

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 6 September 2022

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Committee members present:

Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Coyne

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Miles (for Councillor Smowton)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Corais

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Pegg

Councillor Hunt (for Councillor Bely-Summers)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Lucy Tyrrell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Amanda Ford, Team Leader for Planning Policy

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader for Planning Policy (virtual)

Rachel Williams, Planning Policy & Place Manager

Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property (virtual)

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Delivery

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Smowton and Bely-Summers sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

30. Declarations of interest

There were no declaration of interests.

31. Chair's Announcements

Cllr Diggins reminded Members to respond to the request for confirmation of attendance at the site visit to The Covered Market on 22 September 2022.

32. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022 as a true and accurate record.

33. 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:

- October Cabinet reports
 - Procurement Strategy 2022-2025
 - West End Osney Mead SPD
- November Cabinet reports
 - Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24
- December Cabinet reports
 - Thriving Communities Strategy
 - Workplace Equalities and Action Plan
 - Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23

34. Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Regulation 18 Consultation Document

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Document for consultation.

Cllr Hollingsworth provided an overview of what is incorporated within a local plan and outlined Regulation 18 for information. Cllr Diggins requested that the Committee, in framing discussions, focus on the following areas from the report:

- Consultation and engagement methodology and plan
- Development sites and areas of focus
- Net zero decarbonisation, biodiversity and climate change

Cllr Corais joined the meeting.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The policies contained within the Local Plan will form the shape of future development in Oxford, and seek to protect historic buildings, whilst balanced against local housing needs.
- The Local Plan was the most ambitious with regards to zero carbon policies and social housing compared to those produced nationally whilst ensuring that it remained deliverable within legislation.
- Residents would be notified of the consultation via leaflet drop, however social media would be employed to ensure maximum exposure, and contact sought with community groups, including face to face engagement across the City. It was noted that consideration should be given on ensuring engagement with residents for whom English is a second or other language, including the use of drop-in sessions.
- Engagement of the consultation should be extended to vocational groups, e.g. trade unions, to enable those who do not live in the City to respond to the consultation.

Organisations that represent those with specific housing needs, such as Crisis, should also be considered.

- Further explanation of the document and consultation could be delivered via use of podcasts and this would be explored.
- Consideration would be given to how the reader could best engage with the consultation documents and see how it interacts with the current Local Plan and other policies, including a key to the document to ensure that navigation and integration are more accessible.
- Due to the confines of site allocations, sites are determined on their own merits, and greater explanation should be included.
- The new strategic policies contained within the document aimed to provide greater flexibility within the planning system in future planning decisions.
- Car parking provision for new housing developments would continue to be determined via a criteria based approach.
- The Local Plan could set general parameters on what the Council considered constitutes a good neighbourhood, additional detail could then be included on specific sites, ensuring that principles and intentions are evident.
- An explanation was provided on the differences between 'areas of focus' and 'site allocation policies', and noted that this would be useful for inclusion within the document.
- The Local Plan 2040 once adopted, will supersede the previous Plans, and all allocated sites in the 2036 Local Plan will be reviewed to determine if they are to remain as allocated sites within the Plan.
- The Local Development Scheme available on the Council's website, provided detail of the timetable for development for the new Local Plan, however highlighted that further consultation of the draft 2040 Plan was scheduled for autumn 2023.
- Whilst there are policies on biodiversity, the new Urban Greening Factor policy would give greater focus on 'green cover tests' that would improve the proportion of green areas, and are intended as a supplement to the DEFRA biodiversity metric.
- The inclusion of street trees was a requirement under Government planning legislation for climate mitigation, and therefore omitted from the Local Plan, however it was recognised that explicit reference should be made within the document.
Cllr Arshad left the meeting and did not return.
- The document makes reference to international frameworks and the language referencing those, however considered that consistent language, such as 'loss and damage' be reflected throughout the narrative.
- Whilst there would be appropriate retro fit solutions to the majority of heritage buildings, the planning authority could only encourage landowners to adopt holistic planning solutions to their property, and work on this would take place outside of the Local Plan.
- Development builds have to be operationally fit, with mitigation of impact on the neighbourhood, however broader options could be considered but would not form part of this Local Plan.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council inserts a key to the document to ensure that navigation and integration are more accessible.
2. That the Council gives consideration to how to engage most effectively with residents for whom English is a second or other language during the consultation process, including the provision of drop-in sessions.

3. That the Council explores options to produce basic podcasts summarising the document.
4. That the Council seeks to engage specifically with vocational groups (such as trade unions and royal colleges) to ensure that the voice of those who work in Oxford but do not live in the City is heard.
5. That the Council seeks to engage specifically with organisations representing those with specific housing needs, such as Crisis and Acorn.
6. That the Council clarifies the definition of 'good connectivity' within the document.
7. That the Council explains in the document that the National Model Design Code principles are applied when considering the location of car parking in relation to residential and shared amenity spaces.
8. That the Council explains the distinction between 'areas of focus' and 'site allocation policies' and the interaction between them within the document.
9. That the Council makes explicit reference to the importance of access to nature in housing developments within the document.
10. That the Council makes explicit reference to the importance of street trees within the document.
11. That the Council ensures in cases where explicit reference to a topic or area of policy is forbidden by legislation, or that topic or area of policy is covered in a separate document, that this is explained in the document introduction.
12. That the Council makes explicit reference to the Paris Agreement within the document and that the language of international frameworks, such as 'loss and damage', be reflected in the narrative section.

35. Matters exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

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.

36. Lease of Council Office Accommodation at St Aldate's Chambers

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for lease of Council accommodation at St Aldate's Chambers.

The Committee discussed the report in private session and made recommendations to Cabinet.

37. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Asset Management Strategy 2021-2031

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that the Finance and Performance Panel met on 5 September 2022 where it considered the Integrated Performance Report for Q1, Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/2022 and the Council Tax

Reduction Scheme for 2022/2023. No recommendations were made and the Committee **noted** that the Panel had met.

38. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 11 October 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.

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