

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 4 July 2023

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Committee members present:

Councillor Snowton	Councillor Diggins
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Corais	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Mundy	Councillor Pegg (Chair)
Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Douglas
Councillor Fry (as substitute for Cllr Dunne)	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Peter Matthew, Executive Director (Communities and People) (Interim)
Ian Wright, Head of Service Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Richard Adams, Community Safety Manager
Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator
Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader
Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager
Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement
Vicki Galvin, Senior Programme Manager for Customer Experience
Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer
Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focussed Services and Council Companies

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Dunne sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

11. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

12. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

13. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 07 June 2023 as a true and accurate record.

14. Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Safeguarding Policy 2023-26

Cllr Jarvis arrived at the meeting.

The Committee agreed to take items 7, 8 and 9 next on the agenda, followed by items 5, 6 and 10.

Cllr Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, presented the report which reported on progress made on Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan for 2022/23 and presented an updated Safeguarding Policy for 2023-26. She highlighted that the annual report to Cabinet sets out how Oxford City Council would fulfil its statutory safeguarding duties and the new processes put in place for this year to deliver this function more effectively.

Cllr Aziz, Richard Adams, Community Safety Manager, Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator and Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, answered questions as follows:

- Safeguarding Champions attend quarterly internal Strategic Safeguarding meetings to review safeguarding concerns and best practice scenarios.
- Trends identified through MyConcern, outcomes from the annual staff safeguarding questionnaire, or trends identified from Board meetings, are incorporated into the training for Safeguarding Champions. Trainers meet quarterly to update the training material to ensure it is up to date.
- Any allegations made against Safeguarding Champions would go to a designated safeguarding lead, as per the Safeguarding Policy and Allegations Policy procedures.
- The Council's safeguarding coordination function moved from the Policy and Partnership Team to the Community Safety Service, within Regulatory Services and Community Safety.
- The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Child Exploitation Subgroup meetings, attended by the Community Safety Manager, receive quarterly reports detailing trends in child exploitation safeguarding concerns, which would include information gathered from language schools, however it would be dependent on the language school to report any concerns raised. However, languages schools are overseen by Oxfordshire County Council Education Safeguarding Advisory Team, and Oxford City Council works closely with them.
- The only significant changes to the policy were to governance and the change of responsibilities within the team. The section outlining procedures had been taken out and put into a separate document for the policy to read in a more structured way.
- All staff received full safeguarding training and would refer to the procedure document when raising any concerns. A summary was available for staff on the intranet page.
- When adults are moved from exploitive situations, they would be supported by a multi-agency response team, supported by the Council's Anti-Slavery Coordinator. Further detail on the types of removal were not included within the report.

- Longitudinal studies for local data was not available, however this could be followed up with the Anti-Slavery Coordinator to ascertain whether it could be produced and included within future reports.
- Contextual data regarding the number of adult exploitation cases would be provided in future reports.
- The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation project was currently underway, and works across the whole organisation and further information could be provided at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Cllr Arshad arrived at the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the responsibility of ensuring any youth group organisations commissioned by the Council had adequate safeguarding policies and practices in place, Richard Adams confirmed this was an area under review, and he would report back in due course.

Cllr Arshad left the meeting and did not return.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations on the report for Cabinet:

1. That the Council adds context to the section on adult exploitation to give a flavour of the situations and responses; and uses available local, regional and national data to frame the figures so that they tell a story.
2. That the Council undertakes a longitudinal study of victims and survivors of adult exploitation to gain an understanding of the impact that support has in positively changing the course of lives, which is grounded in data.
3. That the Council actively works with the voluntary sector and community groups to ensure they have adequate safeguarding policies in place and have access to suitable safeguarding training and support.
4. That the Council clarifies its procedure for reporting back to staff on changes to safeguarding procedures to ensure organisational awareness.

The Committee requested a report to a future meeting on the DAHA Accreditation, which could be joined up with an update on the recommendations made by the Domestic Abuse Review Group. The Committee requested that the Scrutiny Officer work with officers to schedule this in to the Work Plan.

15. Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge

Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader and Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager, presented the report which sought Cabinet approval to participate in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter and the endorsement of a series of Oxford City Council pledges. It was further highlighted that the partnership was a county-wide group that brought together employers, business, education, community groups and local government, aimed to reduce economic inequality across the county and was supported and funded by all of the Councils across Oxfordshire.

Oxford City Council had set out thirteen pledges across five of the six available themes of which it was already engaging with through its respective service areas under the Council's corporate plan.

Clayton Lavallin and Emma Coles answered questions as follows:

- A full list of pledges was available on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership website.
- It was proposed that the Council initially focus on a range of already identified activities as pledges in order to greater enhance successful outcomes. Service Heads had focused on areas where evidenced improvement could be shown, rather than signing up to all pledges where the Council was successful in its current working practices.
- The proposed pledges aligned with the main corporate objectives and would support the Council in developing good practice across the County.
- Pledges would be reviewed regularly, and more could be agreed as part of improving services across the Council.
- A further review of the 39 pledges could be undertaken with Service Heads to ensure that opportunities had not been missed and better communication regarding the process of how pledges had been determined would be beneficial.
- The Working Group could review pledges that include only buying from organisations that have trade union recognition included within their procurement policies as any work with Unions was especially welcomed by the OIEP.
- An impact report would be produced on the pledges, and the employees and the communities that they work with.
- The Council's companies have made separate pledges, recognising the different opportunities presented by their different working practices.

Cllr Corais joined the meeting.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations on the report for Cabinet:

1. That the Council requests that the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership ensures the full list of possible pledges is easily and prominently available online.
2. That the Council reviews the full list of possible pledges to see if it could sign-up to additional pledges; including whether the Council could sign-up to any pledges within the 'recruit inclusively' theme.
3. That the Council undertakes a RAG rating audit for the full list of potential pledges outlining what it could do against each one, whether there are any additional budget or resource implications, whether the Council is currently meeting a pledge or if more work needs to be done and then prioritises pledges on the basis of that audit, to provide assurance that the Council is doing as much as possible to ensure an inclusive economy.
4. That the Council engages with the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership to understand whether it has a preferred approach for organisations' pledge selection approach, or whether there is flexibility for organisations to determine their own approach; and requests that this be clearly articulated in an appropriate location.
5. That the Council improves its communications on how its pledge commitments are framed to ensure clarity around whether they are a checklist of work already completed or underway, or whether they represent a more aspirational 'to do' list; and clearly articulates this locally.
6. That the Council suggests to the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership the addition of pledges relating to the inclusion of organisations with Trade Union Recognition Agreements as a preference during procurement exercises.

16. Citizen Experience Strategy

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focussed Services and Council Companies, presented the report which sought Cabinet approval for a new Citizen Experience Strategy for 2023-25 and highlighted that the Citizen Experience Strategy was more wide ranging and aspirational than the previous Customer Contact Strategy, which covered the period 2019 to 2022.

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement, advised that the Strategy aligned to the Thriving Communities, Equalities, Inclusive Economy, and People Strategies to ensure this Strategy was more cultural and set a vision for modern, inclusive and accessible services.

Cllr Chapman and Helen Bishop, answered questions as follows:

- The consultation process included surveying customers contacting the Council's customer contact centre, visitors to the front-line service at the Westgate Library and all of the Council officers involved in customer service. The equalities impact assessment provided further information on the testing of different dimensions of the strategy with the Policy Officer Group and Equalities Steering Groups.
- The low score for customer satisfaction for those users accessing the Council's website was noted, and had already been identified as an area for improvement.
- Whilst the score for customer satisfaction for those users of the contact centre was not low, work has been undertaken for customer service centre employees to ask more definitive questions to users to better determine successive outcomes.
- Collaborative work with the Council's partners provided better customer service, and provided the Council's customers with access to other organisations that were required to support specific issues not necessarily under the Council's remit.
- The use of language to use 'citizen' rather than 'customer' was determined as a better definition to encompass all those that live in, work in and visit the City and a definition had been included within the Strategy to make this clear. However, this could be kept under review.
- Following the achievement of maintaining the Customer Service Excellence quality mark, the next annual assessment was scheduled for November 2023, and a piece of work was underway to review customer service across the organisation.
- Accessibility to council services should enable users to use both digital and face to face contact to ensure full accessibility to all citizens.
- Collaborative working with Activate Learning was being implemented to help citizens with their digital skills, and the Council would work with these citizens to promote accessibility to council services.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations on the report for Cabinet:

