

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 18 January 2022



Committee members present:

Councillor Wade (Chair)	Councillor Chapman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Corais	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Dunne	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Smowton	Councillor Tidball
Councillor Thomas	Councillor Waite
Councillor Wolff	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Rose Dickinson, Carbon Reduction Team Manager
Annette Osborne, Procurement Manager
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer
Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader; Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford

Apologies:

None.

79. Declarations of interest

Cllr Linda Smith declared an interest in relation to the Procurement Update item on the agenda. She advised that she was a Trustee of RAW Workshop in Blackbird Leys, a social enterprise which frequently responded to tenders from Oxford City Council.

80. Chair's Announcements

The Committee agreed to take agenda item 6, Climate Emergency Review Group Updates immediately after agenda item 3, Chair's Announcements and then return to the items as listed.

The Chair:

- Referenced the procedure note about virtual meetings, which the Committee received before the meeting.

- Highlighted that the meeting was an informal remote meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and was not being held as a committee meeting under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.
- Welcomed Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Officer, who was clerking the meeting.

Following a request from the Scrutiny Officer, the Committee agreed to allow substitutes to attend the Child Poverty Review Group.

81. Climate Emergency Review Group Updates

Cllr Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford introduced the report and highlighted that the Zero Carbon Action Plan was a coproduced document which included the accepted recommendations of the Climate Emergency Review Group.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy added that the Action Plan was published in March 2021 and was a living document mostly comprised of a RAG rating tracker. The Committee was informed of the intention for the Action Plan to be updated and submitted to Cabinet for consideration later in 2022.

Cllr Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini and Cllr Tiago Corais joined the meeting.

The Committee raised a number of points in relation to the Action Plan, including around:

- *Cycle greenways into the city* - in response to questions, Cllr Hayes explained that they were part of the overall Council strategy but that there was limited resource that needed to be allocated to other priorities where it would have most impact, including ZEBRA and the Bus Prioritisation Plan. The Head of Corporate Strategy added that the County Council was the overall lead for cycleways and had diverted funding to emergency transport issues (e.g. quietways) during the pandemic.
- *Biodiversity Officer* - the Head of Corporate Strategy confirmed that Tristan Carlyle had taken up post so there was a added resource for taking forward the biodiversity actions and consideration could be given to taking forward additional recommendations on biodiversity that were not originally included in the Action Plan.
- *Definition of net zero* - the Committee said it would be helpful to have a clear definition of what was and was not included in the Council's definition of net zero in order to avoid confusion. Cllr Hayes agreed. Rose Dickinson, Carbon Reduction Team Manager advised that the definition of net zero was the subject of a report to Cabinet in December 2021.
- *RAG rating* - concerns were raised that the RAG rating was overly generous and did not reflect the gap in resources required to undertake much of the work. It was added that some of the timescales in the Action Plan appeared ambitious. The Committee was advised that the RAG rating had been done as objectively as possible and in some cases strategy or a plan had been delivered rather than actions.
- *Fleet vehicles* - Cllr Hayes advised that currently there is no budget to go above 25% decarbonisation but that he hoped that the City's record of ambition would attract additional investment.
- *Retrofit* - in response to questions, Cllr Hayes confirmed that Government measures prevented any increase being imposed on rent to lever funds for retrofits.

- *New residential buildings* - Cllr Hayes advised that the consultants that were commissioned to conduct condition surveys for the Council's whole commercial portfolio had been disengaged as they could not meet the timescales. He added that the new timescales were not yet known.
- *Equalities impact* - concerns were raised about the fact that the equalities impact section in the report was not good enough and there was no mention of disability within the report. It was requested for issues of equalities and in particular disability to be taken much more seriously and embedded much earlier on. Cllr Hayes agreed to take that point back and ensure it was reflected in future reports. In response to questions, the Head of Corporate Strategy confirmed that the membership of the Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change was representative and that there was a report on this that he could share. It was added that the Council was still engaged with the Citizens Assembly and it had supported a fair amount of work, particularly around retrofit.
- *Landlord and tenant engagement* - in response to questions about being unable to engage with landlords and tenants due to capacity, the Head of Corporate Strategy confirmed that this would be picked up this year. He advised there was an action plan but it needed an overarching strategy/roadmap above it. Cllr Hayes added that a pack was due to be agreed at the end of the month to send to commercial and new landlords about reducing their carbon footprint.

Cllr Hayes, the Head of Corporate Strategy and the Carbon Reduction Team Manager left the meeting and did not return.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet that:

- The Council works with the County Council to prioritise the delivery of cycle greenways into the City which were paused owing to Covid.
- The Council provides a clear definition of the assumptions and definitions it is applying when referencing net zero in strategies and other documents.
- When the Council next updates its Zero Carbon Action Plan it provides, where possible, clarity over how far existing, allocated resources are expected to move the Council towards each goal.
- The Council makes greater efforts to ensure that climate policies are disability inclusive, including involving disability groups at the earliest stage.

82. Minutes

The following amendment was requested to minute 71:

“Projections of the age profile of the City’s residents were taken account of in preparing the future housing requirements in the Local Plan.”

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 08 December 2021 as a true and accurate record, subject to the above change.

83. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee reviewed the Work Plan and confirmed the following changes:

- Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – delayed for an unspecified period of time
- Safeguarding Update – deferred to April
- Business Plan – brought forward to March

The Chair highlighted concerns around the Oxfordshire 2050 and not having the opportunity to make recommendations at the Regulation 18 stage previously. The Committee wanted to ensure it had the opportunity to make recommendations at the Regulation 19 stage and asked the Scrutiny Officer to monitor when the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 came forward to the other District Scrutiny Committees to ensure it could be dovetailed. It was also noted that no feedback had been received from the points raised with Cllr Hollingsworth and Adrian Arnold and the Committee agreed to ask the question when the two were next in attendance.

84. Procurement Update

Annette Osborne, Procurement Manager introduced the report and explained that the Procurement Strategy had been sent out to the majority of Service Areas within the Council for their input and this was an opportunity for the Committee to recommend any considerations that it wished to be taken into account during the update process. She highlighted that a number of amendments were proposed to bring the strategy up to date, including around:

- Embedding Social Value within commissioning and procurement decisions
- Tailoring the national TOMs (themes, outcomes, measures) Measurement Framework into a model that works locally - OxTOMs.
- Taking into account environmental impact
- Strengthening GDPR within the strategy
- Contract management
- Fostering an inclusive economy and Community Wealth Building

The Committee raised a number of points, including around:

- *Social Value* - in response to questions, the Procurement Manager confirmed that the definition of Social Value would not be too prescriptive but would reflect the current description. She confirmed that there would be engagement with suppliers and this piece of work would be undertaken as part of the OxTOMs work.
- *% weightings in evaluation* - the Committee was interested in the 10% weighting given to Social Value considerations during the tender process and whether there was reporting/monitoring information to reveal how often the 10% weighting was outweighed by other factors. Questions were also raised about the circumstances under which the % weightings might be increased or decreased for specific tenders, particularly in relation to how environmental and social harm/value were weighed up. The Procurement Manager was proposing to strengthen the environmental aspect within the Strategy update and advised that each tender had a different set of questions depending on the context of the tender. The Procurement Manager agreed to share the environmental questions asked in the last five big tenders with Cllr Imogen Thomas and outline how they impacted the procurement process.
- *Suppliers* - the Committee noted that suppliers named in the Strategy document included the likes of 'Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation' and 'Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation', which were not local to Oxfordshire. The Procurement Manager explained that the two organisations named were buying organisations which could present a quicker route to market.
- *Partnership working* - in response to questions, the Committee was advised that conversations were being held with the local universities and councils around how they could work better together, but that this was a challenge due to the different organisations managing procurement in different ways.

- *BAME/Women-led SMEs* - the Procurement Manager confirmed that the aim to support BAME/Women-led SMEs in order to tackle under-representation in specific service sectors referenced in the original Strategy had been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Oxford Living Wage* - the Committee noted that OCC and ODSL both scored '0' on 'Support Oxford Living Wage'. The Procurement Manager confirmed that both organisations support the Oxford Living Wage in their contracts.
- *Community Wealth Building* - in response to questions, the Procurement Manager confirmed that her team was working on bringing local anchor institutions together and that the Council had put a big emphasis on doing this.
- *Greenwashing* - in response to questions, the Procurement Manager highlighted that when the Council became aware of suppliers making undesirable investments (e.g. Supporting war, oppression, or climate offences through investment) it would investigate, but that there was no resource within the whole supply chain management process to audit every supplier's investments. The Committee said that the Council should push for ambitious change of its Community Wealth Building approach.
- *OCC Companies* - following questions, the Procurement Manager advised that ODS had its own procurement system but that OCC currently did all of the buying for OCHL. It was added that in some circumstances, OCC went out to market for the Council and its entities if it had agreement from the companies (e.g. It was about to go out to tender for a lone worker solution which the Council and its entities all needed).
- *Values* - the Committee raised that it felt values should always come first before profit during the procurement process within Council companies.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet that:

- The Council monitors and reports on how often social value weightings change procurement outcomes.
- The Council ensures its definition of value for money is consistent with the CWB agenda, and specifically that the Council ensures that it is always measuring value for money alongside other factors relevant to ethical procurement approaches. For example: whole-life cost; returns on good value investment in the local labour force; surplus leakage avoided; and indirect costs associated with lengthening the supply chain.
- The Council contacts pioneering community wealth building councils for comment as part of its consultation on updating its Procurement Strategy.
- For its larger contracts, the Council institutes an ethical due diligence check to ensure compatibility of commercial partners with the Council's own standards (subject to legal advice).
- The Council provides a description of the principles of that determine its social value weightings in contract tenders.
- The Council continues, as a matter of priority, to work with anchor institutions locally to develop a shared approach to procurement that enriches the local economy.

85. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

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

- Workplace Equalities – all recommendations agreed.

- Strategic Grants – recommendations not agreed.
- Asset Management Strategy – all recommendations agreed.
- Air Quality – most of the work contained in the recommendations was already underway.
- Housing and Carbon Reduction – all recommendations agreed.
- Tourism Review Update – three recommendations agreed, one partially agreed as Cabinet had reviewed the Oxford Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan in light of the Tourism Review Group recommendations rather than reviewing its responses to the recommendations in light of the Strategy and Action Plan.

Cllr Linda Smith left the meeting and did not return.

The Committee noted the following update from Cllr Nigel Chapman, Chair of the Companies Scrutiny Panel:

- The Recommendation about the Corporate Dashboard and sustainability was accepted.
- There was already a review underway in relation to the recommendation about Redbridge Park and Ride.

The Committee noted the following update from the Scrutiny Officer on the items considered at the recent Housing and Homelessness Panel:

- Housing Performance (Quarter 2) – general overview.
- Tenant engagement, including the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Council response.

86. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted:

- 01 February 2022
- 07 March 2022
- 05 April 2022

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the April meeting would go ahead despite it falling in the pre-election period (purdah).

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.43 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 1 February 2022

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.