Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Ian Middleton that the following comment be made to the Executive for consideration:

that in line with the carried motion at February 2023 full Council meeting on housing affordability mix, the Local Plan be stronger in terms of the desirability of having more affordable housing in the allocated sites; and delegate to the Chairman to report detailed comments made by Committee to the Executive on the 4 September 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor Sean Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Ian Middleton that the following comment be made to the Executive for consideration.

- that in line with the carried motion at February 2023 full Council meeting on housing affordability mix, the Local Plan be stronger in terms of the desirability of having more affordable housing in the allocated sites; and delegate to the Chairman to report detailed comments made by Committee to the Executive on the 4 September 2023.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration to the draft Local Plan 2040 (Regulation 18), the following comment be made to the Executive:
 - that in line with the carried motion at February 2023 full Council meeting on housing affordability mix, the Local Plan be stronger in terms of the desirability of having more affordable housing in the allocated sites; and delegate to the Chairman to report detailed comments made by Committee to the Executive on the 4 September 2023.

- (2) That it be noted that the Assistant Director for Planning and Development will retain delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, to make minor amendments to the draft document, including correcting any typographic or formatting errors, up to the start of the consultation.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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 19 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor John Broad (Chairman)
Councillor Isabel Creed (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams

Substitute Members:

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Adam Nell

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Tim Hughes, Interim Assistant Director Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Liam Didcock, Leisure Contracts and Sports Hubs Manager
Tom Gubbins, Sport & Recreation Physical Activities Manager
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader

26 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

27 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 August 2023 and 16 August 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

29 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

30 **August 2023 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the Council's performance against its performance indicators for August 2023

The Performance and Insight Team Leader introduced the report and advised the Committee that the council had achieved 86% of its August 2023 key performance indicators (KPIs). Indicator BP1.2.06, average time taken to process Housing Benefit New Claims and council tax reduction (Days), was reporting amber. This was due to a few days with high volumes of claims however the year-to-date performance is ahead of target.

In response to queries from the Committee in relation to this indicator, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that the targets that the council had to report on were based on national statistics that had to be reported quarterly to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

The Assistant Director of Finance explained he regularly met with the team to review performance and was confident that the year-end target would be met. Quarterly meetings take place with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) which is happy with the council's performance.

In response to a question on indicator BP4.1.02, support community safety and anti-social behaviour prevention activities, the Corporate Director of Communities advised that the team's work was both preventative and reactive and involved working closely with partners. The Community Safety Team would be presenting an overview of the work and activities undertaken by the regulatory and community safety service to the Committee in due course.

In response to questions regarding facilities in new developments and activities for 14 – 18 year olds, the Leisure Contracts and Sports Hubs Manager and Sport and Recreation Physical Activities Manager agreed to provide an update on the facilities and activities they were moving forward. The Performance and Insight Team Leader also referred to the brighter futures work which included many initiatives such as art and music as well as sport. The Committee endorsed the Chief Executive's suggestion that an update be provided to the Committee alongside the Community Safety Team presentation.

In response to a question from the Committee on indicator BP1.2.01, Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation, and how the target of 40 households was determined, the Head of Housing advised that there was no requirement to report this, rather the council had chosen to measure and it was therefore a locally set target. The Portfolio Holder for Housing added that the target of 40 households is a figure that the Council believed to be achievable.

Resolved

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

31 **Working Groups Update**

The Committee noted the working group updates that had been published with the agenda.

Resolved

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

32 **Work Programme 2023-24**

The Governance and Elections Manager provided the Committee with an update to the indicative committee work programme.

The Governance and Elections Manager advised the Committee that Sanctuary Housing Officers would be attending their next meeting on 24 October 2023 to give a presentation. Committee members were asked to

submit any areas they wished the presentation to cover or to Sanctuary Housing by 6 October 2023.

The Chairman advised that he was liaising with officers about including updates from the council's representatives (himself, Councillor Woodcock and Councillor Pratt) on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel to this Committee following meetings of the Panel.

Resolved

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

The meeting ended at 7.21 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 13 June 2023 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Amanda Watkins
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ian Harwood

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Aaron Hetherington, Democratic and Elections Team Leader

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

5 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

6 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15 March 2023 and 23 May 2023 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

7 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements

8 **Policy Review**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive that sought approval on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Human Resources explained the changes in the policies were due to changes in the Council's Constitution. The Assistant Director of Human Resources also stated that there would be a continuation to review policies to bring them in line with the Council's constitution when required.

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director Human Resources confirmed that the policies were compliant with national legislation and that any further change would be brought to the Personnel Committee for update and review.

Resolved

(1) That the following policies be approved for implementation:

- Sickness Absence Policy
- Organisational Change Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Capability Policy
- Stand-by and on-call Policy
- Market Supplement Policy
- Car User Policy

9 **Workforce Profile Statistics**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive that provided the Personnel Committee with an update on Cherwell District Council's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, The Assistant Director of Human Resources provided an overview on the workforce data for Quarter 4 of 2022/23.

In response to members questions in regard to the decrease in headcount across the council from quarter 1, the Assistant Director of Human Resources confirmed that this was due to the decoupling from OCC.

Regarding agency staff, the Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that there were circumstances where the Council would need to use agency staff where it could not be avoided. For example, in Waste Services, where three manned crews were required to collect the waste in the district, agency staff would be used to help the service.

In response to queries from the Committee regarding actions to increase diversity of the workforce, the Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that a new recruitment module was being introduced from July 2023. The module would provide information regarding the reach of recruitment advertising, which would allow the HR team to review effectiveness.

In response to members questions regarding Local Government Association and District Council's Network graduate trainee schemes and if the council invested in them, the Assistant Director of Human Resources confirmed that the council had taken on two LGA graduates and would continue to monitor going forward.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce data for Quarter 4 of 2022/23 be noted.

10 **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group**

The Committee were asked to nominate representatives to the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working group, which was proposed to continue as a joint working group with Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Coton, Councillor Okeke and Councillor Pruden be nominated to represent the Personnel Committee at the Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group.

11 **Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2023/2024

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme 2023/2024 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.01 pm

Chairman:

Date: