

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Monday 5 December 2022

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Bely-Summers

Councillor Coyne

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Corais

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Pegg

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services

Lucy Cherry, Leisure and Performance Manager

Paula Redway, Culture and Community Development Manager

Rachel Nixon, Principal Planner

Lan Nguyen, Senior Data Analyst

Christian Cameron, Data Analyst

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement

Gail Malkin, Head of People

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture

Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

Apologies:

Councillor Hunt sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

58. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

59. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

60. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2022 as a true and accurate record.

61. 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.

- January Cabinet reports
 - Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy

62. Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027

Cllr Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture and Cllr Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks introduced the report which asked Cabinet to recommend Council adopt the Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027 as part of the Budget and Policy Framework. Cllr Aziz highlighted the importance of ensuring the voices of communities are front and centre to the Council's work and the language of the report was more accessible than previous reports. She advised that Westminster City Council had recently removed the term 'BAME' which she welcomed as a step forward to move away from terminology that classified communities.

Cllr Arshad arrived at the meeting.

Cllr Munkonge drew the Committee's attention to the strategy which had brought together four outdated strategies that had overlapping outcomes. He had attended one of the positively received workshops as part of the 10-week Thriving Communities City Conversation which had reached hundreds of partners, community groups and residents.

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services and Lucy Cherry, Leisure and Performance Manager attended the meeting to speak to the item and answer Councillors questions.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- Conversations with communities remain ongoing, and Councillors are invited to input into these via their Wards and Parish Councils.
- Data and insight from partner agencies for health profiling, allowing greater understanding of community needs, have been explored in commencing work in communities.
- The strategy was purposely ambitious, and as focused on creating a shared purpose working closely with those communities. It was emphasised that previous reports had been reported as 'talking at' people and communities and the report sought to work alongside communities and organisations and work with their expertise.

Cllr Corais arrived at the meeting.

- Leisure centre contracts expire in 2024, providing an opportunity to review these facilities and how they meet changing community needs, and would explore further

opportunities with partners, such as Oxfordshire County Council public health and the NHS.

- Where work is carried out with partners, it would be beneficial to highlight these specifically, and link these to actions highlighted to explicitly answer questions within the report, and adapt the language to make it more accessible to those with English not as a first language.
- Work with other Councils had been ongoing on use of facilities and green spaces to ensure learning and adaptation of good practice.
- Key programmes with partners in communities included specific work with Leisure For All match funded grants with Fusion encouraging access to leisure facilities ensuring greater inclusivity and accessibility in communities, and also covid support funding with schools which supported those youngsters most impacted by Covid to support with mental health.
- Community spaces, available through the community grants programme, targeted inequality and identified gaps in provision, ensuring support across the city in tackling inequality.
- Work would continue to improve the booking access system in leisure centres that supports the needs of all communities.
- Due to the ongoing resource challenges caused by Covid and rising energy prices, swimming pools had experienced a decline in service, however the Council, along with Swim England, would be lobbying Government for more grants to support these public services, and more comprehensive service contracts were being explored.

The Committee were in agreement that the action plan published on 1 April 2023 be added to the Committee Work Plan for review.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council states explicitly in the Executive Summary where changes have been made to our principles or ways of working, by contrast with those existing principles or ways of working that we intend to reaffirm or restate.
2. That the Council provides greater clarity around partnership working and distribution of work in the strategy by explaining clearly which partners are involved in particular projects and what the nature and level of that collaboration is.

63. Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24

Cllr Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture, introduced the report which sought approval of the criteria and weighting for assessing the 2023/24 grant allocations, providing an interim update to Cabinet showing examples of the impact of the Community Impact Funds grants to date. She highlighted that this was the first report since the Cabinet agreement to merge all the existing community grant funds into one, the Oxford Community Impact Fund, created to ensure a wider range of people, communities and organisation can access the limited pool of resource.

