

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB  
at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 4 December 2024**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Joy Aitman (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Genny Early, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Ruth Smith, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Alex Wilson, David Jackson and Rosie Pearson

Officers: Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Simon Anthony (Business Manager, Environmental Services), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer) Andrew Thomson (Lead Planning Policy & Implementation) and Christine Elsasser (Interim Democratic Services Officer)

Other Councillors in attendance: Lidia Arciszewska and Andy Graham

Guests: Beth Boughton (Manging Director, Ubico) and Mark Heath (Operations Director, Ubico)

#### **67 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugo Ashton, Mike Baggaley, Julian Cooper, Liz Leffman, Dan Levy, Sandra Simpson, Mark Walker.

Councillor David Jackson substituted for Councillor Liz Leffman and Councillor Rosie Pearson substituted for Councillor Sandra Simpson.

Councillor Thomas Ashby left the meeting at 19:12.

Councillor Natalie King left the meeting at 19:20.

#### **68 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members of the Committee.

#### **69 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Councillor Alex Wilson proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 6 November 2024, be approved by the Committee as a true and accurate record.

This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote and it was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2024.

#### **70 Chair's announcements**

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and explained what to do in case of a fire and any further procedure rules.

#### **71 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

**72 Ubico Business Plan 2025-26 (presentation)**

The Managing Director of Ubico provided a Presentation on Business Plan engagement.

A presentation that contained the five pillars on Ubico's business plan engagement was shared and included elements of staff engagement, operational performance goals including benchmarking, reduction of climate emissions, waste reduction measures and business innovation.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- The choice of using HVO as a fossil fuel alternative was an issue that the Council needed to decide.
- The collection of bio-plastics was also a further option for the Council to consider and how to collect these items could be discussed further.
- In terms using proactive measures and emailing the Council to explain why a street was missed during rubbish/recycling collections, the issue would be discussed with Officers as the data did exist but it was a case of how to find an efficient way to get that information through from the Ubico back office and then communicated to the Council.
- Reduction of pesticide usage and targets was again a Council decision and there was ongoing work around looking for partners to see what new alternatives came to the market that could reduce pesticide use.
- Information was provided on cross boundaries for waste/recycle vehicles which was provided in conjunction with Council costs, achievements and performance. Pilot projects were underway to increase information around fleet management and to ensure unit costs/bin etc. could be provided.

Ubico did have staff issues of long term sickness which meant that there were agency staff in place and this created a loss in knowledge at times. To solve the issue, teams were made up of a mixture of experienced and temporary staff. There were not many vacancies; however, Ubico were looking to build a pool of staff to cover holiday and sickness and have spare drivers. The sickness issues were not around work related injuries or work related and were around mental health and stress.

- Changes of bin collection rounds and collection of data were underway and more information would be available in February.
- In terms of emergency plans, areas not provided with service due to acclimate weather conditions were being constantly surveyed to see when access could be provided and service reinstated. Work would be done with Publica colleagues to ensure any areas that consistently encountered issues could be proactively dealt with.
- Glass recycling and heavy bin (due to uncollected bins) communication was mixed and Councillors requested clarity. Ubico would look into this matter. Members welcomed this as there was general confusion around glass recycling and it was confirmed that residents should separate glass from other recycling accordingly in the appropriate collection bin.
- Technology around bar codes was expensive and the INCAB system could provide similar information but it would take longer as it was a manual process. Ubico would take this way and consider possible options.
- Ubico was updated on changing central government regulation and meeting with Officers on a regular basis to discuss what needed to be done.

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RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there would be the following recommendation to the Executive on 11 December 2024:

1. That the Council asks that Ubico reviews its policy on the use of pesticides and herbicides.
2. That the Council asks that Ubico reviews the content of the HVO (hydrogenated vegetable oil) fuel to assess whether it contains palm oil.
3. That the Council asks that Ubico reviews flood support and emergency plans in areas with frequent flooding to address provisions for missed bin collections in the instance of flooding.
4. That the Council considers how it communicates with its residents on how to recycle glass, for instance by including this information in the council tax leaflet.

