

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the **Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 6.30 pm on  
**Thursday, 27 January 2022**

#### PRESENT

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

Also present:

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Democratic Services Manager), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager) and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

#### **48 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **49 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock, Laetisia Carter and Maxine Crossland.

#### **50 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **51 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

#### **52 Presentation from Thames Valley Police**

Members received a presentation from Thames Valley Police regarding Stronger Policing and an update on Organised Crime and County Lines.

The following officers joined the meeting virtually: Chief Constable - John Campbell, Superintendent (LPA Commander for Cherwell and West Oxfordshire) - Emma Garside, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Matthew Barber and Staff Officer - Rebecca Neupert.

At previous meetings of the Committee, Members had compiled a list of questions that they required responses to and these had been circulated to Thames Valley Police in advance. The questions included: issues arising from the pandemic and their ongoing effects such as hate crime and domestic abuse; the reduction in PCSO's particularly in West Oxfordshire; enforcing of 20 mile an hour speed limit in villages particularly in West Oxfordshire; an update

## Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27/January2022

on County lines and the statistics regarding growing drug use and it's % increase and a breakdown of crime figures into a league table.

Both the PCC and TVP delivered in depth presentations providing an update of the work carried out this year, the challenges faced and future work streams. The topics covered included fraud and cyber-crime, digital investigations, digital forensics, the fast-tracking of domestic violence issues, youth offending, prison leavers and illegal encampments.

The officers responded to questions from the Committee and provided clarification on what constituted an illegal encampment.

The Community Safety Partnerships were also discussed along with how they were funded. The prevention of anti-social behaviour, an increase in CCTV provision and tackling fly-tipping was also discussed.

Members noted that a recent recruitment drive had seen a significant increase in the number of police officers, with a focus on specials and PCSO's.

Superintendent Garside, addressed the meeting and spoke about rural crime, partnership priorities, the work being undertaken to raise awareness of domestic violence within communities along with the educational work within schools. She also referred to the two county drug lines within West Oxfordshire and the joint work being undertaken with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to tackle these.

In relation to the questions relating to a 20mph speed limit in areas, Members noted that this was for the local authority to decide and it could be enforced, with speed watch vans available to support this. However, the importance of other measures such as traffic calming methods was highlighted.

The Chair thanked the officers from TVP and the PCC for attending the meeting, especially as some were abroad on leave but had still made time to join the Committee to deliver their presentation.

Following the presentation, Members raised a number of queries including reported incidents of human trafficking, the number of PCSO's on the streets, how Speedwatch was being supported and whether there had been an increase in the use of police helicopters in the area.

It was also noted that in relation to rural domestic violence, no information had been cascaded to the parish councils. Officers agreed to speak to the Community Safety Team as to how this could be improved.

27/January2022

Having received the presentation, the Committee thanked the officers again for their attendance and noted the update.

**Resolved** that the update be noted.

**53 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman confirmed that there was to be an additional Committee meeting set for 10 February 2022.

**54 Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter Two**

The Committee considered the previously circulated report of the Chief Executive, which provided details of the Council's progress towards achieving its aims and priorities set out in the Council Plan 2020-2024, and service performance during Quarter Two.

Councillor Prosser asked for clarification on the figures relating to second homes in the District.

In response to a query from Councillor Poskitt, Mr Hughes provided a definition of the difference between a major and minor planning application.

Councillor Bull raised concerns relating to vulnerable groups and accessibility to book sessions at the Windrush Leisure Centre. She did not feel the booking system was working for disability groups and had raised this with GLL. Councillor Bull felt that, following on from a year affected by Covid, these groups were being discriminated against when they should be encouraged to return to health and wellbeing activities. The Chief Executive proposed that Councillor Bull refer this issue directly to the Council's Leisure Contract Specialist and he could raise it further with GLL.

Councillor Beaney highlighted the difficulties being experienced by the Planning department and whether complaints were being responded to.

Councillor Graham was concerned that there was an unfilled parking enforcement post. He felt that the narrative of Covid was being used too generally and asked to be informed when the post was filled.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the Cabinet

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**55 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)**

Members received a report from the Planning Policy Manager, Chris Hargraves, which asked them to note the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2020-2021, agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

27/January2022

Mr Hargraves introduced the report and advised that this was a summary of the key findings for 2020/21 with the AMR containing the detail.

Queries were raised relating to Biodiversity Net Gain as detailed at paragraph 2.9. Mr Hargraves advised that he did not have the full details, which would be case specific. He offered to respond to Councillor Poskitt after the meeting.

Members discussed the details relating to electric vehicle charging points, flood risk sites and air quality reporting. In response to a query from Councillor Poskitt relating to a Conservation Area Appraisal in Woodstock, Mr Hargraves advised that there had been a change in officer and he would respond directly.

Councillor Collins queried the information contained in the Healthy Towns and Villages section relating to mental health and what the Council was doing to address this. He was advised that Heather McCulloch would be the best person to respond directly.

Councillors also discussed the poverty rates and the matrix used to assess this. The Chief Executive felt that housing costs in West Oxfordshire could be a significant factor but would look into the methodology. Further queries were responded to relating to the West Oxfordshire Business Park, the Mullins project, neighbourhood plans and CIL.

The Chief Executive and Chair thanked Mr Hargraves and his team for the comprehensive report which it was agreed was quite technical but accessible.

The Committee therefore

**Resolved** that the content of the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report be noted.

## **56 Committee Work Programme**

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

Councillor Poskitt raised a concern that scrutiny of the budget by each scrutiny committee had been removed from the process, which she was not happy about. The Chief Executive advised that officers had tried to streamline the rollout of the budget process and would look at how to involve Members more broadly.

Officers advised that the draft budget had been scrutinised by the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny in November and would be considered again prior to Cabinet. All of the papers were available to Councillors and they were welcome to attend other scrutiny committees if they wished.

27/January2022

Councillor Bull asked if Members could be made aware of staff shortages in a timely manner. Councillor Leverton felt this enabled Members to have empathy regarding workloads and ways to communicate vacancies was discussed.

Members noted that officers were producing data on Housing up to the end of March with a view to reporting early in the civic year. The annual update from GLL would be due in July and the Chair was receiving regular updates relating to the Afghan Resettlement Scheme.

Having discussed the matter, it was

**Resolved** that the work programme be updated accordingly.

**57 Cabinet Work Programme**

The Committee received and considered the report from Democratic Services, which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme.

**Resolved** that the report be noted

**58 Members Questions**

There were none.

The Meeting closed at 8.42 pm

CHAIRMAN