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services, Lucy Cherry, Leisure and Performance Manager and Paula Redway, Culture and Community Development Manager, attended the meeting to speak to the item and answer Councillors questions.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- There was a rigorous multi-staged process to approve or reject grant allocation requests, which reviewed assessment scores and other factors before any decisions were made.
- Monitoring of the delivery would be through engagement with beneficiaries, with focus on the big ideas learning network.
- Sessions with individuals and organisations took place guiding them through the process of application, and over 90% of applications had been received from those attending.
- Clear feedback was provided to non-successful applicants via grant advice sessions, to ensure that constructive relationships were continually built upon.
- A briefing summary would be provided for future reports on organisations in receipt of grant funding.
- Due to the limited amount of funds available, other funding sources are explored with the applicants throughout the application process, and the Council was aware of the challenging financial climate and lack of funding available to all organisations, regardless of size and experience.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

1. That the Council includes a very brief summary of the nature and purpose of individual organisations in receipt of Community Impact Fund grants at Appendix 1 of the report.

64. Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval of the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement for publication. He advised that the report was an annual report which summarised a series of performance indicators based on policies set out in the Oxford Local Plan. The Infrastructure Funding Statement is a factual statement and a statutory requirement summarising the amount of developer contributions (CIL and Section 106) obtained, allocated and spent by the authority in the previous financial year (April 2021 – March 2022).

Rachel Nixon, Principal Planner, Lan Nguyen, Senior Data Analyst and Christian Cameron, Data Analyst attended the meeting to speak to the item and answer the Committee's questions.

Cllr Arshad left the meeting.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- Key IFS Headlines were included within the report, further information on which projects the developer contributions received, allocated and spent for were included within Appendix 2.
- Whilst there was a lack of community-led housing projects currently in the City, there were sites identified, however uptake would be dependent on the applicant.
- Data was corrected due to changes in Government policies and improvements to data collection/analysis methods, which is clearly shown in the report.
- The projected future amount of windfall sites versus major strategic sites was provided within the report and demonstrated that there were approximately 10% of windfall sites and 10% of smaller sites already committed, concluding approximately

80% for the major strategic sites, however a site by site summary could be included for future reports.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

1. That the Council reports in subsequent Annual Monitoring Reports on the amount of housing delivered as a result of site allocation policies and the degree to which those policies have been realised.

65. Workplace Equalities and Action Plan

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval for the publication of the annual Workforce Equality Report 2022, the Gender Pay Gap Report, the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and the Disability Pay Gap Report, and shared progress on the current progress of the Workforce Equalities Report and Action Plan. He advised that the report was a snapshot of figures taken at 31 March 2022, and highlighted the increase made in many areas, however drew the Committee's attention to the increased pay gap in ethnicity, which has clearly shown the issue of low number of ethnicity in senior positions within the Council.

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement, and Gail Malkin, Head of People, attended the meeting to speak to the item and to answer the Committee's questions.

Cllr Diggins left the meeting.

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- The Council was working to increase awareness of self-reporting across the workforce to ensure regular communication and best practice. Whole workforce engagement surveys had taken place to help build a better picture of behaviours within the workplace.
- The low number of staff who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual had increased, however it was noted that lower numbers could be caused by staff not wishing to state their sexual identify, which nationally stands at only 2%. This makes it difficult for assessment purposes, however other methods of monitoring could be considered and further details included at the application stage of recruitment.
- A question was raised about plans to address equality issues for trans and non-binary staff. Data for this group was not currently collected, however this would be reviewed. It was noted that smaller numbers of staff would present difficulties for reporting as lower numbers could be easily identifiable.
- A Recruitment Consultant and EDI specialist had been appointed in the People Team to help target recruitment of under-represented groups.
- Whilst there is not a Disability Pay Gap target, the Committee would be interested to compare this to previous years, and would welcome a target included for future reports in line with other pay gap targets.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Council set out explicitly its target in relation to the Disability Pay Gap.
2. That the Council provides an opportunity in its application forms and monitoring for people to provide their gender identity, including if they identify as trans or non-binary.
3. That the Council reports on work surrounding its trans and non-binary policies.

4. That the Council assesses whether it would be beneficial to monitor and report on work being undertaken around the LGBT pay gap.

66. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Procurement Strategy 2022-2025
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1
- West End and Osney Mead SPD

The Committee noted that since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting, no standing panels have met as the Housing and Homelessness Panel did not meet on 30 November 2022. This meant that they were not able to approve the recommendation to adopt three tenant ambassadors to the Committee. Therefore, the Committee were asked to approve this recommendation, and were **resolved** to appoint Anthony Church, Gillian Taylor and Jerry Assongu as Co-Optees to the Housing and Homelessness Panel.

67. 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
2023

Date: Monday 16 January

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.