

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Monday 16 January 2023

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Corais

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Pegg

Councillor Diggins (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Coyne

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Hunt

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Gail Malkin, Head of People

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

Apologies:

Councillors Bely-Summers and Rowley sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

68. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

69. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

70. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 as a true and accurate record.

71. 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.

- February Cabinet reports
 - Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Part 2 constitution
 - Implementing the Covered Market “Masterplan”
- March Cabinet reports
 - Annual Update of the Council’s Business Plan

72. Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report which sought approval for the Hybrid Working Policy. He highlighted that the policy had been extensively consulted on with both staff and unions, and sought to codify arrangements in place since Covid-19.

Cllr Hunt arrived at the meeting.

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

During discussions, the Committee noted the following:

- Data was not provided on the number of employees that fall in each group of work profiles outlined in the report, however this would be provided by officers.
- Conversations had taken place at the Equalities Steering Group and Unions, at which no concerns had been raised. Feedback received from the Women’s Health Network, Accessibility Champion/Advisors and LGBTQIAPIs Network, however this related to the relocation of office staff to the Town Hall, and was not relative to this policy.

The Committee made no recommendations to Council on this report.

73. Disciplinary Policy

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report which sought approval for the Disciplinary Procedure. He further advised that an earlier edition of the report had been included within the papers for this Committee and the following should be noted for the final report that will go to Council:

*Under **Recommendations**, please ignore bullet point 2 – there is no requested change to the Constitution or the role of Elected Members under the Disciplinary Policy.*

*Under **Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance**, please ignore bullet point 9 and replace with the following:*

The current documentation indicates that a Councillor must always be present to observe appeal hearings against dismissal. The Constitution wording is that they may be invited to observe the meeting. The new documentation confirms that an Elected Member may attend to observe the meeting if this is requested by the employee.

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

Cllr Corais arrived at the meeting.

During discussions, the following was noted:

- The new documentation confirmed that an Elected Member may attend an appeal meeting if requested by the employee, of which was welcomed by the Unions, and the procedure was therefore unchanged.
- It was recognised that whilst the removal of the Elected Member simplified the process for managers, especially with appeal meetings arranged at short notice, it added additional scrutiny to the process.
- The procedure did not state if the Elected Member should be a Cabinet Member, and it was considered that it should be stated that an appropriate portfolio holder would be sensible for inclusion in the procedure.
- Controls are in place within the People Team, with guidance and advice provided to ensure the investigation is appropriately managed.
- Representation is not required at a suspension meeting as no items are discussed or debated, the purpose of the meeting is for a management decision to take place, however witnesses are allowed.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation on the report for Council:

1. That the Council should set out which Elected Member would be eligible to attend an appeal meeting if requested by the employee.

74. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027
- Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24
- Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22
- Workplace Equalities and Action Plan

The Committee noted that since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting, the Finance and Performance Panel had met on 07 December 2022, The Budget Review Group met three times on 04 January 2023, 05 January 2023 and 10 January 2023, and will meet again on 19 January 2023 to agree its draft report. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 11 January 2023 for a briefing by Professor Nick Eyre, the Scientific Adviser to the Council.

75. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 6.35 pm

Chair
February 2023

Date: Wednesday 1

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.