

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in the Committee Room 1 at 6.30 pm on **Thursday, 16 March 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Rizvana Poole (Vice-Chair), Jill Bull, Owen Collins, Natalie King, Charlie Maynard, Lysette Nicholls, Rosie Pearson, Alex Wilson, Richard Langridge, Martin McBride, Ruth Smith and Alaric Smith

Officers: Phil Martin (Assistant Director, Business Services), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Kelly Murray (Senior Planning Officer) and Phil Shaw (Business Manager - Development Management), Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer), and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Joy Aitman, Duncan Enright, Geoff Saul, Dan Levy and Mike Cahill

45 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

46 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Luci Ashbourne, Jane Doughty, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, and Harry St John.

Councillor Ruth Smith substituted for Councillor Ashbourne.

Councillor Alaric Smith substituted for Councillor Leffman.

Councillor Martin McBride substituted for Councillor Leverton.

47 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

48 Participation of the Public

There were no participation of the public.

49 Public Houses - Future after closure

Members discussed the Motion Public Houses – Future after Closure Motion response from Chris Hargreaves, and asked when the Local Plan was being reviewed. Frank Wilson the Group Finance Director (Publica) confirmed that the review would not be completed this calendar year. The Motion also involved Planning with view to Policy 5. Frank Wilson believed that Chris Hargreaves would set up sessions for Councillors so they know how the Local Plan review is progressing. Members were keen to ensure that each Public House was dealt with independently and not as a one size fits all solution. Members were also keen to keep them also as a community asset.

Councillor Martin McBride proposed recommendation to Executive that the Motion of Public Houses – Future after Closure is included in the review of the Local Plan, taking account of specific conditions pertaining at the time a Public House closes. This was seconded by Councillor Jill Bull, was voted on and carried. The vote was unanimous.

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Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Recommend to Executive that the Motion of Public Houses – Future after Closure is included in the review of the Local Plan, taking account of specific conditions pertaining at the time a Public House closes.

50 REEMA North update from Jon Wooden

The Committee noted the update but raised concerns that there had been no progress.

The following areas were discussed:

- Empty MOD properties in Carterton;
- Properties being remodelled;
- Escalation of the REEMA North project;
- Options available to the Committee re escalation, request meeting.

Frank Wilson the Group Finance Director (Publica) confirmed these properties were in West Oxfordshire District Council's 5 year land supply, and that the halt in the project was with the Government's Treasury department.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Recommend to the Chief Executive that REEMA North be referred to the Armed Forces Liaison meeting due in September at RAF Brize Norton;
2. Recommend to the Chief Executive to raise with the MP at the next liaison meeting;
3. Move the REEMA North to the Committee Work Programme, to review once an update was available.

51 Enforcement Improvement Programme Update

Phil Shaw Business Manager - Development Management, and Kelly Murray the Principal Planner for Enforcement & Appeals, introduced the slide presentation regarding the Planning Enforcement Update.

The presentation focussed on the following topics:

- Background;
- Timescale;
- Workloads/Structure;
- Challenges;
- Formal Enforcement Action;
- Future Work – Projects/Front End Improvements.

Following the presentation, Phil Shaw and Kelly Murray took questions from Members.

Councillor Charlie Maynard asked about deterrents, and if they had been considered the press, and if there was a visible list that Councillors could check against their ward.

Phil Shaw confirmed that legislation was clear enforcement, and is not a punishment, and it is not a criminal offence. The number of cases were dependant on the stage of the investigation or allegations, and the team were happy to brief Councillors if they were concerned about a particular area.

Councillor Rizvana Poole enquired as to how many complaints there were, and how were West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) were fairing against other local Councils. Kelly

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Murray confirmed that WODC receives on average 10 to 15 complaints per month, which is currently less than Cotswolds and Forest of Dean District Councils. Phil Shaw stated that some cases were easily resolved and that others took longer – it is case by case: there is no real average.

Councillor Ruth Smith enquired on when the new ICT Front End would be available. Phil Shaw explained that due to maternity leave there would be a gap in the project's delivery timeline, but after looking at what was involved he had more confidence to leave it for the best person to deliver the project in full. This was envisaged to be end of summer.

Councillor Lysette Nicholls asked about non ICT users how they would be able to report. Scripts would be issued to Customer Services and they would be able to log the issues for non ICT users, on their behalf. The Chair asked if the Parish Councils would be trained on how to use the ICT front end. Phil Shaw was of the opinion that at the beginning this would not be the case and it is something they could keep in mind for future if there were a requirement.

Kelly Murray explained that one member on the team had a fair amount of experience, and that the remainder were new to the role. Learning on the job was key, as was enthusiasm and planning experience.

Phil Shaw added that the new posts were career graded, which made the posts more attractive by building in the career matrix.

The Chair enquired if the staff were protected enough, Phil Shaw confirmed that measures were in place for staff being out on site. Kelly Murray confirmed that on occasion they hired security, and the Inspectorate often did not allow filming so people were free to talk, it was about planning taking precautions and limiting social media.

The Chair thanked Phil Shaw, Kelly Murray and the Team for the good progress being made.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Enforcement Improvement Programme Update.

