

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Record of Decisions of the meeting of the
Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held at 6.30 pm on **Thursday, 8 July 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Councillor Andy Graham (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jake Acock, Councillor Jill Bull, Councillor Laetisia Carter, Councillor Owen Collins, Councillor Mark Johnson, Councillor Nick Leverton, Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Andrew Prosser, Councillor Dean Temple and Councillor Alex Wilson

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive) and Phil Shaw (Business Manager - Development Management)

13 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Temple substituted for Councillor Crossland.

15 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

16 Participation of the Public

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

17 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

18 Presentation from GLL Better

Following a request from the Committee at a previous meeting, a presentation was given by GLL Better (Greenwich Leisure Ltd), the Council's Leisure Services provider. Mr John Busby and Mr John Amatt from GLL gave a slide presentation to the members and it was agreed that a copy would be circulated to Members after the meeting

The presentation was received well by all members and the Chair thanked GLL for their contributions during the height of the Covid crisis.

Councillor Carter stated that GLL had been a lifeline to people in Chipping Norton, and that they should be proud of their staff.

A general discussion was held on the GLL presentation where the following topics were raised, noted and discussed:

- Carterton football pitches and grounds – Plans were in place for improvements, a local nominated grounds communicator was also in place.

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- Swimming pools were due to open from 23rd July 2021
- Discussion of inclusivity for access to the swimming pools, which included water temperature management to enable this service, as swimming pool heating systems aged
- Retention of 'trickle feed entry' as public liked this approach and it enabled centres to manage the flow of people
- More Pilates and yoga sessions were desired
- Future plans were being looked at in case of further lockdowns
- Workforce reviews, currently full staffing levels
- Energy action plan and investment in upkeep of centres
- Income from clubs were now being closely managed

Having received the presentation and having debated the issue, the Chairman thanked the representatives from GLL for attending and answering queries from the Committee.

The Committee

Resolved that the presentation be noted.

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Enforcement Update

Members received a verbal update from the Business Manager – Development Management, on the current workload and initiatives within the Planning and Enforcement teams.

A summary of the update was as follows:

- A 46% increase in planning applications this year, had resulted in a pressured workforce
- There were less staff to manage applications – a current review was in place on staff retention and recruitment, and proposal on re-introduction of grading structure, retention of junior staff, to enable them to grow into senior positions, was a future aim
- 30% of workload currently being focussed on as a priority
- 70% of workload to be managed by new workflow initiatives
- Length of time to manage cases had increased due to Covid restrictions
- Implementation of shared investigators resulting in less site visits
- Implemented a building management investigator to monitor construction sites in the field, this had reduced the numbers of complaints received
- Lead times at courts were very lengthy, officers were working with applicants to negotiate and try to avoid court routes

The update was greatly appreciated by all members and Mr Shaw was thanked for attending.

Members wanted the staff to be aware that they were very aware of the current increased workload they were faced with, especially with the limited staff available. Members wished to be supportive of the initiatives in place to address the situation and

Resolved that the update is noted.

20 Oxfordshire Plan Consultation Document

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which asked Members to consider the approval of the Oxfordshire Plan consultation document. This set out a range of planning policy options and a series of spatial strategy options for Oxfordshire.

When complete, the Plan would provide a high level spatial planning framework up to 2050 and would be statutory planning document, supplementing Local Plans. Members were asked to express a view on the recommendations due to be considered at Cabinet on 21 July 2021. The Chief Executive, Giles Hughes introduced the report.

Mr Hughes advised that, as the lead senior officer for Oxfordshire, he would work on delivery of the Plan with colleagues across the Oxfordshire Councils. Councillor Haine also sat on the Oxfordshire Plan Advisory Group, alongside fellow Cabinet Members from the other Oxfordshire Councils. He explained that this was an ambitious project for a long term view, and was a notable national piece of work, which had government funding. The Plan was a draft consultation document, looking at options and no key decisions had been made as yet. Requirement at this stage was to obtain approval to consult on the plan and its options. There would be a ten week consultation process, due to start at the end of July, with on-line webinars being delivered. Libraries would also provide accessibility for the public to view the document.

The Chairman suggested that he would go through the document page by page with Councillors indicating when they had feedback or comments, or if a section required further discussion

During consideration of the document, the following key items were noted and discussed:

- Final consultation document needed editorial context reviewed to ensure clarity, especially maps and pictorial content
- Last review in 1977 resulted in boundary and county changes, affecting political local seats and national seats
- Clarification was required on the tight timeframes already agreed by programme team
- Councils had different targets for Climate emergency and there was a need to work across Councils to work more closely together to develop a future plan
- Offsetting framework mentioned, clarity of the framework would be useful
- Light pollution, requirement to protect areas of Dark Skies
- Biodiversity net gain, definition required
- Appropriate terminology for Traveller and Gypsy communities
- Document should not be generic on inclusivity when looking at disability housing needs
- Document needed to reflect housing needs for younger people as well as older people
- Seemed to have been written towards older people, did not reflect preschool, apprenticeships or post 16 education
- Live work units, plan is strategic

Having considered the report and discussed the content, it was agreed that the Chief Executive would take into account their comments when the final publication style, editorial corrections and minor amendments were made.

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Therefore, the Committee

Resolved that their comments be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.

21 Council Priorities and Service Performance Report - Quarter 4

The committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which provided details of the Council's service performance during Quarter 4.

A description of the Performance Management Framework and Performance Reporting was provided at section 2 of the report and advised of the six key strands of information now being focused on. The report also explained the Commissioning Framework and set out the relationship between Publica and the Council, along with their respective responsibilities.

The Chief Executive had received the report and had noted the progress made, whilst being mindful of the impact of the ongoing pandemic. Section 2.7 of the report highlighted the key issues experienced by the Council and its officers in that time.

Members considered the content of the report and discussed the various challenges encountered. It was noted that Planning applications had increased by 46% this year and this was reflected in the report.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the officers present, the Committee

Resolved that the report is noted.

22 Committee Work Programme

The Committee received and considered the report which gave members the opportunity to comment on the recent of the Work Programme for 2021/2022.

Following discussions, it was noted that:

An invitation was due to be extended to the Police to attend the next Committee meeting and give a verbal update. Members were encouraged to submit questions to the Chairman and Democratic Services by mid-August.

An invitation was due to be extended to Cottsway Housing Association to attend Committee meeting and give a verbal update. Members were keen to invite WODC Housing Associations to attend future Committee meetings, starting with Cottsway, followed by others at later dates throughout the year.

NHS Dental Service provision - Following the last briefing note from Oxfordshire CCG, officers had requested a further update on how the Council would address the NHS Dental practice shortfall.

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The report on the preparation for the arrival of refugees from Afghanistan - Following last month's briefing note, Officers were informed that a further detailed briefing note was due to be issued in September.

Resolved that the updates be noted.

23 Cabinet Work Programme

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of the Democratic Services, which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 18 May 2021.

During discussions it was noted that:

Upgrade to WO public space CCTV provision & monitoring arrangements - Members agreed to hold a pre-meeting one week before 16 September 2021 meeting, if required, to review the report and receive an update because this item was due to be considered by Cabinet on 15 September 2021.

24 Members Questions

Councillor Leverton wanted it noted that the Oxfordshire Plan was a long document to review. It was suggested that if there was a long report to review in the future, it could warrant a separate meeting. All members were in agreement.

The Meeting closed at 9.40 pm

CHAIRMAN