

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 5 July 2022

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Committee members present:

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| Councillor Snowton (Chair) | Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair) |
| Councillor Altaf-Khan (substitute for Councillor Roz Smith) | Councillor Arshad |
| Councillor Bely-Summers | Councillor Hunt (substitute for Councillor Corais) |
| Councillor Jarvis | Councillor Mundy |
| Councillor Pegg | Councillor Rowley |

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer
Lucy Tyrrell, Committee and Member Services Officer
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator
Vikki Robins, Project Manager - Innovation

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Councillors Corais, Coyne, Roz Smith and Tidball.
Substitutes are shown above.

12. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

13. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting, noting it was his first meeting as Chair of the new Committee. Lucy Tyrrell, Committee and Member Services Officer was welcomed to her first meeting supporting the Committee.

14. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 as a true and accurate record.

15. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Plan. It was **agreed** that the meeting scheduled for August would go ahead and the Committee would consider the following reports:

- Procurement Strategy 2022-25 – subject to Cabinet Member availability
- Asset Management Strategy 2022-2031

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Scrutiny Work Plan. The Committee was advised that an extraordinary Scrutiny Committee meeting was required in September in order for the Committee to consider a report on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The Committee agreed the proposed date of 27 September 2022, 6pm for an extraordinary meeting.

The Committee reviewed the Work Plan and agreed to add the following Scrutiny-commissioned items for 2022-23:

- Covered Market Site Visit
- Water quality in the Waterways

The Committee requested that the Scrutiny Officer schedule the items into the Work Plan as appropriate.

The following regular/standard items for Scrutiny (based on previous years) were **agreed**:

- Climate Emergency Review Group Update
- Tourism Review Group Update
- Domestic Abuse Review Group Update

In addition to the Scrutiny Work Plan, it was noted that the currently established Standing Panels would consider the following:

- Finance and Performance Panel:
 - Scrutiny-commissioned performance reports
 - Social value/impact in procurement
 - Integrated performance reports
- Housing & Homelessness Panel
 - Housing performance reports
 - Tenants Forum

16. Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report

Cllr Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, introduced the report which updated on the progress made on Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan 2021/22. She thanked Officers for their hard work behind the scenes, especially in these challenging times.

She highlighted the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements which ensured the delivery of safeguarding across the County in conjunction with partners and drew particular attention to the following:

- The work done by Oxford City Council ensuring free school meals were provided for those that are eligible, and continued delivery of these over the school holidays, supporting the most vulnerable residents.
- The impact on mental health concerns caused by social isolation and people struggling with bereavement and loneliness due to COVID-19.
- Council staff engaging with and supporting the recommendations from the recent 'Jacob' serious case review and participation in work streams highlighted within the report.
- The implementation of the Community Food System supporting food banks, community food larders and local community fridges, working with Good Food Oxford to set up the City Community Food network within the City.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, advised the Committee that this was a safeguarding report rather than a policy, and highlighted that the Council had achieved a 'best practice' finding for the fifth consecutive year, of which staff should be congratulated. He emphasised the increase in referrals to MyConcern, partly borne out of better reporting tools in place, however COVID-19 and the wider economic challenges were also considered a contributory factor.

In discussion, the Committee noted:

- The Council was committed to extending the twinning arrangements with other Oxford colleges and local schools.
- Safeguarding training was undertaken by all those working with children - quality assurance and an annual safeguarding self-assessment was undertaken to ensure full oversight.
- Mandatory safeguarding training covered adults as well as children; the Council had safeguarding champions in dedicated areas of knowledge to support with concerns raised.
- There had been an increase in children placed on protection plans, and there was multi-agency support for families to address this.
- Home based working may have contributed to higher levels of mental health issues, however the Council was following up from staff engagement surveys to address these findings.
- County commissioned community groups were required to hold safeguarding policies, which were monitored through quarterly reviews.
- The Council donated laptops through the Oxfordshire Community Foundation scheme to children home schooled during the pandemic, which enabled interventions to take place and supported learning, however, this highlighted a lack of digital inclusion of which the County and City Councils were reviewing.
- Training in digital safeguarding was undertaken by the Children's Board, however Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator advised that further information on this would have to be sought from the County Council.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

1. That the Council works with Oxfordshire County Council and other local organisations to ensure that digital inclusion and digital safeguarding are covered in safeguarding training.

17. Oxford City Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport introduced the report which set out the Council's approach to ensuring a robust, quality and equitable deployment of charging infrastructure across the city. The Council had set out a road map and action plan to become a net zero Council by 2030, and had set out a framework for delivering electric vehicle infrastructure, with the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership, to reach a target of net zero carbon emissions for Oxford by 2040 or earlier.

