PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 11 March 2022 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at

Present:

Voting Members:	Councillor Eddie Reeves – in the Chair
	Councillor Michael O'Connor (Deputy Chair)
	Councillor Brad Baines
	Councillor Ian Corkin
	Councillor Donna Ford
	Councillor Andrew Gant
	Councillor Damian Haywood
	Councillor Ian Middleton
	Councillor Robin Bennett (Substituting for Councillor David Rouane)
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council
	Councillor Glynis Phillips (Cabinet Member for Corporate in Services)
	Councillor Liz Brighouse OB E (Deputy Leader of the Council)
	Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery & Environment)
	Councillor Callum Miller (Cabinet Member for Finance)
	Councillor Jenny Hannaby (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care)
	Councillor Neil Fawcett, (Cabinet Member for Community Services & Safety
Officers:	Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customers, Organisational Development and Resources
	Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adult & Housing Services
	Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Environment and Place
	Mark Haynes, Director – Customer and Culture
	Ansaf Azhar, Director of Public Health
	Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance
	Hayley Good, Deputy Director of Education
	Emily Schofield, Interim Head of Strategy
	Celia Prado-Teeling, Communications, Strategy & Insight
	Michael Carr, Scrutiny Officer
	Cameron MacLean, Committee Clerk

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below.

5/21   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

The Chair stated that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Rouane and that Councillor Bennett was substituting for Councillor Rouane.

6/21   DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
(Agenda No. 2)

There were no Declarations of Interest.

7/21   MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2022 and authorised the Chair to sign them as a correct record.

8/21   PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS
(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

9/21   OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING
(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources, RECOMMENDING that the Committee:

1. Consider the Outcomes Framework and Performance Management arrangements set out in [the] report and its annexes;

2. Provide any comments, suggestions, or feedback to Cabinet;

3. Note the progress to date on developing a Public Performance Portal ("the Portal") with a planned "go live" [date] in the second quarter of the year; and

4. Consider whether the Committee would like a demonstration of the Portal.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, who presented the report.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were made.

(a)   In response to a question regarding which Performance Model had been used when preparing the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document ("the document"), and whether any other models had been considered, Claire Taylor, Corporate Director, Customers, Organisational Development and Resources, stated there were different approaches that could

be adopted in relation to performance management. Regarding the Outcomes Framework ("the Framework"), the intention was to represent a way of monitoring and managing progress of the Council's strategic priorities. To that extent, the Framework was a combination of progress measures and initiatives, and key performance measures of the Council's core business. Accordingly, the Framework was an exercise in balancing a summary of core measures and key outcomes.

Ms Taylor noted that there were different Performance Management models that could be used, such as a balanced scorecard and EFQN[1] and that different approaches were used in different areas of the Council depending on what was appropriate. She noted that the Framework was the "tip of the Performance Management iceberg" which had several hundred metrics below it.

[Ms Taylor then provided a detailed explanation on how this worked in practice, including the operation of the Public Performance Portal].

(b)   In response to several questions, Councillor Phillips provided the following information –

   (i)   All the Council's Cabinet Members would have had some input into the Performance Framework;

   (ii) To link Strategic Priorities and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and how Key Plans and Strategies supported and underpinned the wider delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan, would have made the document extremely long and unwieldy;

   (iii) Regarding the Council's Strategic Plan and its vision of "Leading Positive Change by Working in Partnership to Make Oxfordshire a Greener, Fairer and Healthier County", it was noted that "Working with Partners" was a work in progress and that, at present, the Council could only measure performance in relation to its own activities; and

   (iv) The Framework and Performance Management document, as well as being a strategic document, was a dynamic document.

(c)   Councillor Sudbury added that the performance indicators for climate issues were "legacy indicators" and no longer fit for purpose. He noted that work was being carried out on updating the performance indicators as well as a new Climate and Resilience strategy.

(d)   In response to a question by the Chair, it was stated that officers had been carrying out work to include operational measures in the Public Performance Portal and it was the intention that the operational measures would, in due course, operate in real time. It was noted that it was the pace of this work and the nature of performance indicators that determined how often particular groups might meet to discuss work that was ongoing.

[Ms Taylor detailed reporting arrangements which were intended to provide accountability and clarity. She noted that the Performance Framework included how often performance was measured, stating that not all KPIs would be

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[1] European Foundation for Quality Management: a not-for-profit membership foundation in Brussels established in 1989 to increase the competitiveness of the European economy.

included in the Outcomes Framework to aid clarity and prevent the document becoming unwieldy].

(e)   In response to a proposal regarding correlating information in the strategic framework to the size of the population and population growth, Councillor Phillips stated she would arrange for a suitable presentation of information on population size and growth to be included in the information presented in the document

ACTION: Councillor Phillips

(f)   In response to questions, Councillor Brighouse provided the following information –

   (i)   When considering Children's Educational Outcomes, there were numerous national comparators and it was, therefore, necessary to compare like-with-like including, for example, numbers of children in an area, levels of poverty, and the number of private schools in an area;

   (ii) A matrix system was one way of bringing together different issues and outcomes; and

   (iii) Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Appeal Tribunals had been considered by the Council's Children, Education & Families services and may be considered by the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

(g)   In response to a suggestion that reading and understanding the information presented in the report could be made easier if the report was reformatted, it was noted that Performance Reports would include Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings and other information that would be of assistance to Members when interpreting and scrutinising the information presented to them.

(h)   In response to a question about outputs and outcomes, Ms Taylor noted the distinction between outputs and outcomes and how to analyse this information within the context of performance management and actions.

(i)   In response to a further question about how information in the report was presented, Ms Taylor noted that there was a detailed coding system sitting behind the information presented in the report and officers were looking at how best to present the information using the available software including by way of narrative and/or tables. She confirmed that officers would be willing to attend scrutiny meetings should there be a standing item on the agenda on the presentation of information.

(j)   Ms Taylor confirmed that the framework had been created with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in mind but included various statutory KPIs, targets and measures, as well as other standard measures used for reporting purposes. She noted that it was important that the outcomes framework reflected OCC's priorities and objectives

   Ms Taylor went on to say that the Government White Paper Levelling Up: Levelling up the United Kingdom, indicated that there may be a return to more standardised, national KPIs and changes to how inspections were carried out and reported.

(k)   In response to a question by the Chair, Ms Taylor confirmed that the Outcomes Framework was a core Council document.

(l)   Councillor Phillips confirmed that the framework had to be given sufficient time to allow itself to become embedded thereby allowing Members to see trends in the information presented and how the Council was performing. She noted that there was an option to do "deep dives" which provided the opportunity for comparisons and benchmarking.

Councillor Phillips went on to say that some metrics in the Outcomes Framework were within the Council's control and there were wide areas across Oxfordshire where the Council exercised influence through discussions, Committees, and joint working with the District Councils, Universities, and the NHS, as well as submitting motions to national government making it aware of OCC policies and asking for change. However, the information that was before the committee today related to matters which were under the Council's control.

The Leader of the Council ("the Leader"), Councillor Leffman, noted the role of bodies such as the Health and Wellbeing Board which looked at broader issues in some detail with the Council's various partners. Accordingly, she proposed it was appropriate for this Committee to look at matters which were under the Council's control.

(m)   Councillor Brighouse noted that child poverty was a good indicator in relation to levels of attainment and other measures. Accordingly, she proposed that child poverty should be to the fore when considering how to measure outcomes and performance and in discussions with groups considering issues of child poverty, such as the Children's Trust.

Councillor Brighouse concluded by noting the relationship between income (something which the Council could not control) and child poverty, and the need to address issues of equity as well as equality.

(n)   Councillor Miller noted that Cabinet would welcome the Committee's views on balancing accountability for things that were within the Council's control and progress towards the Council's overall desired outcomes. He noted that the Committee would want to see information in the reports and metrics that came before it which would allow Members to ask for evidence of the Council's achievements. Therefore, it was necessary to find a way of expressing within the Framework, performance management information about items over which the Council had direct control, and the Council's aspirations which may be dependent upon partnership working.

(o)   As the Council had little control over certain factors affecting child poverty and the ways in which it was assessed, it was proposed that the Council might consider other forms of poverty over which the Council had some discretion when prioritising issues. If it was a priority of the administration to reduce inequality, it should be included within the Performance and Outcomes Framework and Cabinet should be asked to review the measures it looked at when considering poverty and inequality.

(p)   In response to several points raised by the Deputy Chair, Councillor Phillips, Ansaf Azhar, Director of Public Health, and Councillor Sudbury provided the following information –

(i)   The main report addressing issues of inequality was the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health.

(ii)　If the Committee had ideas as to what measurements should be included in the Climate Action Plan, it would be welcomed if the Committee were to include these in its recommendations.

(iii)　The NHS Health Check, which was an important preventative measure which considered amongst other things issues of GP registration, was commissioned by OCC's Public Health Team.

(iv)　There were several partnership bodies, such as the Health Improvement Board, some of which reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board, which looked at the metrics of partnership working.

