

Remote meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 2 March 2021

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Committee members present:

Councillor Gant (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Aziz

Councillor Fry

Councillor Kennedy

Councillor Munkonge (for Councillor Lloyd-Shogbesan)

Councillor McManners (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Corais

Councillor Howlett

Councillor Lygo (for Councillor Djafari-Marbini)

Councillor Simmons

Also present (Members)

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

Councillor Tom Landell Mills

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present

Lindsay Cane, OXWED Company Secretary

Kevin Minns, OXWED Executive Director, Nuffield College

Apologies:

Councillors Djafari-Marbini and Lloyd-Shogbesan sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

82. Declarations of interest

None.

83. Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that item7 (Oxpens Redevelopment) would more usually be considered by the Companies Scrutiny Panel. The timing of the report did not, however, fit with scheduled meetings of the Companies Scrutiny Panel, hence its place on the Committee's agenda. The Committee would however benefit from the presence of all members of the Panel given Cllr Munkonge's presence at this meeting as a substitute and the later arrival for the item of Cllr Landell-Mills as a guest of the meeting together with the normal presence of Cllrs Fry and Simmons as members of the Committee. Given the confidential nature of the appendices to this item, the Committee agreed that it should be taken at the end of the meeting.

84. Minutes

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 02 February 2021 as a true and accurate record.

85. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that this was likely to be the last meeting of the Committee in the present council year. In anticipation of the new council year the Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Scrutiny Officer to prepare a provisional workplan for the first quarter for the new Committee. To assist with this he would soon be writing to all Councillors and senior officers, seeking suggestions for this provisional plan.

The Committee expressed regret that it had not been possible to consider the imminent Cabinet report on the Zero Emission Zone. The Scrutiny Officer explained that this was largely the result of the limited capacity of the Committee, combined with the sometimes unpredictable timing of items appearing and moving on the Forward Plan and the associated difficulty of lining up items and guest speakers at relatively short notice.

Members of the Committee raised the matter of the Climate Emergency Review Group, the draft Cabinet response to which was later on the agenda. It was suggested that consideration of it should be delayed until the Cabinet response had been confirmed and that it should, rather, be a priority for the new council year. On being put to the vote the suggestion was agreed and that the item should be deferred.

86. Council Business Plan 2021-22 and Business Plan 2020-21 update

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, introduced the report. The last 12 months had been most unusual and, as a result, the focus had been on producing a plan which both met the Council's objectives as well as meeting the atypical needs faced by the City as it emerged from the pandemic. Members and officers across the Council had worked hard to secure the right objectives which were fit for purpose and informed by a high level of engagement with stakeholders. The plan included targets which were both exciting and realistic. The section on "Equalities Impact" was worthy of particular attention because of the way in which it exemplified the critical importance of equalities as a key theme throughout the plan. She went on to draw attention to a few examples such as the promotion of the Oxford Living Wage; the promotion of socially

responsible businesses (which would be helped by the recently revised procurement strategy); and the importance of employment and economic recovery over the next year and beyond. Housing and homelessness comprised another important element, building on the good work of the last year. It continued to be important to deliver the Workforce Equalities Action Plan with its key objective of securing a properly representative and inclusive workforce.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications, emphasised that this ambitious plan was the product of significant engagement with, among others, all senior officers and portfolio holders. The plan had been constructed on the basis that it was deliverable (although this necessarily included assumptions about the ability to proceed with some activities as the current Covid-19 driven restrictions receded). The structure of the plan echoed that of the Council's 4 year strategy and this included, for the sake of clarity and conciseness, the capturing of an item in the plan just once. It was important not to misinterpret this as meaning that an item was not considered relevant or important in some other strand of the plan also. It was important also to note that the plan's focus was on transformative actions and not those which might be considered to be both important but also "business as usual." A great deal of thought had been given to the KPIs, seeking to identify ones which were both accessible and meaningful.

The Committee expressed support for the overall objectives of the plan and went on to raise a number of detailed observations. These included the desirability of identifying how to track social value; clarifying the meaning of 'infrastructure' in the context of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc; clarifying what was meant by the Transport and Connectivity Prospectus; some actions appeared not to be aligned with those CERG recommendations which seemed likely to be agreed by Cabinet; a better measure in relation to the conversion of fleet vehicles might be how many miles are covered by both types of vehicle rather than the number of them; some apparent inconsistencies between aspirations for zero carbon buildings and what is in the Local Plan (which is silent on the matter of carbon targets for non-residential buildings); and the assertion that there had been a 40% reduction in carbon emissions across the City was not, yet, demonstrable.

It was agreed that some of the detailed matters raised would have to be responded to outside the meeting. In relation to infrastructure in the context of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc it was confirmed that this would only ever refer to that which would support the City's aspirations, needs and economy. The Transport and Connectivity Prospectus did not yet exist but was the expression of the need for something which addressed those issues across the County. Alignment with agreed CERG recommendations would be addressed in the final iteration of the plan. Changing the measurements in relation to the conversion of vehicles would need further discussion outside the meeting.

The Plan included reference to embedding use of the Residents' Panel among others. It was suggested that there might be merit in adding a reference to the "Inclusive Transport Group" but as this was not a standing group in the way that the others listed were, this was probably not appropriate (which was not to undervalue the important work of that group).

The plan made reference to social prescribing. This was something which the Council had the opportunity to influence through its work with other Districts and the County through the Health & Wellbeing Board and Health Improvement Board as well as through the Leader's engagement with, for example, the Director of Public Health and

other leaders. Councillor Brown was hopeful that emergence from the pandemic would see greater levels of co-operation between the health service and local government to tackle endemic health inequalities.

The plan referred to the establishment of an Inclusive Economy Commission in 2022-24 and it was suggested that there would be merit in bringing this forward to 2021 so as to follow more swiftly on the heels of the Inclusive Economy seminar series run by the Council. In response it was explained that a great deal of work was needed to help the local economy recover after the pandemic and inclusivity, in the widest sense, would be a central element of that throughout. So the reference to 2022 should not be taken as an indication that matters of inclusivity would not be addressed until then. The date was, rather, a function of the practical reality of the time it would take to address all of the matters listed in the plan.

The Committee made some detailed observations about the proposed indicators including, among others: the lack of a social value indicator; the absence of targets for some measures; the reference to landlords and working to improve the quality and energy efficiency of privately rented homes was lacking a target relating to energy efficiency; the target(s) for carbon reduction appeared not to be sufficient to reach the Council's aspiration of zero carbon by 2030. It was agreed that the detailed observations about the targets would be incorporated in the Committee's report to Cabinet. More specifically the Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet, that Council:

- 1: Aligns the Business Plan with recommendations from Climate Emergency Review Group (once approved by Cabinet);
- 2: Includes a glossary of terms and acronyms used in the Business Plan, to include Social Value, OLW, OxLEP, MEEES, Net Zero, ZEZ, Energy Super hub;
- 3: Checks alignment with the current Local Plan 2036 policies priority 4 page 57; and
- 4: Includes reference to the circular economy as part of transformational agenda for waste and resource management

87. Report back on recommendations and Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee expressed disappointment that none of the Committee's recommendations in relation to the Zero Carbon Council report had been agreed, not least because they had been driven only by a wish to improve the credibility of the associated plans. There was surprise that the recommendation in relation to the inclusion of an environmental implications section for all Cabinet reports had not been agreed given that it was understood to be already in hand. The Committee asked the Chair to feed this concern back to Cabinet.

The Committee was also disappointed to note the proportion of budget review group recommendations which had been rejected.

The Committee had agreed earlier in the meeting to defer consideration of the Cabinet response to the CERG report.

88. Reports for approval

Citizens' Engagement Report

Subject to a few specific observations by the Chair, the Committee agreed that this report should be submitted to Cabinet.

Domestic Review Group Report

Cllr Shaista Aziz, as Chair of the review group, introduced the report, thanking all those who had contributed to this thorough and comprehensive review of an important matter. She drew attention to the review's particular focus on those from minoritised groups such as ethnic minorities, those with no recourse to public funds and those who are homeless. The review had benefitted from the expertise of a wide range of experts and those with lived experience both within and from outside the City. She hoped that the report would herald continuing conversations and dialogue about this important matter which cut across many areas of Council activity. She concluded by noting that domestic abuse was of particular concern at the present time because of unusually strained domestic environments imposed by pandemic restrictions.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Cllr Aziz and all those who had contributed to this substantive and valuable report.

The Committee agreed that the report should be submitted to Cabinet, with a recommendation that the Cabinet response should be given at its first meeting following the election and delegated agreement to minor changes to Cllr Aziz and the Scrutiny Officer.

89. Dates of future meetings

Meetings are scheduled as followed:

Scrutiny Committee

- 08 April - *cancelled*

Standing Panels

- Finance & Performance: Provisional meeting scheduled for 06 April – *now cancelled*
- Companies Scrutiny: 15 March
- Housing & Homelessness: 04 March

All meetings start at 6.00 pm.

90. Matters Exempt from Publication

The 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 public from the following item on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

91. Oxpens Revelopment

This matter was considered in confidential session.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.15 pm

Chair

Date: Thursday 8 April 2021