### **73 Waste Fleet Purchase Delegation**

Simon Anthony, Business Manager, Environmental Services presented the report that was to consider the proposal outlined in the report to procure new waste fleet vehicles and the associated infrastructure for any electric vehicles.

The waste service had thirty-five frontline collection vehicles with most of these approaching the end of their life. The paper asked the Executive to consider the purchase of four vehicle and to delegate the purchase or lease of a further six vehicles. This would make the procurement of the vehicles smoother and would allow for better management of the Council's Capital Programme.

Without reliable replacements, the vehicles, and therefore the service, would become unstable and could result in service disruption and additional costs relating to repairs and maintenance. Waste was the only council provided service that most residents use each week, having an unreliable vehicle fleet will lead to reputational damage and could lead to significant impact on residents.

A Member/Officer Steering Group met on 17 July and determined that the following vehicles are due for renewal:

- 4 x Food Waste Vehicles 7.5te and retain one of the existing fleet as a spare;
- 1 x 7.5te vehicle with bin lift for ultra narrow access collections;
- 2 x 26te vehicles used across both refuse and garden waste collections;
- 3 x supervisor vans.

The depots would also require substantial upgrades to accommodate the capacity for the EVs and the costs of those were outlined to Members.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- As the report had already gone through to Executive, the report was presented to enable full transparency of the delegation of the decision.
- The depot had a fully green tariff and solar panels or renewable energies would be an ideal situation; however, there was limited and restrictive grant funding. The Council would need to decide how far they go with EV usage in future.
- The procurement would begin in the new year and depending on the vehicle, it would be a six-nine month lead time to receiving the vehicle. All vehicles would be owned by the Council and leased to Ubico, which was standard practice. Hydrogen was not currently being considered as an alternative; however, it could be considered in future if available.

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- Supervisors checked missed bins, processed container returns and managed the crews which made them an essential part of the service.
- Members welcomed the phased purchases proposed in the report which made sense to be a delegated decision.
- It was felt that availability of the narrow vehicle was critical and most of the missed bins currently were due to lack of these; Officers confirmed that this was the key focus of the current dashboard.
- Savings were forecast from the tariff information and best available information and was currently marginal.
- New regulations from central government were still be worked out and the vehicles in the report would be needed in all scenarios and a report would come back to the Committee on Waste Strategy at a later date.
- There was a plan to install six EV charge points by Christmas and further works would include the substation and a programme of works, dependent on the purchase of the two HGVs.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there were no recommendations to the Executive on 11 December 2024.

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#### **Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report**

The Lead Planning and Implementation Officer presented the report that considered the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for the period 2024-2025.

Under current planning legislation, the Council was required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The main purpose of the AMR was to monitor the implementation of adopted Local Plan policies but it must also include information on the following:

- Progress of the Local Plan and any other related documents against agreed timetables;
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where this has been introduced;
- And how the Council has fulfilled its obligations under the Duty to Co-Operate.

The AMR must be made available on the Council's website, at its main offices and at any other appropriate locations. The Council's most recently published AMR covered the two-year period 1st April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The new draft AMR for 2023 – 2024 was attached at Annex A and the key points of interest were summarised in Section two of the report and included: Local Plan Progress, Salt Garden Village Area Acton Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbouring Planning, Community Infrastructure Levy, Duty to Co-Operate, Implementation of Local Plan Policies, Overall Strategy, Providing New Homes, Sustainable Economic Growth, Transport and Movement and Environmental and Heritage Assets.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- In table 10, column 2 provided the allocation for the sites and the appeals that were determined which increased the number of dwellings on those sites. Those would be updated on the 5 Year Land Supply Housing Statement. The Local Plan projected the numbers in column 3 were how many were anticipated to have been built on the site.
- Discussion with partners was ongoing around the County Wide Statement on Common Ground.

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- The Heritage at Risk Register information was derived from the Heritage England website would need to be considered when commenting on the suitability of the Botley West Solar Farm.
- It was explained that there had been an imposition on Grampian conditions on new developments coming forward to ensure no dwellings were occupied before the identified sewage treatment works upgrades had been undertaken. The infrastructure required was contained in the infrastructure delivery plan and required partnership working with Thames Water.
- The issue in West Oxfordshire was that allocated larger sites had proved complex and therefore had undermined delivery and trajectory; these were the issues that West Oxford faced and not land banking.
- In regard to issues with sewage and Thames Water, any work would need to be done within the revised Local Plan through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to ensure proactively and resilience with partners. It was also suggested flooding should also be dealt with in a more responsive ways and it was requested that a more concerted effort in the report needed to be included in the report next year. It was also requested that independent assessments from the community could influence a range of indicators and it was confirmed those would be looked at further for the next report.
- It was questioned why sewage was not mentioned as a pollutant and needed to be reflected as a contributor in the report.
- In regards to the Community Infrastructure Levy, a consultation on the draft charging was underway; however, there was no timetable for the examination and without a date programmed for that Officers could not commit to timeline. It was believed it would early next year at the very least.
- The housing supply could be increased through approving more development sites through the Local Plan. There have been some appealed decisions that have granted approval for development. There were some completions due and the position does fluctuate from year to year and positions need to be reviewed regularly.
- In terms of affordable housing, a survey and viability assessment were being undertaken to determine whether the policy would be amended for the district.
- The Strategic Housing Team were working on evidence of the emerging Local Plan and to rebase the requirement and traveller accommodation would be added to the next report.

Thanks were given to Officers for the report by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there were no recommendations to the Executive on 11 December 2024.

## **75 Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two**

The Senior Performance Analyst presented the report that provided details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter Two (Q2).

Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q2 were contained in the report.

The Council Priority highlight report was attached at Annex A with an overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex B.

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Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter had been largely positive, with notable progress in Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days and the percentage of Planning Appeals allowed. Planning Determination Times, Gym Memberships, and Land Charges Response Times remained high. Additionally, Customer Satisfaction continued to be strong, with the Council topping the Gov Metric league table in July and August. However, the Number of Affordable

Homes delivered and Income Achieved in Planning are showing negative trends.

A full report was attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report. As previously agreed, where possible, broader benchmarking had been included in the full performance report to gain a more robust and insightful evaluation of performance. Where benchmarking data was not currently available or outdated, this is noted, and further investigations will be undertaken to look at options.

It was suggested that next time the report was presented in Quarter three, Members could submit questions prior to the meeting.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- It was requested that future benchmarking be done against neighbouring Councils instead of those miles away; it was explained that the reasoning for the Councils chosen were due to using SIPFA guidance as they had pulled together and used over 40 metrics. Others would be added as requested.
- Members suggested that Data Hub be used to draw metrics which were useful. A discussion would take place with the service on this.
- The action tracker was down to Officers to fill in and in regards to what was meant by ongoing procurement an explanation would be provided from the service. An explanation would also be sought on what the ten feedback points were in regards to Parish Councillors.
- Community grants figures needed to be amended to £1000 mark.
- It was requested that EV points and active travel should not be lumped together and that was noted.
- The survey would be asked to confirm if a survey would go out in regards to the phone call service.

The Committee thanked Officers for the report.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there were no recommendations to the Executive on 11 December 2024.

### **76 Report back on recommendations**

The report back on the recommendations from the Executive, from the previous meeting, was noted.

### **77 Committee Work Programme**

The Executive Work Programme was noted.

It was requested that items such as the Ubico report should be Member Briefings in future rather than Overview and Scrutiny presentations.

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**78 Executive Work Programme**

It was noted that the Knight's Court report had been recently delayed and would now come to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at pace with Executive; however, at the time of publication of this agenda that was not known and the current work plan would now reflect the change.

The Meeting closed at 7.39 pm

CHAIRMAN