(v)　The Council also produced specific action plans, for example, "Smoke-Free Oxfordshire", which involved partnership working with relevant bodies and organisations across Oxfordshire.

(vi)　As issues such as inequality were so broad ranging, it was useful to have metrics that included matters specifically under the control of OCC and metrics covering the work of partnership and other organisations.

(vii)　It was noted there was a Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee looking at the countywide climate strategy which had been adopted by Oxfordshire County Council and the District Councils as Climate Change Action Plan. Currently, officers from the County Council and the District Councils were working on making the Plan operational, including producing a "Gant Chart" with performance indicators.

(q)　In response to questions about the information included in the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document, Councillor Philip provided the following information –

(i)　It was a matter of choosing which metrics to include in the document. If all the metrics on inequality were included, it would be a very large document. She noted that information on metrics not included in the report were available in other documentation. However, if the Committee wished to make recommendations on including shortened versions of specific metrics in the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document, the Cabinet would consider such recommendations.

(ii)　The Cabinet was due to consider the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document and any recommendations made by the Committee at its meeting later in the month. She noted that policy documents may produce new key performance indicators (KPIs) and that was why the document made references to "policy development". The choice of strategies and KPIs referred to in the document related to the Council's priorities and had been selected as they were manageable, relevant, and addressed concerns of "added burden" should new KPIs be adopted.

(r)　The Leader, Councillor Leffman made the following observations –

(i)　There were three Overview & Scrutiny Committees (OSC's) and some of the concerns that had been raised today would be considered by other OSC's;

(ii) The purpose of the document was to allow the Council to measure its progress against its priorities and to get into granular detail risked losing sight of the purpose of the document; and

(iii) If a Scrutiny Committee felt it did not have sufficient information on a particular area, it was open to the Committee to look at that area in detail.

(s) Councillor Brighouse noted that the Children's and Young People Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy referred to in the document had been considered in detail by the Health Overview Scrutiny Committee. She noted the importance of having the appropriate, rather than all available, KPIs presented to the Committee. Therefore, she proposed that it was for the Committee to recommend to Cabinet which KPIs would be the most relevant.

(t) Claire Taylor, Corporate Director, Customers, Organisational Development and Resources, noted that there was a "Strategy Map" which linked various related documents ("the golden thread") and that it may be useful for this Committee to consider this document and how it may be used for work planning purposes.

(u) In response to several points raised by a Member of the Committee, the Chair noted that there had been several recurring themes in the discussion including the utility, comparability, and transparency in relation to the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document ("the document"), all of which were necessary if people were to be able to interrogate the document.

(v) In response to several points raised by a Members of the Committee, the Chair noted that, allied to the recurrent themes of utility, comparability, and transparency, was the stability of the metrics. He noted that there was an inherent tension between the introduction of new KPIs reflecting new priorities and/or new data that became available and ensuring that there was consistency within the metrics during the lifetime of the administration, thereby allowing the Committee to gauge the Council's performance in terms of both political priorities and statutory requirements.

(w) In response to a point raised about the resources available to the Committee to carry out its work, the Chair proposed that, when it came to the Committee's key findings and recommendations, the Committee may wish to recommend that, to allow the Committee to discharge its responsibilities, it be given more resources to allow it to meet more frequently.

(x) In response to an invitation by the Chair for any further comments, Members of the Committee made the following proposals –

(i) Statutory KPIs be distinguished from other KPIs;

(ii) That information from different sources be included in the Public Performance Portal ("the Portal") with links that that allowed users to navigate the various sources of information on the Portal; and

(iii) The necessity of taking a broad, countywide and beyond view of climate issues and, in so doing, allowing the Committee the opportunity to add to the recommendations relating to climate change to make them "fit for purpose".

At this point in the proceedings, the Chair proposed that he summarise the key findings of the Committee and that the Committee then agree on the recommendations it wished to make to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: To note the recommendations of the report which were to –

1. **Consider the Outcomes Framework and Performance Management arrangements set out in [the] report and its annexes;**

2. **Provide any comments, suggestions, or feedback to Cabinet;**

3. **Note the progress to date on developing a Public Performance Portal ("the Portal") with a planned "go live" [date] in the second quarter of the year; and**

4. **Consider whether the Committee would like a demonstration of the Portal.**

FURTHER RESOLVED: to –

1. Inform Cabinet of the Committee's Key Findings, as follows –

   Key Findings

   That the Committee –

   1. Noted The importance of the Outcomes Framework and Performance Report document ("the document") for –

      (a) Cabinet, as a means of monitoring progress by the administration;

      (b) Members of the Public;

      (c) Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committees; and

      (d) The Council's partnership bodies and agencies.

   2. Was concerned about –

      (a) The utility of the document in its present format, and its utility relative to other sources of data;

      (b) How to measure how well Oxfordshire County Council was performing vis-à-vis other local authorities with similar services and responsibilities and whether the measures and indices used to measure performance of the respective authorities were comparable;

      (c) The nature and content of the metrics used to measure performance which had to be stable and transparent if they were to be relied upon; and

      (d) Having sufficient resources to allow the Committee to continue to scrutinise the document as it developed, and in its final draft form.

   3. Was of the view that there should be a Standing Item on the Committee's agenda on the presentation and formatting of data and information in Council reports and other sources of information.

      [At this point, Councillor Bennett made a comment that was inaudible as his microphone was switched off, but which the Chair acknowledged in relation to his earlier comments].

2. Make the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Cabinet –

   1. That the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee ("the Committee") recommend to the Cabinet, that -

      (a) Statutory metrics in the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document ("the document") be separated from political priorities to allow

the Committee to determine how the administration was performing in relation to its –

- Strategic and political priorities; and

- It's statutory functions.

(b) The measures used for determining levels of poverty and inequality be reviewed as the present measures were deemed inadequate, and that any revised measures should include means by which the administration might be held accountable in terms of its performance in relation to levels of poverty and inequality.

(c) The Committee be given the resources necessary to perform its scrutiny functions in relation to the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document as it was developed, and upon completion of its final draft.

3. It was **FURTHER RECOMMENDED** by the Committee that, Cabinet –

1. Review the templates used for the Outcomes Framework and Performance Reporting document ("the document") to address concerns about formatting and to ensure that the document was comprehensible as an overarching document;

2. Adopt, as its preferred format, the format used in Pages 24 to 26 of the report which identified the Responsible Officer and Lead Cabinet Member, subject to the preferred formatting (including the use of Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings; narrative columns; and alignment of objectives and outcomes, when using tables) being agreed when the final draft of the document was produced;

3. Ensure that –

(a) There were suitable links within the document to ancillary and related documents;

(b) That all Council Members were made aware of the Public Performance Portal and apprised of its operation; and

(c) Where a service had an external appeals procedure, information was provided, according to Council directorate, on the number of external appeals and the outcome of those appeals.

4. Where specific strategies and/or reports were mentioned in the document, that the relevant KPIs also be included in the document.

10/21 CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE - DELIVERY MODEL AND PLANS FOR TRANSFORMATION PRESENTATION
(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources in which the Committee was: RECOMMENDED to consider the content of the briefing note [set out in the report] with a view to [making] suggestions for performance and development [improvements] within this function.

Mark Haynes, Director, Customer and Culture, presented the report.

In response to a question by the Chair, Mr Haynes stated that the difference between continuous improvement and transformation within the context of the Customer Service Centre was one of scale whereby continuous improvement referred to "business as usual" activities, and transformation referred to collaborative work with other services on larger programmes and projects.

In response to an invitation from the Chair to add any comments that she might wish to make, Councillor Phillips stated that she wished to thank Mr Haynes and his team for their work, noting that they were constantly seeking to improve the service.

She stated that complaints were one way of finding out what was going on within the organisation and, therefore, the Council was looking to centralise its Complaints Service to determine the nature of issues affecting residents.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were raised by Members of the Committee.

(a) That use private sector terminology such as customer, business, corporate etc. was to be discouraged as being inappropriate when referring to the Council's Complaints Service, which was a public service.

(b) In response to several questions by Members, Mr Haynes provided the following information –

    (i) Following the installation of a new telephone system in June/July of last year, it had been possible to offer web chat and social media services as part of the Contact Service Centre services and staff were becoming adept at responding to enquiries using these services as well as responding to telephone enquiries.

    (ii) Work was being carried out on the Council's ICT Digital Presence programme to improve the Council's website, notably the front end of the service, including searches using the Council website which could give rise to enquiries as well as complaints following service user searches of the Council's website.

    (iii) Discussions were taking place as to how AI[2] might be used to improve the Council's services over the next year.

    (iv) Regarding services for persons who did not have access to digital technology, it was the intention to offer a variety of services such that people could choose how they wished to communicate with the Council and to do so in a way that was simple.

