

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Monday 7 November 2022

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton (Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Corais

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Pegg

Councillor Hunt (for Councillor Railton)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Bely-Summers

Councillor Coyne

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Pressel (for Councillor Diggins)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Arome Agamah, Senior Planner

Tom Morris, Principal Planner

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Annette Osbourne, Procurement Manager

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Delivery

Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management)

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing

Apologies:

Councillors Diggins and Railton sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

48. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

49. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

50. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 as a true and accurate record.

51. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee **noted** the Forward Plan.

The Committee reviewed the Work Plan and **confirmed** its agreement to consider the following reports at future meetings:

- December Cabinet reports
 - Thriving Communities Strategy
 - Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24
 - Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021
 - Workplace Equalities and Action Plan

52. West End and Osney Mead SPD

With the agreement of the Committee, Agenda Item 8 was taken prior to the following items in the agenda.

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery introduced the report which asked Cabinet to consider the public comments made to the Draft West End Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the proposed changes in response, and then to adopt the revised SPD and supporting documents. He drew the Committee's attention to the report which highlighted that the SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of any planning application made on sites in the West End, as per the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (paragraph 8(3)) which states that '*Any policies contained in a supplementary planning document must not conflict with the adopted development plan*'. The purpose and status of the SPD would be to provide further detail and advice on the implementation of existing adopted policies.

Tom Morris, Principal Planner, provided further information on the purpose and status of the SPD and highlighted the particular policies of importance in the West End, and drew attention to the fourth recommendation which sought Cabinet approval for the revocation of the Oxpens Masterplan SPD and Oxford Station SPD which would take place following the adoption of this SPD.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- Planning policies are contained within the Local Plan, the purpose of the SPD would be to show in greater detail how these would be applied in the local area.
- The individual strategies within the SPD and the spatial framework form the key principles and any submitted application would be required to show how their proposals address these specific strategies.
- The strategies are underpinned by three golden threads of sustainability (including reducing and adapting to climate change), social value and the economy. It includes building an inclusive economy on the route to zero carbon, and would need to be addressed as a key principle of those strategies as part of any planning application.

- Whilst planning decisions are often subject to different views, subjective decision making should be allowed for reasonable decisions be taken during the application process.
- The formal period of six weeks for public consultation was extended to seven weeks to ensure adequate time for responses, of which a positive number were received. However each individual response was considered and given the same weight.
- Housing numbers are set out in the adopted Local Plan and were based on the capacity of site and potential for delivery and tested at the Local Plan hearings, the SPD would not change those policies.
- Bus only routes have not been identified for requirement by Oxfordshire County Council, however there are opportunities for routes to be extended to Osney Mead, with layover opportunities within the site.
- Car sharing could be incorporated within a travel minimisation plan as part of Oxfordshire County Council's Active Travel Plan.
- Biodiversity was maintained and enhanced through the adopted Local Plan, and any proposals would need to demonstrate those proposals.
- A list of indicative infrastructure projects was contained within the spatial framework, which provided a realistic impression of those schemes, supported by an infrastructure delivery plan which provides greater up to date certainty for costing and resources.
- Details regarding the OxWED site planning application would be picked up as part of the planning application and would not form part of this document.
- Whilst these developments are in proximity to Osney Mead, the development sites would not be accessible from Osney Mead.
- Any new Local Plan would make reference to this SPD to ensure it would remained a material consideration.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council gives consideration to making clearer the relationship between this SPD, the development of future Local Plans, and future iterations of the Local Plan within the document.
2. That the Council considers whether a second phase of engagement and consultation would be of benefit and how such a phase might connect with tenants in the community.
3. That the Council reports on progress in discussions with the Environment Agency on the 'blue network' and on the opening up of the Environment Agency depot and, also, to setting out the agency's formal responses, if any, thus far.
4. That the Council clarifies within the document that activation of the riverside edge need not mean the site is no longer predominantly green.
5. That the Council includes reference to car clubs and shared cars under the Movement Strategy within the SPD.
6. That the Council gives consideration to referencing the importance for improved connectivity of the path along the River Thames that leads north to Gibbs Crescent and to Mill Street.
7. That the Council provides a progress update on the feasibility of opening up Osney Abbey and Osney Mill Cottage.

