

To: Council
Date: 30 January 2023
Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Scrutiny Committee Update Report

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Dr Christopher Snowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That Council resolves to note the update report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on Scrutiny activity during the period from 11 November 2022 to 20 January 2023.
2. The Committee welcomed Cllr Jemima Hunt as a member of the Scrutiny Committee following her appointment at the meeting of Council on 28 November 2022, replacing Cllr Anna Railton.

Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

3. During this reporting period, the Committee met twice, on 05 December 2022 and on 16 January 2023. A summary of each meeting is set out below.

Scrutiny Committee: 05 December 2022

4. Four substantive reports were considered on 05 December 2022:
 - Thriving Communities Strategy (*Cabinet report*)

- Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24 (*Cabinet report*)
 - Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22 (*Cabinet report*)
 - Workplace Equalities and Action Plan (*Cabinet report*)
5. The Thriving Communities Strategy report recommended that Cabinet recommend to Council the adoption of the Thriving Communities Strategy as part of the Budget and Policy Framework. The Committee's attention was drawn to the Thriving Communities Principles including doing things with people rather than to them. The Committee commended the ambition and wide-ranging strategy and recognised the flexibility of the work proposed. The Committee made two recommendations, one which sought greater clarity about changes to ways of working and one which sought greater clarity about the nature of collaboration in partnership working.
 6. The Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations report recommended that Cabinet noted the implementation of the Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed in December 2021 and recommended that changes should be made to information provided for project monitoring. The Committee was pleased to hear of support and advice given to organisations that wished to apply for grants but might not yet have been ready to do so. The Committee made one recommendation, namely that a very brief summary of the nature and purpose of individual organisations given grants be provided.
 7. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) report recommended that Cabinet approved the AMR and IFS for publication. The AMR was a statutory report that effectively functioned as a series of performance indicators with the IFS being a statement which recorded infrastructure funding. The Committee welcomed the detail provided and made one recommendation which was that, in future reports, the Council reports on the amount of housing delivered as a result of site allocation policies.
 8. The Equalities Update report recommended that Cabinet approve the Workplace Equality Report 2022 and the publication of the Gender Pay Gap, the Ethnicity Pay Gap, and the Disability Pay Gap reports. The Committee explored the detail and ambition provided in the report and made four recommendations. One related to being explicit over the Council's target regarding the Disability Pay Gap and one related to people being able to self-identify as trans or non-binary. The third recommendation related to the Council reporting on work surrounding trans and non-binary policies and the fourth recommended consideration of the worth of monitoring and reporting on the LGBT Pay Gap.
 9. Three tenant ambassadors had agreed to sit as co-opted members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel. The Committee resolved to approve their appointment as co-opted members without voting rights.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: December 2022

10. Reports on the items listed in paragraph 4 were submitted to Cabinet on 14 December 2022. All of the Committee's eight recommendations across the four reports considered were agreed by Cabinet.

Scrutiny Committee: 16 January 2023

11. Two substantive reports were considered on 16 January 2023:
 - Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy (*Council report*)
 - Disciplinary Policy (*Council report*)
12. The Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy report recommended that Council resolve to approve the policy. The Committee recognised that the Council has moved to a standard practice of hybrid working and explored some of the detail of the proposed policy. The Committee made no recommendations.
13. The Disciplinary Policy report recommended that Council resolves to agree the Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance with immediate effect, authorising the Head of Business Improvement to make minor revisions. The Committee noted that the role of the Elected Member would remain as an option and recommended that it be set out which Members would be eligible.

Housing and Homelessness Panel

14. The Housing and Homelessness Panel was due to meet on 30 November 2022, but was adjourned owing to an unfortunate clash with an extraordinary meeting of another committee. The business was not time sensitive and will be carried over to the Panel's next meeting on 02 March 2023.

Finance and Performance Panel

15. The Finance and Performance Panel met on 07 December 2022 and considered reports on the Integrated Performance Report Q2 and the Treasury Management Mid-year Review for April-September 2022. The Panel also noted the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27 and the 2023-2024 Budget for Consultation, prior to the work of the Budget Review Group commencing in January 2023. No recommendations were made to Cabinet.

Budget Review Group

16. Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27 and the 2023-2024 Budget for Consultation was considered in detail by members of the Finance and Performance Panel meeting as the Budget Review Group on 04 January, 05 January, 10 January, and 23 January. At the time of writing, it is anticipated that the Finance & Performance Panel will recommend its report be submitted by the Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet after the Panel has met on 26 January 2023.

Climate and Environment Panel

17. Members of the Climate and Environment Panel met on 11 January 2023 to receive a briefing from Professor Nick Eyre, Scientific Adviser to the Council. It is anticipated that two substantive meetings will be scheduled before the end of the municipal year in consultation with the Panel and officers.

Companies Scrutiny Panel

18. The Companies Scrutiny Panel joined the Shareholder and Joint Venture meeting as non-voting members on 08 December to consider reports relating to Oxford

Direct Services. Commercial confidentiality prevents the provision of a summary report.

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