Cllr Upton highlighted the opening of the new superhub at Redbridge, with capacity for charging 400 vehicles and the trademarked GUL-e initiative by the ODS Group, which were potential income generating streams. The Council did not have funding in its Forward Plan to provide public EV charging infrastructure, and would be looking to government grants.

Vikki Robins, Project Manager – Innovation gave the Committee an explanation of the dynamic purchasing system and its benefits. She also provided the Committee with the positive results of the public consultation which sought to provide information on the Council's approach to driving forward its electric vehicle infrastructure strategy.

During discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- The public consultation stretched across organisations, including the taxi community, small business enterprise and inclusive transport groups. Whilst the Project Manager – Innovation did not have the data regarding response rate from ethnic minorities, this information could be sought for the Committee.
- Ebikes used three pin plug in and were not compatible with charging points across the city. They were part of active transport delivery solutions that the Council was working on, and were not included in the scope of the strategy.
- Work was taking place to give better accessibility to disabled road users and the Council was working with Motability to facilitate this.
- Pre-work was being undertaken with the Planning Department regarding the placement of charging points in households to be able to give assurances during the planning process.
- Reliability of chargers had been a challenge, however the dynamic purchasing system would address some of these issues with service level agreements, contract take-overs and breaches of contract, giving a more reliable service.
- Work was being undertaken with bus companies, supporting them to run their services more profitably and enabling them to provide more bus services for residents, however the Council recognised the impact of rising bus prices.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council explores setting a requirement for large housing developments to have electric vehicle charging spaces which are allocated exclusively for car clubs, in addition to electric vehicle charging spaces available for private cars.
2. That the Council reviews the projected uptake figures for electric vehicles contained in the strategy to ensure they are realistic; namely
 - a. Ensuring that the projected figures take into account the later 2035 phase-out date of some non-plug-in hybrids (which are not considered EVs by the strategy), and
 - b. Checking the very high near-term EV uptake that would be required to hit any of the given 2026 targets.

3. That the Council explores ways in which it could incentivise local organisations, businesses and partners to ensure that any electric vehicle charging infrastructure provided by them is reliable and in a good state of repair.

18. Growth Fund Cycle Routes

Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval of the variations to cycle route schemes which were undeliverable (variations agreed with Oxfordshire County Council under Section 10 of the Agreement). This followed a funding agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver city cycling schemes at Cuckoo Lane, Marsh Lane, Marston Road and Boundary Brook. The variations had been negotiated to ensure deliverable schemes within the requirements of the funding agreement.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- The scheme did not allow funding for lighting of the cycleways.
- The Cuckoo Lane scheme would not go ahead due to implications with Oxford Brookes.
- The scheme was from Growth Deal funding to develop off road cycle routes and therefore could not be utilised for safer cycling on city roads, however this was an area for development that was being reviewed separately.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council ensures all communications setting out the changes to the cycle route plans have clear messaging and explain the rationale behind the changes.
2. That the Council ensures that Vision Zero is highlighted in its public communications, where appropriate, to ensure awareness.

19. Standing Panel and Review Group Arrangements 2022/23

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which asked the Committee to agree the standing panel and review group arrangements for the 2022/23 municipal year, following the Committee's agreement to its Operating Principles for 2022/23 at the meeting of 8 June 2022.

The Committee **resolved to:**

1. Agree to establish a Climate & Environment Panel, noting that the remit, proposed business and meeting dates will be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting. Defer agreement of a Chair (or lead member) for the Climate & Environment Panel to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.
2. Agree the membership level (4) of the Climate & Environment Panel and invite nominations for membership from political groups, to be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.
3. Agree to establish a Budget Review Group, comprising the membership of the Finance & Performance Panel, noting that the proposed scope will be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.
4. Agree that the Chair of the Finance & Performance Panel will Chair the Budget Review Group.
5. Suggest topics for an additional review group focused on a priority topic of the Committee's choosing.

20. Reports for approval

The Committee **approved** the following report for submission to Cabinet:

- Oxford Waterways Project Update

21. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations presented by the Scrutiny Officer:

- Oxford Economic Strategy – Consultation Report and Recommendations
- City Centre Action Plan (Draft) – Consultation Report and Recommendations

The Committee requested that the Scrutiny Officer explore how recommendations made in relation to reports that were considered by the Committee on an annual basis (e.g. Council Tax Reduction Scheme) could be tracked going forward to check that recommendations that were accepted by Cabinet were carried forward year-on-year and not just on a one-off basis. This would avoid the same recommendations being made by the Committee each year.

The Committee **noted** the report.

The Chair of the Companies Scrutiny Panel gave feedback to the Committee on the Shareholders and Joint Venture Group meeting held on 22 June 2022. He reported that it was a useful meeting, with ample opportunity for scrutiny and he offered to provide a more detailed update at the next meeting.

22. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm

Chair
2022

Date: Tuesday 2 August

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.