    (v) Work on establishing good relationships with the Council's various Directorates, including informing them of the services that the Contact Centre could offer when responding to enquiries, had meant that the major Directorates were now willing to allow the Contact Centre to respond to enquiries on their behalf. Concerning directorates more reluctant to allow the Contact Centre to field their enquiries by virtue of the professional nature of their service, it was noted that the Contact Centre comprised Council staff who were professionals in Customer Service Contact Handling.

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[2] Artificial Intelligence

(c) In response to further questions from Members of the Committee, Mr Haynes provided the following information –

(i) Regarding maintaining staff morale, he stated it was necessary with large numbers of staff to keep them informed and engaged and, to achieve that, Members of Staff were sent regular email updates about the service; were encouraged to participate in any initiatives that the service might be undertaking, for example, involving staff in undertaking User Acceptance Testing (UAT) during last year's rollout of the new telephone system; that six Members of Staff were "Delivering the Future Together" Champions; and the creation of a staff forum run by Members of Staff which he , As Director of the Service, attended on occasion to give staff updates on the service.

These initiatives complemented existing staff training and feedback as well as fun activities that were organised throughout the year, including Christmas, all of which help to keep staff energised.

(ii) Concerning partnership working, Mr Haynes stated that, if an enquiry was received that referred to a District Council matter, there was a move towards trying to assist the enquirer. He noted that, in terms of customer satisfaction, this approach was to be preferred, if possible, to simply deflecting the call to the relevant District Council.

(iii) In his role as Director, Mr Haynes stated that he sat on different bodies involving the County Council, the City and District Councils and outside bodies. In so doing, he carried out benchmarking exercises to encourage a uniformity of standards across the different organisations and services. In addition, he offered to assist and share information with these organisations to promote uniformity in the standards of service across the various service providers.

(iv) To ensure the retention of new and competent staff, Mr Haynes operated what he said might loosely be referred to as a "Career Progression Team", noting that there were different grades within the Contact Centre allowing staff to progress to higher grades within the Contact Centre. In addition, there were Team Leader posts which offered an opportunity for career progression. However, vacancies for Team Leader posts did not often arise, but there were secondment opportunities for staff covering for Team Leaders who were currently on maternity leave.

In addition, the creation of the "Continuous Improvement Team" had afforded an opportunity to bring some Members of Staff through the ranks.

Furthermore, as many Contact Centre staff had a good knowledge of the structure and organisation of the Council, this afforded them opportunities to develop their careers in other posts within the Council.

(d) Council Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services, stated that the Contact Centre had become adept at directing people seeking Adult Social Services to other organisations or services which might be better placed to provide the service required, thereby freeing up the Council's Adult Social Services for those persons who were most vulnerable and most in need of the Council's services.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chair noted that there were no substantive recommendations for the Committee to consider and that it was not necessary for the Committee to consider key issues arising out of Mr Haynes presentation or the discussion. Also, it was not necessary for the Committee to make any recommendations to Cabinet. Therefore, he proposed that the Committee note the presentation and the points raised in the subsequent discussion.

NOTED

11/21 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee had before it a report by the Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources incorporating a briefing note about complaints management.

It was RECOMMENDED that the Committee consider the content of the briefing note with a view to suggestions for performance and development within this function.

Mindful of the time, the Chair proposed that, as in keeping with the previous item, there were no substantive recommendations for the committee to consider and there was no requirement for the committee to identify key issues or make recommendations to Cabinet. Therefore, he proposed that this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

On the advice of the Scrutiny Officer, the Chair proposed that, rather than defer the report to the next meeting of the Committee, that the Committee simply note the report.

AGREED: To note the report.

Concluding Remarks by the Chair

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the Committee in the current municipal year. Therefore, he proposed that any Members who wished to remain on the Committee, give consideration as to items that the Committee might wish to scrutinise in the next municipal year.

Mr Michael Carr, Scrutiny Officer

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of Michael Carr, Scrutiny Officer, and that he wished to put wish to put on record the Committee's thanks for his able assistance in recent weeks and months.

Committee Work Programme 2022/23

In response to a Member's question, Mr Carr stated that, as the Committee's Work Programme was not an item on the agenda for consideration at today's meeting, it was not possible for Members of the Committee to agree, at this meeting, items for inclusion on the Committee's Work Programme for the next municipal year. He proposed that it would be appropriate for the Committee, at its first meeting in the new municipal year to agree its Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year. In so doing, he proposed that the Committee consult with OCC Councillors and officers;

stakeholders; outside bodies; and any other interested parties, in deciding which items the Committee may wish to consider, and when, in the next municipal year.

The Chair then closed the meeting.

The meeting ended at 1:15 PM

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Date of signing …………………………………………………….   *DD MM* 2022

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Date of signing   200