

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 18 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)
Councillor Gemma Coton (In place of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership
Councillor Rebecca Biegel

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder Planning and Development Management
Councillor Ian Middleton, Food Champion

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation

66 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

67 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2025 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcement;

Given the nature of the agenda items and the participants for each item, the order would be item 6 – Housing Action Plan Update as the first main item, followed by Item 9 – Transformation Programme, then item 8 - the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Outcomes, then Item 7 – Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment, due to the same officers supporting these items.

69 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

70 **Housing Action Plan Update**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Head of Development Management on the Councils Housing Delivery Action Plan.

In introducing the report, the Head of Development Management advised that at present, the Council could demonstrate a 2.3 year supply of housing against a 5 year housing supply target. The emerging Action Plan would identify the measures that the Council intended to undertake to help improve housing delivery in Cherwell.

Members were briefed on the timeline for the production of the Action Plan, and were advised that it was anticipated the draft plan would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting.

In response to a question regarding the pros, cons and risks of proceeding to Regulation 19 with the Local Plan rather than returning to Regulation 18 and the potential impact on speculative planning applications, the portfolio holder for Planning and Development Management advised that at this stage, returning to regulation 18 was not an option, the entire process of drafting a Local Plan would have to start again if significant changes were required. Proceeding to Regulation 19 stage as planned would provide greater protection for the council with regards to speculative applications.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Housing Action Plan update be noted.
- (2) That a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 03 June 2025.

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Transformation Programme

The Committee considered a presentation and report from the Assistant Director Customer Focus on the Council's Transformation Programme, covering an introduction, next steps, strategic alignment, and implications.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership introduced the report, advising members that the programme began in June 2024 with an external consultant supporting services to deliver a three phase piece of work:

- Phase 1 – Cost Based Service Catalogue
- Phase 2 – Demand & Effectiveness Proposals
- Phase 3 – Service Level Options

Members were advised that panel sessions were implemented with the purpose to confirm that proposals were credible, implementation was achievable, the risks were appropriately assessed, and the potential benefits realistic.

It was also advised that PA Consulting were commissioned in January 2025 to help develop plans for achieving the transformation opportunities identified from the first three phases, specifically covering:

- Programme Set up.
- Agile Delivery – Process Automation
- Culture Change

This work concluded in early March 2025, and the final report, as part of a case for change, would be considered by the Executive as soon as practicable.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership detailed that savings had been built into next year's budget from the £4.1m of identified effectiveness

changes from the phase 2 work. These efficiencies were identified by services without impacting service delivery and the levels residents currently receive from the Council. Any impact on service delivery would depend on the financial situation facing the Council at the time of budget setting, and as per the usual process there would be consultation on any proposed service level changes.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the Transformation Programme, the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership explained that the work was essential for ensuring the council was in the best position, having implemented strategic efficiencies for any future changes.

In response to a question on the involvement of both the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the process of the Transformation Programme, members were advised that regular updates would be provided throughout the process.

In response to a question on the possible implementation of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) within the Councils service areas, the Head of Digital and Innovation advised that the integration of A.I. within service areas was being looked into as a way to enhance efficiency and improve accessibility to the services provided by the council.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Transformation Programme report be noted.

72 Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Outcomes Framework for 2025 - 2026

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus on the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measures 2025-26 detailing the Council's new vision and strategic priorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services introduced the report, detailing the overarching 5-year strategy that would be underpinned by Annual Delivery Plans for each year of the Corporate Plan period. The Annual Delivery Plans aim to set out the strategic actions for delivering each year, towards achieving the priorities established in its Corporate Strategy. Members were also advised that the council's progress towards achieving its strategic priorities and measuring service delivery would be set out through a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In response to a question regarding tenant surveys, the Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing explained that there were reliant and robust relationships with housing providers and that milestones were in place to help them conduct surveys.

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Creed that in relation to the quarterly milestones within the Annual Delivery Plan, the following methodology and approach be adopted:

- Quarter 1 - Survey of tenants to analyse and establish a baseline for concerns and needs
- Quarter 2 - Establish a monitoring framework based on the analysis of the above
- Quarter 3 - Hold a registered providers forum
- Quarter 4 - Further survey of tenants to inform actions for 2026/27.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, there were 6 votes for, 1 vote against and 2 abstentions. It was agreed that recommendations should be submitted to Executive as soon as practicable.

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Creed that that the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) on Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation retain the number of homeless households living in Temporary Accommodation and include an additional KPI metric on the number of people who are in nightly charged accommodation.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, the motion was upheld unanimously, and it was agreed that the recommendation should be submitted to Executive as soon as practicable.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measures 2025-26 report be noted.
- (2) That it be recommended to the Executive:
 - i. That the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) on Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation retain the number of homeless households living in Temporary Accommodation and include an additional KPI metric on the number of people who are in nightly charged accommodation.
 - ii. That in relation to the quarterly milestones within the Annual Delivery Plan the following methodology and approach be adopted:
 - Quarter 1 - Survey of tenants to analyse and establish a baseline for concerns and needs
 - Quarter 2 - Establish a monitoring framework based on the analysis of the above
 - Quarter 3 - Hold a registered providers forum
 - Quarter 4 - Further survey of tenants to inform actions for 2026/27.

Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing, providing an overview of the "Everybody's Wellbeing" Strategy and baseline outcome measures planned to be collected from the annual satisfaction survey and six-monthly citizen space surveys.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities introduced the report, informing members that feedback from the surveys would be collected to assess the need and impact while also linking into the Wellbeing Service plan. As well as working with performance team, annual satisfaction survey questions around wellbeing would be asked and collected to produce a baseline of where residents currently see their wellbeing and how they interact with areas of the wellbeing service, enabling the wellbeing team to establish a base and continually ask these questions on a six-month period to review progress. Action plan measures would be reported a quarterly basis.

In response to a question on the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on the future of the Strategy as well as service levels across the district, the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing advised that LGR was in its very early stages, and as such would not impact on plans for several years. Work carried out in the interim would look to provide a firm foundation for whatever form of local authority existed in the future.

In response to a question regarding public participation in the surveys and what initiatives were in place to boost interaction, the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing advised that measures were being taken to involve young people more and that it was important to capture as many residents as possible. The council actively used its current social media channels for outreach but would also look into other platforms as appropriate.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment report be noted.

Scrutiny Working Groups Update

The Committee received reports on the work of the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Food Insecurity working groups for the 2024 – 2025 municipal year.

The Chairman of each working group presented the findings and recommendations of each group to the Committee. Recommendations from each group would be taken forward to Executive for consideration in the next Municipal Year.

The Portfolio Holders for Greener Communities, Corporate Services and Healthy Communities thanked the respective working groups and their support officers for their work and recommendations.

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Working Groups update be noted.
- (2) That the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Report be agreed, adopted and referred to the Executive for an Executive Response, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (3) That the Climate Action Scrutiny Report be agreed, adopted and referred to the Executive for an Executive Response, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (4) That the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Report be agreed and adopted, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (5) That the Planning Application Appeals Scrutiny Recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Update Briefing Report be agreed, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), and be referred to the Executive for an Executive Response and
- (6) That a scrutiny report be prepared setting out the findings of the Planning Application Appeals scrutiny inquiry and brought before the next meeting of the Committee for consideration and agreement.

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Work Programme Update

The Chairman advised the Committee that as it was the end of the Municipal year the current work programme had concluded. A new work programme including the previously agreed Housing Action Plan update report, would be produced once the Committee had been re-appointed following the Full Council meeting on 21 May 2025.

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

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 be agreed.
- (2) That a report on the Housing Action Plan be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 03 June 2025.

The meeting ended at 9.19 pm

Chairman:

Date: