

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 11 October 2022

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Bely-Summers

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Pegg

Councillor Hunt (for Councillor Coyne)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Lucy Tyrrell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Amanda Ford, Team Leader Planning Policy

Arome Agamah, Senior Planner

Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Delivery

Councillor Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice

Apologies:

Councillors Corais, Coyne and Railton sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

39. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Cllr Mundy joined the meeting.

40. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

41. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022 as a true and accurate record.

42. 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:

- November Cabinet reports
 - Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24
 - West End and Osney Mead SPD
 - Procurement Strategy 2022-2025
- December Cabinet reports
 - Thriving Communities Strategy
 - Oxfordshire Food Strategy Action Plan

43. Development Brief for Botley Road Retail Park

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee drew the Committee's attention to an emailed submission of representation from a resident, sent via Cllr Susanna Pressel. The email set out concerns about access and movement; sharing services; hours of operation; numbers; flooding; design. The document was circulated to all members of the Committee prior to the meeting, with hard copies available at the meeting and summarised for the Committee by the Chair.

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for the Botley Road Retail Park Development Brief which outlined the modification of Use Classes Order as per the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. He emphasised that the report before the Committee was not a scheme, but a Development Brief which did not seek to change planning policy, but rather set out the impact of existing planning policy given the change in circumstance. He further advised that the substantial majority of the site was in the functional flood plain, which under national planning policy meant that it could not be used for residential development.

Arome Agamah, Senior Planner advised the Committee that the development brief provided guidance for landowners intending to bring forward development schemes on the site. It also provided guidance and transparency to the public and any other interest parties. It was not a statutory document and therefore not subject to consultation, however was covered as an area under consideration in the Local Plan 2040 currently under consultation.

Cllr Hunt joined the meeting.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The Development Brief did not change planning policy and was therefore not subject to formal consultation. It would form a technical advice note, which would be brought to Cabinet for adoption due to the large area that would be affected.
- The Development Brief provided guidance, useful as an area of focus for an evidence base for the site allocation for the Local Plan 2040 consultation.
- The Development Brief did not propose a scheme or master plan, and would not incorporate no parking/low parking schemes, which would be addressed through the Local Plan 2040 consultation.
- The Development Brief outlined opportunities for improved transport routes on the proposed site which would aid planning application decisions.

- The Environmental Agency had advised that the flood alleviation scheme was designed to protect existing settlements and would not be considered to reduce the flood risk level of an area of development.
- The island of land within the allocated site would be subject to consultation with the Environmental Agency to determine safe egress for any future residential development. In contrast, the residential development allowed at the Osney Mead site was deemed safe by the Environmental Agency.
- Whilst the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme were able to change flood zone risk areas, the Development Brief set out existing policy to aid planning applications determined through the Local 2036 Plan currently in place. This would be subject to change by The Environment Agency, and the Committee and Officers were in agreement that the wording within the document should better clarify that position.
- Existing policy determined how areas of development border green spaces, therefore building heights would be subject to existing policy.
- Landscaping would be intended in place of the existing impermeable car parking currently in place.
- Individual planning applications that take into account flood alleviation solutions could be considered under current planning policy, and had been successfully accomplished in other areas.
- The outline shown within the Development Brief would be amended prior to presentation to Cabinet to remove the section of car park accessible from Earl Street as it was not relevant for the purpose of the document.
- Clarification would be provided on the cover of the Development Brief to ensure it is clear that the document's purpose was to form a technical advice note.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council should consider how to make clear where the deeming of unsuitability for residential provision has come from and should add text clarifying what bearing the actual effects of OFAS may have on future suitability for residential use.
2. That the Council should consider how to make clear that the Earl Street car park is not included within the boundary of the site.

44. UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Cllr Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for endorsement of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan, allocation of budget, and delegated authority to enter contract with Government for delivery of the plan on behalf of Oxford City Council.

Cllr Thomas advised that the paper was in conjunction with Cllr Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, however as the majority of funding was allocated against projects in the City Centre, fell into her remit of City Centre Action Plan delivery.

Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager advised the Committee that the funding was relatively new, intended to replace European Union Structural Investment Funds, which were historically larger and therefore less funding was available.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The SPF Programme Board would report to Government every six months which would include a risk register report. The SPF Board would meet every three months and work closely with other Council teams where appropriate, and whilst ensuring governance and accountability, would aim to strike the correct balance of the additional work. However it was recognised that the importance of the objectives for the funding, and therefore periodic reports would be submitted either to Scrutiny or to the relevant Cabinet Member.
- The City Centre Action Plan highlighted the importance of access and navigation of the City with the use of websites and apps to ensure the City remained a Tourist City.
- Additional, specific information detailing allocation of funding, highlighting the more deprived areas of the City, would be beneficial to the Plan.
- The programme ensured officer resource to work directly with communities, sourcing funding and stimulating additional work required within those sectors.
- Areas such as East Oxford and Temple Cowley, whilst not particularly highlighted within the Plan are included in the 'least developed areas requiring representation', and the Committee felt these communities would benefit from collaborative working relationships with Ward Members to ensure targeted support for minority groups.
- The Market Street vision was part of the Broad Street renovations and would be developed within the City Centre Action Plan.
- Greater clarity and information of strategic partnerships would be recommended for the Action Plan.
- The City Centre Action Plan was widely consulted on with a very strong response, and overwhelming support was received for the Broad Street consultation.
- The Committee would welcome specific mention of communities in the most deprived areas and wished specific wording to be included in the Action Plan.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council should explore and report on opportunities to cooperate even further with partner institutions in the delivery of the Investment Plan.
2. That the Council should explore and report upon ways in which the funding can be focussed on all those areas of the City which are amongst the most deprived according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.
3. That the Council should arrange for periodic reports to be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee.

45. Budget Review Group

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which set out the scope for the Scrutiny Budget Review Group as agreed at its meeting on 5 July 2022. The Review Group would comprise membership of the Finance and Performance Panel, and the attached scope would be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Committee were **resolved** to approve the scope as set out in the report.

46. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Regulation 18 Consultation Document

- Lease of Council Office Accommodation at St Aldate's Chambers

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that the Housing and Homelessness Panel met for the first time this municipal year last week. It agreed that it would like up to four tenant ambassadors on the Panel and had asked the Scrutiny Officer to make contact with the relevant team and to invite expressions of interest.

The Committee noted that the Panel had met and agreed the following minor amendments made to recommendations to Cabinet:

~~That the Council produces a glossary for the consultation so as to make engagement more accessible.~~ replaced by '*That the council produces a glossary for the strategy document as part of the consultation to make engagement more accessible*'.

And:

~~That the Council employs the language of residents rather than customers in the strategy.~~ replaced by '*That the Council employs the language of residents /service user/citizens rather than customers in the strategy*'.

47. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.10 pm

Chair
2022

Date: Monday 7 November

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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