

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 12 March 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Simon Holland

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety

Tom Gubbins, Wellbeing Manager

65 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

66 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcement:

1. That current Committee members Councillors Clarke and Williams and previous Committee Chairman Councillor Donaldson would be standing down at the forthcoming elections. The Chairman thanked them for their hard work during their time on the Committee and the wider Council.

68 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

69 **Future Oxfordshire Partnership - Scrutiny Panel Update**

The Chairman provided an update on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel meeting of the 11 March 2024 that he had attended.

The Committee was advised that from the 31 March 2024 the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would no longer exist and that the existing LEP functions would transfer to Oxfordshire County Council. The Chairman explained that this would lead to changes to the structure of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and to the FOP Scrutiny Panel going forward.

Councillor Broad also provided an update on the work of the FOP advisory groups including the Planning advisory group, Planning for Health Infrastructure advisory group and Joint working on Biodiversity Net Gain. The Committee was updated on the report regarding the Local Transport Connectivity Plan (LTCP) which had shown that the number of bus and cycle journeys were not as high as had been anticipated but it was believed that this was due to the fact that the data had been collected in the winter period.

The Committee was advised that due to the changes arising from the cessation of the LEPs, the work programme for the FOP Scrutiny Panel would need to be re-evaluated.

Resolved

- (1) That the update regarding the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) be noted.

70

Performance Outcomes Framework 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services introduced the update on the Performance Outcomes Framework 2024/25. The Committee was advised that the framework set out the basis of how the Council measured its performance against both the strategic priorities set out in its Business Plan and the corporate objectives that were recently agreed in the Annual Delivery Service Plan.

The Assistant Director - Customer Focus provided the Committee with an update on some of the targets that had not been available when the report was published as part of the agenda. These included:

- the yearly target of 1,142 for Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell's needs
- the percentage of Climate Action plan delivering to target had previously been a monitored measure but had now been changed to a target of 66%
- the amount of greenhouse gas emissions for the year which had been updated to 3,900 tonnes.

The Corporate Director - Communities provided the Committee with an update on the proposed Economic and Regeneration indicators. It was explained that as part of the Enterprising economy priority, the success of the implementation of projects that were funded from the UK Prosperity fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (plan reference EEV1) would be measured by the number of businesses and local residents that the projects engaged.

In response to a question regarding the potential monitoring of the number of new businesses set up in the District, the Corporate Director – Communities advised the Committee that this was difficult to achieve due to the lag in time of obtaining the data from the Office of National Statistics. Other methods of reporting this metric were being investigated.

In response to a question seeking clarification on the milestones for Business Plan priority EV3 – to develop a plan for reimagining Bicester and ensure existing and new communities benefit from short and long term measures of the garden Town principles - in Quarter 3 and a possible conflict of finalising a design that was still under consultation, the Corporate Director – Communities advised that the draft masterplan was for Bicester as a whole whereas the Market Square Final scheme design was for that particular area only. The two milestones related to the two separate projects.

In response to a question of whether the target of a 1% reduction in the fleet fuel consumption was ambitious enough, the Corporate Director –

Communities explained that there whilst route optimisation helped to reduce fuel consumption, the increase in the size of the District meant that routes were getting longer and this limited the impact of efficiencies from optimisation. The Committee was also advised that the switch from combustion vehicles to electric ones was still some time away. The Assistant Director – Environmental Services provided more information on some of the other actions that had been taken to reduce fuel consumption such as monitoring driver behaviour and introducing systems for pre-heating vehicles in the winter months rather than leaving the engines running. The Committee was advised that the technology and price was not at a point where the Council could switch larger vehicles from diesel to electric.

In response to a question regarding the terminology used in the Business Plan and whether the 2030 climate target under 'supporting environmental sustainability' should be net zero rather than carbon neutral the Corporate Director – Communities agreed to check the wording with the Climate Action Manager.

In response to a question regarding the metrics for measuring the move to the Council's new offices in Castle Quay (plan reference SES3) and in particular the timescale for disposing of Bodicote House, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that Committee had commented on the plan, including the measures and milestones, earlier in the year and it had now been approved by Executive. It was agreed that further discussion would take place outside of the meeting to clarify the wording of this particular measure.

In response to a question regarding whether the value of 66% was ambitious enough as the percentage of the Climate Action plan delivering to target, the Corporate Director – Communities advised the Committee that it was a realistic figure considering the resource challenges the Council faced but it was hoped that the target would be exceeded. It was explained that the progress on the delivery of the Climate Action Plan would be reported to the Committee through the quarterly performance review reports.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the approach to managing the council's performance for 2024/25 be noted.
- (2) That having given due consideration, no changes be recommended to Executive for consideration.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans 2024-25

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services introduced the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan for 2024-25 and advised that this had been produced in consultation with the EDI working group. The Chairman of the working group, Councillor Coton, provided an update on the group's work over the last year and provided some examples of how the action plan had been delivered across the district. This included the Everybody's Wellbeing

strategy, the establishment of the Resettlement team to help support refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants and the production of updated Human Resource policies to reflect the key EDI principles.