53. Procurement Strategy 2022-2025

Cllr Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for a three year Corporate Procurement Strategy for the Council. He further highlighted that central ambitions of the Council, to add value to the local economy, reduce carbon footprint and support local skills, are addressed through this strategy, whilst ensuring best value and practice.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The strategy had been developed as an external document, rather than a working document for Council employees, and any recommendations on specific requirements would be considered.
- Whilst the Council is committed to delivering ethical and sustainable objectives in the international element of its supply chains, this is not explicitly referred to within the strategy.
- The Council works with its partners through the Oxford Economic Strategy to promote and encourage them to embrace similar policies to the Council, good progress has been made, and this work would continue.
- The Council was committed to not working with companies that do not utilise good employment practices, including fire and rehire, and whilst this was documented under the terms and conditions of this document, did not sit within the strategy.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council gives consideration to exploring how it could work with independent labour monitoring organisations to ensure the international elements of supply chains are monitored, specifically relating to human rights and labour rights.
2. That the Council gives consideration to referring explicitly in the strategy to the Council's commitment to delivering ethical and sustainable objectives in the international elements of its supply chains.
3. That the Council gives consideration to adopting an ethical code of conduct for the purposes of contracts, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative's base code.
4. That the Council gives consideration to how, through the strategy and more widely, the Council can promote its commitment to, and encouragement of, partner organisations adopting the Oxford Living Wage.
5. That the Council gives consideration to referencing the discouragement of Fire and Rehire in the strategy, as part of the commitment to good quality employment practices.
6. That the Council gives consideration to promoting trade union recognition within the social value element of the strategy.

54. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for Oxford City Council's submission of a bid to Government under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund 2.1 bidding round to seek funding towards a retrofit programme for around 300 council houses. Cllr Smith highlighted that this would be welcomed external funding that would support delivery of the retrofit programme. As part of the shared Tenant Involvement Strategy, a tenant ambassador had been involved as a member of the Programme Board overseeing development of the bid, ensuring a stronger bid, and better engagement for completion on works in Council properties.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, highlighted that approximately 300 properties would be developed, which would calculate as two third's cost to the Council, and to maximise resources would be grouped by property type and localised geographies.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The bid was focused on retrofit for houses only, which are not subject to the same complexities as leasehold properties.
- Learning achieved from successful outcomes from this programme would put the Council in a positive situation for future bids, however this would not be possible without government funding.
- Whilst this was not match funding, it was available government funding which would be beneficial to support the programme.
- Households chosen were of a similar type and geographical adjacent to ensure enhanced resources are employed to maximise the number of retrofits delivered.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

1. That the Council gives consideration to setting out the reasoning for targeting according to type of housing rather than financial need of tenants and whether this is likely to be the case in the future.

55. Climate and Environmental Panel

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which recommended to the Committee, proposals relating to the consultation of the Climate and Environmental Panel to the Standing Committee.

The Committee were resolved to:

1. Agree the remit, proposed business, and meeting dates of the Climate and Environment Panel as set out in the report;
2. Agree a Chair (or lead member) for the Climate and Environment Panel.
3. Receive nominations for membership from political groups and agree the membership of the Climate and Environment Panel (4 members).

In response to the second recommendation above, the Committee were in agreement with Cllr Jemima Hunt nominated as Chair, voted on and approved at the Committee.

In response to the third recommendation above, the Committee were in agreement with the following membership; Cllr Katherine Miles, Cllr Emily Kerr, Cllr Jemima Hunt and Cllr Paula Dunne.

56. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Development Brief for Botley Road Retail Park
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan
- Draft Housing, Homelessness, and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation

The Committee noted that since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting, no standing panels have met as the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 3 November had been rescheduled to 30 November 2022.

57. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 8.00 pm

Chair
2022

Date: Monday 5 December

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.