

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 1 February 2023

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton (Chair)	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Corais	Councillor Coyne
Councillor Jarvis	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Pegg	Councillor Rowley
Councillor Fry (for Councillor Diggins)	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Sarah Harrison, Planning Policy Team Leader
Rachel Williams, Planning Policy Place Manager
Emma Gubbins, Corporate Assets Lead
Ted Maxwell, Economy, City Centre and Green Transport Lead
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer
Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery
Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships

Apologies:

Councillors Diggins and Hunt sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

76. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

77. Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that the vacancy on the Committee would be filled following the by-election.

The following were elected on being proposed, seconded and put to the vote:

- Cllr Snowton to replace Cllr Landell-Mills on the Finance and Performance Panel.
- Cllr Miles to replace Cllr Landell-Mills on the Companies Scrutiny Panel.

78. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 as a true and accurate record.

79. 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:

- March Cabinet reports
 - Annual update of the Council's Business Plan
 - Integrated Care Strategy Update
 - Integrated Performance Report for Q3 2022/23

80. Oxford Local Plan 2040 Focused Consultation on Housing Need

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery presented the report which requested Cabinet approval for the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Housing Numbers Consultation Document (Regulation 18 part 2) for consultation. The document supplemented the Preferred Options Consultation that had taken place in autumn 2022 with additional evidence about housing need and Cllr Hollingsworth provided an explanation of such to the Committee.

Rachel Williams, Planning Policy Place Manager, provided the Committee with information regarding the consultation process that would be followed, and a brief overview of the documentation circulated.

Cllr Corais joined the meeting.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Rachel Williams and Sarah Harrison, Planning Policy Team Leader, answered questions as follows:

- Evidence gathered from this consultation would be required to support the Oxford Local Plan as the Preferred Options document had only discussed housing need in general terms.
- The standard method within the document utilised 2014 household projections under current government guidelines.
- HENA not only looked at housing need for Oxfordshire, but also how it could be distributed back to the constituent parts of the Authorities. The Oxfordshire Plan would have contained this spatial information, however without this information, data regarding distribution of jobs as a logical formula to test this data had been used.
- Step trajectory allowed for a realistic measure against the housing delivery test.
- A joint consultation would take place with the other districts on gypsy and traveller accommodation and inform the policies in the Oxford Local Plan 2040.
- A separate study would take place for student accommodation which would be separate to the census information.
- There was not much scope for utilisation of elderly person's accommodation due to the conditions of these properties and suitability of type.
- The downside of using the standard method was highlighted, which would not show densification, which could lead to overcrowding within the city.

- Assumptions had to be made using 2011 data to calculate the number of commuters coming into the city.

The Committee made no recommendations to Cabinet on this report.

81. Site visit to Covered Market

The Committee had before them a report from the Scrutiny Officer detailing the site visit to the Covered Market undertaken by members of the Committee in September 2022.

The Committee **noted** the report and did not make any recommendations.

82. Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

The Committee, on the understanding that no discussion involving Appendices 3 and 6 of the following item could be discussed in public session did not wish to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding or following agenda item, and was therefore not necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

83. Implementing the Covered Market 'Masterplan'

Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, presented the report which sought Cabinet approval to fund and enter into contracts for the detailed design works, planning and construction of major improvements to the Covered Market in line with the recently completed masterplan. She thanked those Councillors who had recently attended the site visit to the Covered Market.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- There was no fixed footfall increase baked into the plan, however Appendix 2 outlined the business case which included the changes and predicted impact on footfall.
- The design stage shown was at concept stage only and did not detail the accessibility of the toilets, other than they would be accessible to all genders.
- The current number of vacant units had not changed since the site visit to the Covered Market, however the ownership of some units had changed. The Council works closely with its traders to ensure like for like replacements, in line with the Council's Covered Market strategy.
- The Masterplan will help significantly to enforce Oxfordshire County Council's regulations, thereby reducing issues with accessibility.
- The use of two free electric delivery vehicles has been received well, and was being supported by Pedal and Post to alleviate traders' staffing restrictions.
- An events programme was being developed with the Tap Social, and would be aimed at all sectors of the community, in line with the Covered Market strategy.

- The Council aimed to continue its tradition for encouraging independent traders with both the use of ‘pop up shops’ utilising smaller units. The Masterplan had developed this further with the new pop up areas and outdoor market area to encourage more independent trade.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation on the report for Cabinet:

1. That the Council considers the provision of gender-neutral lavatories in its plans for when the public lavatories at the Covered Market are improved.

84. Reports for Approval

The Scrutiny Committee passed a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the press and members of the public on the grounds that Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate’s Oxford OX1 1BX their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cllr James Fry, Chair of the Budget Review Group 2023/24 presented the report and outlined the recommendations. Discussions were held in private session and the Committee **agreed** the recommendations that should be made to Cabinet, and to delegate authority to the Scrutiny Officer to make minor editorial revisions as necessary.

85. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

None received.

86. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.55 pm

Chair

Date: Monday 6 March 2023

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.