Regarding the structure of the plan, the Committee was advised that the working group proposed to deliver nine actions to deliver Inclusive Communities with the focus on reaching out to underrepresented communities and vulnerable residents, eight actions as part of the Inclusive Services Action Plan to ensure services are accessible to all and seven actions to deliver Inclusive Workplace with the emphasis on training to support employees with different needs. The Inclusive Workplace action plan had been reviewed and agreed by the Personnel Committee at its meeting on the 7 February 2024.

Following a detailed discussion regarding action plan commitments EDI 1.03, Work directly with communities to identify inequality and tackle disadvantage and EDI 1.04 Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chain and strategic partnerships, it was agreed that the proposed actions for these two items, currently shown as “No actions for 2024/25” should be reconsidered and the plan updated accordingly. The Committee acknowledged that the plan was a starting point and further work would take place in the future to enhance and improve the plan.

The Committee thanked Councillor Coton and the rest of the Working Group for their hard work over the last year in producing the EDI action plan.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the following comments be referred to Executive for consideration at their 8 April meeting:
 - Inclusive Communities action plan Commitments EDI 1.03 and 1.04 – consideration be given to amending the wording in the ‘proposed action’ column to acknowledge the work undertaken so far and providing a commitment to build on that work going forward.
- (2) That Executive be recommended to delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Customer Focus to make minor amendments to the agreed Inclusive Communities and Services Actions Plans, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Chair of the EDI working group.

72 Community Safety Update and Brighter Future Initiatives Presentation

The Head of Regulatory Services provided the Committee with an update on Community Safety work in response to previous discussions that had taken place regarding performance indicator BP4.1.02 support community safety and anti-social behaviour prevention activities.

The presentation provided an overview of the Regulatory Services and Community Safety statutory functions which included environmental

protection enforcement, food hygiene inspections, premises licensing for the sale of alcohol and anti-social behaviour work carried out by the Community safety team.

The Committee was advised that the Regulatory Services team took an approach that balanced the needs of protecting the environment and local residents whilst also supporting business and the local economy. This was achieved by using a combination of monitoring and evaluating standards and compliance and where necessary taking enforcement action to address any issues that were identified.

The presentation also outlined the service activity that the Community safety team undertook in the District which included running the Community Safety partnership, dealing with anti-social behaviour witnessed on patrol and issuing fixed penalty notices within the prescribed powers. The team also worked in partnership with other agencies that had led to initiatives such as the Safer Streets project funded by Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner and Violence Against Women and Girls project funded by the Home Office.

The Wellbeing Manager provided the Committee with an update on the Brighter Futures Partnership. The Committee was advised that the Partnership has been active for over 12 years and worked with over 50 local community organisations across a range of disciplines including health, education, business and faith groups. The scheme focussed on the three most deprived wards in Banbury, Grimsbury, Ruscote and Neithrop.

The Committee was advised that the Partnership concentrated on six themes: Stronger communities and volunteering; Health, wellbeing and physical activity; Safer communities; Housing; Economy, education and skills; and Start well (early years development). These were underpinned by a structure of Stakeholder Steering Groups, Partnership events and Local networks.

The Committee was shown data that demonstrated the reasons for targeting the three wards in Banbury. In the Ruscote and Neithrop wards, eight out of 32 indicators were ranked worse than the England average and this included factors such as overall income deprivation, emergency hospital admissions. In Grimsbury 16 out of 32 indicators were ranked worse than the England average.

The Wellbeing Manager concluded the presentation with some examples of some of the success stories of the initiative which included the Safer Street Projects and Breakfast initiative located at The Hill.

In response to a question requesting more information on data by ethnic group, it was agreed that the Wellbeing Manager would provide the information after the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the possibility of extending the project to Kidlington and Bicester, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing advised that the Healthy Place Shaping team had implemented the K5 Better

Together initiative in Kidlington and Healthy Bicester in Bicester to provide help to residents in those areas. The Committee was also advised that a Local Area Coordinator had been identified for the Bicester East ward and that the work done as part of the Brighter Futures Initiative would now be introduced to the Bicester West ward.

The Chairman thanked the presenters and their respective teams for the good work that had been carried out by them to address the challenges faced in the Banbury wards.

Resolved

- (1) That the Community Safety update and Brighter Future Initiatives presentations be noted.

73 **Working Group Update - March 2024**

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

With regard to the Food Insecurity working group and the Cherwell Food action plan, the Committee were advised that Executive had approved the action plan at its meeting on 4 March 2024.

The Chairman thanked members of all working groups for their work throughout the year.

Resolved

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

74 **Work Programme 2023-24**

The Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead advised the Committee that as it was the end of the Municipal year the current work programme had concluded. A new work programme would be produced once the Committee had been re-appointed following the Full Council meeting on 22 May.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their participation throughout the municipal year.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chairman:

Date: