

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28
1NB at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 8 January 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Joy Aitman (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Mike Baggaley, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Ruth Smith, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Alex Wilson and David Jackson

Officers: Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director for Commercial Development), Murry Burnett (Strategic Housing Officer), Michael David (Housing Delivery Programme Manager) and Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Other Councillors in attendance: Lidia Arciszewska and Geoff Saul

79 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointment

Apologies were received from Councillors Adam Clements and Mark Walker.

Councillor Adrian Wray Arrived partway through the meeting, at 5:38pm.

Councillor Joy Aitman left the meeting early, at 6:40pm

80 Declarations of Interest

In relation to the item on Affordable Housing, Councillor Julian Cooper declared that he was a member of the Lowlands Planning Sub-Committee.

81 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Mike Baggaley stated that he had been missed from the apologies from the previous meeting and asked that this be amended.

Councillor Steve Cosier proposed accepting the minutes with Councillor Baggaley's amendments.

The minutes were seconded by Councillor Poskitt and unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: To agree the the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November.

82 Chair's announcements

The Chair announced that a Survey on the Committee's effectiveness would be sent within the next couple of weeks and asked that all members respond to this when they receive it.

The Chair explained that agenda item 8 would be moved to the end of the meeting.

The Chair also explained that the Sovereign Housing Association had been unable to attend the meeting and stated that the item would be deferred to a future meeting.

83 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

84 Registered Provider Discussion: Sovereign Housing Association

As per the Chair's announcements, the item was deferred and not discussed.

85 Affordable Housing Delivery Update

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on delivery against the corporate priority of delivering more affordable homes across the district, particularly social rented homes. The report sets out key information on the delivery of affordable housing to date and the future plans to intervene in the market in order to boost the supply of social rented accommodation.

Councillor Geoff Saul, the Executive Member for Housing and Social Care Cabinet Member for introduced the item, highlighting the following;

- The Council was forecast to deliver 240 socially rented homes between June 2024 to December 2025.
- 162 units were within pipeline for completion
- Social housing was priced at a substantially reduced rate of generally around 50-60% compared to the average market rate

The Executive Member asked the Housing Delivery Programme Manager to speak on the item. The Housing Delivery Programme Manager provided an overview of the report and explained that the Council was working with a range of registered providers to deliver socially rented accommodation.

Members of the Committee discussed the report, raising the following points of discussion and clarification;

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- The affordability of rented properties was discussed, with specific reference being made to Carterton. The Housing Delivery Programme Manager explained that for the purpose of calculating affordability, housing should not make up more than a third of income. With reference to the specific example in Carterton, a detailed written response would be provided.
- Problems with water pressure had caused issues for residents in Carterton who were due to move into new homes on the Miller Homes estate. The officers explained that this was a known issue that Thames Water were dealing with. The Member who raised the issue was asked to put the question in writing so that officers could respond.
- The Woodford Way site was owned by the Council and allocated in the local plan but had not been delivered yet. The Executive Member explained that a number of options had been brought forward and though the project was progressing, it was complex due to issues such as parking.
- Land Value Capture had been used successfully by other authorities. The Executive Member stated the Council could explore this option.
- The situation around affordable housing was recognised as a crisis in the report and it was stated that the target around temporary housing should be amended to reflect this.

Councillor Andrew Beaney proposed that the report be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny recommend that the Council's target on an additional 30 bedspaces within the district to clarify that the target is for the current financial target and to emphasise that the Council's priority is to keep families together and in the district.

Councillor Ruth Smith seconded the proposal.

The Committee voted on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the update
2. Recommended to the Executive that the Council's target on providing a minimum of 30 temporary accommodation bed spaces is amended to clarify that the target is for the current financial year and to emphasise that the Council's priority is to keep families together and in the district

The Chair explained that the report contained an exempt annex and that if the Committee wished to discuss this it would need to resolve to go into a private session.

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The purpose of the item was to update the Committee on the review of the waste and environmental services contract with Ubico and to outline the proposed Oxfordshire Waste and Environmental Services (WESP) Transformation Programme

At the Chair's discretion, this item was taken as the last one on the agenda.

Lidia Arciszewska The Executive member for the Environment introduced the item, and explained that;

- In partnership with Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council, The Council had commissioned Activist to undertake a review of options for these services. Having already worked together to complete a dry mixed recycling procurement project, the three councils had common goals and could work together to achieve this at scale.
- What was proposed was an extensive transformation project which would achieve economies of scale.
- The contract for waste and recycling collection with Ubico was due to expire in March 2026 and the Council was seeking to extend it to 2027.

The Public Assistant Director for Commercial Development provided an overview of the work, explaining that the project tied in to Government proposals intended to simplify waste collection and opportunities which would be provided by devolution.

Members of the Committee discussed the report, raising the following points of discussion and clarification;

- The report highlighted that the cost of waste collection across the County was very high and welcomed the proposals for their ability to save money.
- The Public Assistant Director explained that the Council had been awarded an Extended Producer Responsibility Grant, which would likely be ringfenced to pay for costs such as commissioning and secondment associated with the work.
- Simpler recycling was a separate work stream and it was important to get it right so that residents would understand changes.
- The figures on page 64 related to annual returns provided by local authorities.

Councillor Liz Leffman proposed noting the report, welcoming the proposals and this proposal was seconded by Councillor Nick Leverton.

The recommendation was voted on and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

87 Report back on recommendations

The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services explained that the recommendations made by the Committee at the previous meeting had been considered by the Executive, and that the Executive had resolved to defer the recommendations to the meeting in March, when they were due to consider the Ubico business plan.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the response

88 Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered the work plan. The Chair proposed the following amendments;

- Community Safety Partnership item from March to April's meeting.
- Supporting Market Towns be removed as there would be a Member briefing on this instead.

The Committee agreed to the changes unanimously.

Resolved: To note the work programme

89 Executive Work Programme

In discussing this, it was mentioned that the Executive report on affordable housing had a recommendation to note and that the Committee's time might be better spent on pre-decision scrutiny. The Chair explained that this could be considered in the survey feedback.

90 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Committee did not resolve to exclude the press and public.

91 Waste and Environmental Services Review - Exempt Annex A

This was not discussed.

The Meeting closed at 7.15 pm

CHAIR