52 Service Performance Report 2022/23 - Quarter Two

The Chair advised the Committee that both the Quarter 2 and 3 Performance Reports would be considered together.

Members were concerned about the lack of single occupancy housing, The Group Finance Director agreed that ideally WODC needed more emergency accommodation. A report went to Executive in February allocating funds for 13 – 16 additional housing for refugees, which would add to general housing stock or for emergency needs. The Court House, Horsefair, was a successful conversation for single occupancy units, and the search was on to find suitable further sites.

The Chair enquired if the performance reports had been reduced as the Committee used to receive a bigger pack of data and information.

The Group Finance Director suggested that next committee meeting a full report should be made available, where members could go through and indicate the reports they would require at each quarterly reporting cycle.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Review a full version of data at the next Committee meeting, in the view to revise which data is required to be reported on at each quarters reporting cycle.

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53 Service Performance Report 2022/23 - Quarter Three

Committee noted the Service Performance Report Quarter Three.

Committee Resolved to:

1. Review a full version of data at the next Committee meeting, in the view to revise which data s required to be reported on at each quarters reporting cycle.

54 Committee Work Programme

The Committee discussed the current WODC Housing stock, and asked to know what the issues and problems were. The Chair and Councillor Rizvana Poole confirmed to members that a Housing Working Group had been set up with Caroline Clissold, Jon Dearing the Assistant Director for Resident Services, Leadership and Management Team, and Councillor Geoff Saul the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare. The first meeting had been arranged for end of April, and Councillor Poole would report back to this Committee.

Earlier in the year Cottsway Housing Association had attended Committee to give an update and the Committee discussed extending the invite to another WODC Housing Association.

Councillor Alaric Smith informed the Committee that CIL was also being reviewed at the Audit and Governance Committee. Committee believed that they would like to be briefed on CIL Update.

Members enquired when the Parking Strategy would be ready to review, the Group Finance Director confirmed that the delay had been due to data collection and that it was now due in June.

Members reviewed the Committee Work Programme.

Committee **Resolved** to add the following to the Work Programme.

1. Health Care statistic from Oxfordshire Health Watch;
2. Health and Well Being Board data on medication shortages;
3. Review of Grant Scheme from the Executive Work Programme;
4. Principle Housing information.

Committee further **Resolved** to:

1. Invite Housing Association Members Resolved to invite Housing Association Sovereign to the next committee meeting;
2. Invite Andy Barge to next meeting to have a CCTV update;
3. Members **Resolved** to invite Chris Hargreaves to the next Scrutiny meeting to give an appraisal on CIL;
4. Invite the Police to a future Committee meeting.

55 Executive Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the Executive Work Programme in its current form, and **Resolved** to:

1. Add the "Review Grant Scheme" to the Committee Work Programme;
2. Add "West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Update" to the Committee Work Programme;

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3. Recommend to Executive a change of the wording of the *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy*, to “*Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy*”;
4. Advise the Executive that the transfer of ‘Playing Areas’ to Witney Town Council is a conflict of interest for Councillor Joy Aitman.

56 Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Committee agreed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting for exempt items of business, on the basis that the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighed any public interest in disclosing the information.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting.

57 WODC Refugee Update

The Group Finance Director informed the Committee that the overhead resource for management of refugee dispersal and data collection is not funded from government, and therefore is labour intensive.

Latest Refugee update information:

ASYLUM DISPERSAL

Dispersed Asylum Hotel, Witney:

- Home Office scheme and managed via third party provider;
- Over 200 residents, majority families, small percentage of single adult females and no single adult males;
- Council hold regular meetings with associated agencies such as Police, Health, Education, Asylum Welcome.

Dispersed Asylum HMO, Carterton:

- Home Office oversight;
- Small number of single adult males living independently;
- No Council involvement.

FODDC & CDC

- No properties taken on in Cotswold or Forest of Dean Districts, although there are allocations;
- 2 additional hotels recently opened in Gloucestershire (Gloucester & Cheltenham).

UKRAINE

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	Current Guest Numbers	Current Active Hosts / Households
Cotswold	210	78
Forest	127	51
West Oxfordshire	154	tbc

- Data above is now being reported on current sponsors and guests as many have left the scheme;
- WODC data is being cleansed to enable reporting on current situation;
- 1 family in temporary accommodation for WODC awaiting social housing;
- 1 family in temporary accommodation for FOD hoping to move into private rental in Gloucester;
- 1 family in temporary accommodation for CDC awaiting re-match;
- Local Authority Housing Fund – Expressions of Interest submitted by all 3 districts to enable discussion to evolve with social housing providers. MOU to follow.

AFGHANISTAN

- Mandy Avis, Resettlement Coordinator provides day to day support alongside GARAS;
- 5 families happily settled;
- Working with OCC on 'Find Your Own Accommodation Pathway' .

SYRIA

Nothing to report, families settled.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Refugee Updates;
2. Request that future updates are put in the public domain.

58 Update on Replacement of CCTV Monitoring Control Room Equipment

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the update for the replacement of CCTV;
2. Invite Andy Barge, Assistant Director, Communities to next meeting to provide a CCTV update.

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The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

CHAIR