1. That the Council seeks ongoing feedback on how individuals and groups engage with the strategy and whether they feel excluded by the use of the term 'citizen'; and listens to and reflects on this feedback with a view to adjusting the language accordingly in future iterations of the strategy.
2. That the Council contextualises the strategy by drawing out the general feelings of exclusion felt by many groups and individuals in the current climate.

17. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee **noted** the Forward Plan.

The Committee reviewed the Work Plan and **confirmed** its agreement to cancel the Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 01 August 2023 and **confirmed** its agreement to consider the following reports at future meetings:

- September Cabinet reports
 - Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2024/25
 - Developing a Sustainable Building Control Service
 - Delivery of a New Burial Space

The Committee also agreed to add the following to the list of Scrutiny-commissioned items for 2023/24 for the Scrutiny Officer to schedule into the Work Plan as appropriate:

- Adult Exploitation

The following regular/standard items for Scrutiny (based on previous years) were **agreed**:

- Tourism Review Group Update – if a substantive update was available
- Domestic Abuse Review Group Update

In addition the Committee agreed to request that the Climate and Environment Panel consider the following item at its September meeting:

- Delivery of EV Infrastructure for Oxford

18. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Chair presented the report on recommendations.

The recommendations on the Housing Management System Implementation and the Tenancy Agreement from the last meeting were agreed by Cabinet.

The Chair advised that Cabinet agreed its formal response to the Child Poverty Review Group's 42 recommendations after they were submitted to Cabinet in June 2022, but did not specifically indicate whether it agreed, partially agreed or did not agree with the recommendations. The Chair advised that whilst there were some positive responses, and a number of the recommendations were being progressed through the work of the Council, there were some disappointing responses, particularly around the recommendations that the Council develops a dedicated Poverty Strategy and looks to adopt the Socio-economic Duty.

Cllrs Fry and Altaf-Khan left the meeting and did not return.

Cllr Mike Rowley, Companies Scrutiny Panel Chair provided an update of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group held on 21 June 2023. He stated that further analysis was required to ensure that the responsibility for future costs for maintaining the infrastructure and communal areas was confirmed, and in particular if there would be a common strategy for all Joint Ventures or whether there would be a bespoke approach for each. It was suggested that this could be an area of Scrutiny-commissioned work.

The Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee on the first Climate and Environment Panel of the municipal year on 27 June 2023. The membership for 2023/24 was Cllrs Hollingsworth (Chair), Dunne, Kerr and Miles. The Panel considered the Work Plan of the Panel for the year ahead, and agreed to focus on the following themes alongside

consideration of relevant Cabinet reports and a number of standing items as per the Panel's scope:

- Tree planting and maintenance
- Energy generation/solar potential on Council buildings
- Air pollution
- Retrofit
- Council policies/projects/actions
- Waste – dependent on Government timescales.

In addition, the Panel considered the draft Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Retrofit Guidance for Historic Buildings Technical Advice Note and received a Biodiversity Update presentation. The discussions were wide ranging and constructive, leading to the formulation of 7 recommendations on the TAN tem and 4 recommendations on the Biodiversity Update item – all of which would be submitted to Cabinet for formal responses in July.

The Committee **noted** the responses to the recommendations and updates from Panel meetings.

19. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted, including that the Scrutiny Committee in August 2023 was cancelled due to no business.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.17 pm

Chair
2023

Date: Tuesday 5 September

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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