

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 5 September 2023



Committee members present:

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

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services
Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead
Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager
Peter Moore, Programme Manager - Out of Hospital Care Team
Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Carri Unwin, Regeneration Manager
Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer
Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Pegg and Dunne sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

20. Declarations of interest

Item 9: Delivery of a New Burial Space

Cllr Diggins: stated that she was a Trustee of the Oxford Preservation Trust; she made the declaration for reasons of transparency; it was not a pecuniary interest and she indicated that she would remain in the room and participate in discussion on that item.

21. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

22. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 04 July 2023 as a true and accurate record.

The Committee agreed to consider items 8, 9 and 10 next on the agenda, followed by items 5, 6, 7 and 11.

23. Out of Hospital Care Team Provision

Peter Moore, Programme Manager – Out of Hospital Care Team introduced the report, which sought authorisation to continue the Oxfordshire Out of Hospital Care Model through financing secured from the Better Care Fund, and sought delegated authority to award ongoing contracts (with annual break clauses) for the provision of this service, subject to securing the necessary financing.

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Peter Moore, Programme Manager – Out of Hospital Care Team responded to the Committee's questions as follows:

- The requested funding would sustain the Model's current state rather than enabling growth. The Oxfordshire Out of Hospital Care Model (OOHCM) had seen substantial growth from its original model; the immediate focus now would be on consolidation, implementing lessons learned, and refining the overall model.
- The King's College London evaluation of the model would determine the actual level of requirement and inform the direction of the project.
- The OOHCM currently operated on an annual cost of approximately £2 million, based on the current evaluation. This meant supporting around 300 people per year, including approximately 150 discharged from hospitals. Extrapolating from the ongoing model growth, this capacity could potentially extend to 350 people per year.
- A desire to shift to longer-term contracts had been expressed; the Integrated Care Board, overseeing the Better Care Fund (BCF), had indicated an aim to move away from short-term agreements.

The Committee noted the report; no recommendations were agreed.

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Peter Moore, Programme Manager – Out of Hospital Care Team left the meeting and did not return.

24. Delivery of a New Burial Space

Cllr Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks introduced the report, which sought approval for delivery of a new publicly accessible greenspace and burial meadow on land owned by the Council off Oxford Road towards Horspath, including approval of the scheme, submission of Planning application to South Oxfordshire District Council, Phase 1 delivery budget and required Property and Legal procedures to deliver the scheme. It was highlighted that the Council had carried out extensive searches for a new burial site within Oxford and neighbouring districts over the last decade and faced challenges due to the limited availability of suitable land. Cllr Munkonge extended his thanks to Members and officers who had contributed to the project thus far.

Cllrs Arshad and Corais joined the meeting.

Cllr Munkonge, Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services, Carri Unwin, Regeneration Manager and Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead answered the Committee's questions as follows:

- Consultants were appointed in January 2023 to examine the design of the burial site. Whilst the number of plots for the site had been determined, it was important to note that changes could still occur during the planning process.
- The site would have a 45-year lifespan; however, this did not imply closure of the site after this period. There was no need for concern regarding graves being disturbed upon completion of the site's 45-year lifespan.
- The site would continue to adhere to the Council's existing rules and regulations on cemeteries and burials, with slight modifications to its naturalistic character. This would include encouraging the use of sustainable headstones (made of timber or matte stone) and minimising the use of plastics, in alignment with the Council's Net Zero Policy.
- Considerable effort had been invested in ensuring a thorough Equalities Impact Assessment, which included ongoing conversations with stakeholders including faith leaders, the Interfaith Forum and Death Committees. Officers confirmed that they would explore best practice within other local authority burial sites where there were large communities of faith (e.g. Bradford and Birmingham).
- The proposed site had an existing Covenant which intended to prevent development and preserve open and green space; this meant there were certain limitations on how the land could be utilised.
- "The Oxford Model" had been key to the Council's financial stability and proven effective to the City thus far. This had been recognised in the recent Local Government Association Peer Review exercise. The Committee was advised that the agreement with Oxford Direct Services aimed to support the timely and efficient delivery of the burial service.

