

Cherwell District Council

Executive

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

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor John Broad, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Chris Thom, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Simon Barlow, Principal Planner - Infrastructure Lead (Interim)

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group and Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered item 6, Everybody's Wellbeing – a new strategy for Cherwell, and item 10, the performance aspects of the Performance, Finance and Risk Monitoring Report October 2023 but made no specific recommendations to Executive on either item.

65 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. Agenda Item 11, Sale of Bodicote House, had been marked "to follow" as a precautionary measure. However, this had always been an ambitious timeframe in which to agree heads of terms with the preferred bidder and this process had not yet concluded. For these reasons, the item would be deferred until the new year. The associated items, 12 to 15 were also not required.
2. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) had met on Tuesday 28 November. As the council's representative on FOP, the Chairman provided an update on the meeting. The FOP Annual Report had been submitted to the meeting and the Chairman undertook to circulate this to all Cherwell District Council members. The meeting had also considered recommendations from the FOP Scrutiny Panel, received the Quarter 2 progress report for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Annual report, the Oxfordshire Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan as well as updates on the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Acton Plan and from each of the FOR Advisory Groups: Infrastructure; Housing; Environment; and, Planning.

67 **Everybody's Wellbeing - A new strategy for Cherwell**

The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to present the new Wellbeing strategy for 2024 – 2028 'Everybody's Wellbeing'.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities commended the Wellbeing Team for their excellent work on the Strategy.

On behalf of Executive, the Chairman thanked the Wellbeing Team for their work on wellbeing across the district. Cherwell District Council was a frontrunner with an excellent track record of delivering a range of programmes and facilities to meet its objective of developing healthy, resilient and engaged communities. The “Everybody’s Wellbeing” strategy was ambitious and would ensure the council remained a frontrunner in this area.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had reviewed the draft strategy, reported that the Committee had praised the Wellbeing Team for their ongoing hard work across the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Wellbeing Strategy for Cherwell – Everybody’s Wellbeing 2024 – 2028 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

The strategy has been developed through insight and consultation. It celebrates the achievements Cherwell District Council has made so far and pushes delivery against 7 goals that will be measured and monitored to capture impact, allowing members to broadly consider the social return on Investment.

Alternative options

Option 1: To rely on system strategies and seek to implement them locally. This was rejected. An option to pursue our own strategy would be based on more detailed local knowledge and circumstance and allow us to reflect the levels of deprivation, rurality and housing growth across the district better.

The local place-based approach Everybody’s Wellbeing captures, is in step with broader Health and Wellbeing strategies but the refinement presented by a district strategy encourages better interaction with Town and Parish Councils and the strong, vibrant relationships the District has with voluntary and community sector locally.

Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23

The Assistant Director – Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Council’s Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23 for publication by 31 December 2023 and to note the updated guidance removing the previous requirement to submit accompanying data to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Resolved

- (1) That the Infrastructure Funding Statement 22/23 be approved for publication by 31 December 2023, subject to any minor or presentational changes considered to be necessary by the Assistant Director – Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.

Reasons

The publication of an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is a statutory requirement that provides transparency and accessibility to information about developer contributions secured by the Council through Section 106 Agreements.

The report has been produced in collaboration with Financial Services and the information contained within it is considered to represent the most robust data available at this time.

Alternative options

Option 1 – Not to bring forward and Infrastructure Funding Statement
This is not a lawful option and would leave the Council in breach of its statutory duty.

Option 2 – Seek review of the key statistics and proposed Infrastructure Funding Statement

Officers consider that this is not required as the information is the most available at this time.

69

Annual Monitoring Report 2023

The Assistant Director – Planning and Development submitted a report which sought approval of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2023 including a housing land supply update (November 2023) and the accompanying updates to the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Brownfield Land Register.

Resolved

- (1) That with the amendments set out in the annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), the 2023 Annual Monitoring Report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) including a housing land supply statement and a 2022/23 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) update be approved for publication.
- (2) That the 2022/23 Brownfield Land Register (BLR) (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved for publication.
- (3) That Assistant Director - Planning and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – Planning and & Development, be authorised

to make any necessary minor and presentational changes to the Annual Monitoring Report, and Brownfield Land Register if required prior to publication.

Reasons

The Annual Monitoring Report provides important information to measure the effectiveness of planning policies and to assist policy making and development management decision making. It is the statutory mechanism for monitoring housing delivery.

Its most significant conclusions are that Cherwell is continuing to deliver homes and employment land despite the widely reported national pressures faced by the development industry such as disrupted supply chains, finance costs, and labour shortages.

Alternative options

Option 1: Deferment to seek significant amendment of the: 2023 Annual Monitoring Report, Infrastructure Delivery Plan or Brownfield Land Register. Officers consider the documents to comprise robust factual reporting and updating against relevant indicators and requirements, supported by data and research. Members are therefore asked to consider amendment through delegation and consultation with the Portfolio Holder should they consider significant changes to be necessary.

Option 2: Not to approve the documents for publication
Production of an Authorities Monitoring Report is a statutory requirement and the AMR's wider information supports the Local Plan implementation and review. Updating the Brownfield Land Register is also a statutory requirement. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is required to monitor and support delivery of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and its Partial Review.

70

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/2024

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

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that the current scheme was introduced from April 2020 following a period of consultation and engagement. In general, it had been well received with limited contact from customers. It was proposed to continue with the current scheme, updated for inflationary factors.

The current scheme was understood by customers and enabled them to budget for their council tax payments, which was reflected in the Council Tax collection rates with Cherwell being the highest performer across the county for 2022 -23.

The current scheme reduced the number of changes that the customer would experience with less bills and notification letters generated and enabled better personal budgeting. There was still a lot of financial uncertainty for many customers and in the current financial climate with the ongoing cost of living crisis it is therefore recommended that the existing scheme should be retained for 2024.25.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and any financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That the comments of the Budget Planning Committee be noted.
- (3) That Council be recommended to agree that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (adjusted for inflationary factors) is retained for 2024/25

Reasons

The current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their council tax payments. One of the main advantages of the banded scheme is that it reduces the number of changes that the customer will experience enabling more effective personal budgeting.

There is still a lot of financial uncertainty for many customers and in the current financial climate with the ongoing cost of living crisis it is therefore recommended that the existing scheme should be retained for 2024 / 25.

Alternative options

The alternative option is to undertake a review of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme but the reasons for the recommendation explain the rationale for not taking this course of action.

71

Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report October 2023

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to update Executive on how well the council was performing in delivering its priorities, managing potential risks, and balancing its finances during October 2023.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Council's Performance, Risk and Financial report for the month of October 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the following use of reserves (app 5) be approved:

Directorate: Communities

Type: Earmarked

Description: Appeals & Legal Reserve

Reason: To mitigate forecast overspend with appeals and legal challenges

Amount £m: 0.209

Total Earmarked reserves £m: 0.209

- (3) That the use of £0.351m Commercial Risk within Policy Contingency to mitigate the increased recycling processing costs be approved.

Reasons

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

Alternative options

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

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

As advised under the Chairman's announcements, consideration of this item (and the subsequent associated items) had been deferred.

73 Exclusion of the Press and Public

As advised under the Chairman's announcements, the item "Sale of Bodicote House Site, White Post Road, Bodicote, OX15 4AA" had been deferred, therefore this item was not required.

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75 Readmittance of the Press and Public

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77 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.16 pm

Chairman:

Date: