

## Minutes of a meeting of the Companies Scrutiny Panel on Monday 13 December 2021



### Committee members present:

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Fry

Councillor Miles

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Pegg

### Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Laura Harlock, ODS Cemeteries Manager

Jason Munro, Director of Operations

Lindsay Cane, Company Secretary

Simon Howick, Managing Director, Direct Services Companies, Director of Oxford Direct Services

Gregor Budde, ODS Finance Director

Tim Sadler, ODS Chair of the Board

### Also present:

### Apologies:

Councillor(s) Landell Mills sent apologies.

### 28. Apologies for absence

Councillor Landell Mills tendered apologies for the meeting.

### 29. Declarations of Interest

None

### 30. Announcements and verbal updates from the Chair and/or the Scrutiny Officer

The Chair reported the success of the previous meeting of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group and expressed support for Scrutiny remaining part of it.

### 31. Notes of the previous meeting

The record of the meeting of 24 November 2021 was **AGREED**.

### **32. Items to be considered in private**

The Panel resolved to move into private session following the presentation of the public report on the grounds that the presence of the public would likely involve the disclosure of exempt information in accordance with paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **33. Tree Planting and Management**

Simon Howick, ODS Chief Executive, Jason Munro, ODS Director of Operations, and Laura Harlock, ODS Parks and Open Spaces Manager presented a Scrutiny-commissioned report on Tree Management to the Panel.

The Council's Tree Policy arose from a near-miss with an individual, following which a more rigorous and systematic system of surveying and managing trees was implemented.

The ODS Tree Service services the c 100,000 Council-owned trees on a three-year basis, surveying them all and developing a prioritised plan of works. Ad hoc inspections also took place. It is also responsible for surveying the County Council's trees through a s.42 and s.42+ agreement. The Service is also responsible for planting of trees, and emergency work such as during storms. The team is made up of three people, with a fourth seasonal worker in the spring and summer months.

The Service's tree planning on average involves the planting of approximately 90 trees per annum with a view to replacing in wards where practicable trees previously felled. The seasonal worker who is responsible for this is currently at maximum capacity, so additional tree planting would require investment in additional staff or equipment.

Councillors requested that the schedule for ward visits be made available to them, which was agreed.

Members also asked about how the capacity of the team was impacted by the secondment of one of the three full time staff to Oxford City Council. Careful planning had allowed this to work, but did cause a slight pressure when remaining staff were taking holiday. Regular surveying did also mean that when storms came, it created lower peaks of remedial work afterwards.

The balance between ad hoc and scheduled surveys was explored. Ad hoc surveys had halved in regularity since the Policy was implemented, and ran at about 12 per week.

Clarification over who was responsible for undertaking works on or ultimately replanting damaged trees was raised. In the end it came down to tree ownership; a tree owned by the Council would be the Council's responsibility, but one in private ownership would not. Likewise, the Council did undertake surveying of County Council trees, but it would not then undertake the works required unless done so via a further contract.

The report was **NOTED** and no recommendations were made.

Jason Munro and Laura Harlock left the meeting at the end of this item.

NB There are confidential minutes associated with this item.

### **34. Shareholder and Joint Venture Group reports**

Minutes of the consideration of the relevant Shareholder and Joint Venture Group reports are detailed below.

### **35. ODS reports**

Minutes below

### **36. OCHL report**

### **37. Barton Report**

### **38. OxWED report**

#### **a) ODS minutes**

Simon Howick, ODS Chief Executive, Tim Sadler, ODS Chairman, and Gregor Budde, ODS Financial Director, presented the ODS report to the Panel.

The Panel **AGREED** that the following recommendations would be taken up at the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group:

- 1) That future development of the score card includes environmental and sustainability elements.
- 2) That the SJVG requests a review from Council and ODS to assess how the depot project took such a long time to make a decision over Redbridge, one which was ultimately negative.

NB There are confidential minutes for this item.

#### **b) OxWED minutes**

No report to consider

#### **c) Barton minutes**

No report to consider.

#### **d) OCHL minutes**

No report to consider.

### **39. Date of the Next Meeting**

The dates of the next meetings were **NOTED**.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.50 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Monday 28 March 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.*