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

1. That the Council continues to facilitate open dialogue and communication with stakeholders in order to help ensure the success of the proposed project, with all Members being kept informed of progress as the project develops.

25. Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

The Committee resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendices 2, 4 and 6 to the 'Delivery of a New Burial Space' report on the grounds that their presence would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

a) Delivery of a New Burial Space - exempt appendices

The Committee asked questions in relation to the information contained in Appendices 2, 4 and 6 to the report.

The recommendations arising from the matters contained in Appendices 2, 4 and 6 are reflected in minute item 24 above.

26. Public Session

The Committee resolved to return to public session for the remaining items of business.

27. The Leys Pools & Leisure Centre - Youth Hub

Cllr Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks introduced the report, which sought approval for a project in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to create a youth hub based in the currently under-utilised space at the Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, to be made possible by utilising external funding from both Capital (building works) and Revenue (youth work). He highlighted the programme had been designed in liaison with local young people.

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services and Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager added that the proposal was based on the insights collected from community engagement activities with the local health profile highlighting the need for these changes. In line with efforts to reimagine leisure, the proposal set out a plan to reanimate the centre's entrance, making it a vibrant and thriving space for the community. It was noted that the proposed project was entirely externally funded.

Cllr Munkonge, Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services and Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager answered questions from the Committee as follows:

- Building strong relationships with youth was crucial. Young people from a variety of diverse backgrounds had been consulted to ensure inclusivity and that the proposal reflected the wishes of young people.
- The conditions of the funding were closely tied to the local area's needs. The focus was on demonstrating the project's impact and promoting cross-fertilisation of activities, making the entire centre a thriving hub for young people and families.
- The centre would be accessible to everyone (though provision of transport was not in scope of the proposal), regardless of where they lived, with localised youth work being a key focus.
- In terms of future year sustainability, an opportunity with the current funder could exist but was not guaranteed; early conversations with partners were ongoing. Additionally, potential funding opportunities would be continually sought and explored for the project's sustainability in the longer-term.
- There had been positive engagement with local schools.
- Building resilience and confidence in young people's lives would be a broad ambition and continued collaboration with schools, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners would remain a big part of the community strategy, including growing issues surrounding young people's mental health.
- The programme currently had good diversity in relation to ethnicity but lacking in terms of gender. There would be a continued aim to address disparities amongst girls in certain age groups and areas where there were discrepancies.

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

1. That the Council includes a risk relating to continuity of the youth hub provision within the risk register, which will be monitored on an ongoing basis and any relevant risk mitigations implemented.

28. 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:

- October Cabinet reports
 - Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge
 - Delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure for Oxford
 - Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document
- November Cabinet reports
 - Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2024/25
 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25
 - Equalities Update
- December Cabinet reports
 - Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23
 - Oxfordshire Food Strategy Action Plan
 - Joint Venture LLP for South Oxford Science Village

The Committee noted that there were other items scheduled for November Cabinet which would be of interest to Scrutiny, namely the Leisure Management Contract report and the Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal report. The Committee requested that the Scrutiny Officer explore options for consideration of both items at the November Scrutiny Committee meeting and report back at the next meeting.

The Committee noted that, following discussion on the Work Plan at the previous meeting, a number of items had been scheduled for later in the municipal year:

- Tourism Review Group Update
- Domestic Abuse Review Group Update
- Adult Exploitation

29. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Draft Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Retrofit Guidance for Historic Buildings Technical Advice Note
- Biodiversity Update
- Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Safeguarding Policy 2023-26
- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge
- Citizen Experience Strategy
- Future Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families
- Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey
- Expansion of the Housing First Programme
- Update on Customer Complaints and Feedback

Cllr Mike Rowley, Companies Scrutiny Panel Chair provided an update of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group held on 27 July 2023.

Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Housing and Homelessness Panel Chair provided an update of the recent activities of the Housing and Homelessness Panel which had met on 05 July and 02 August 2023.

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

30. Budget Review Group Scope

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, highlighting that the draft Budget Review Group scope was broadly similar to previous years and meeting dates had been circulated to relevant attendees.

The Committee confirmed its agreement to the Budget Review Group Scope for 2024/25.

31. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.38 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 10 October 2023

*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.*