

## OXFORDSHIRE PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Wednesday, 24 November 2021 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 4.00 pm.

### **Present:**

Councillor Ian Snowdon – in the Chair

### Councillors:

Charlie Hicks  
Brad Baines  
Dan Levy

Kieron Mallon  
Jane Murphy  
Sally Povolotsky

Judy Roberts  
Richard Webber

**Other Members in Attendance:** Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety, Councillor Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, Councillor Tim Bearder.

**Officers:** Corporate Director, Customers Organisational Development, Claire Taylor, the Interim Assistant Director for Cultural, Lesli Good and the Director of Customer Experience & Cultural Services, Mark Haynes; The Assistant Director for Infrastructure and Planning, Rachel Wileman, Melissa Goodacre, John Disley, Joseph Kay and Chanika Farmer; Jodie Townsend, Michael Carr and Deborah Miller (Law & Governance).

*The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **9/21 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item 3)

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 22 September 2021 and 13 October 2021 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

### **10/21 DEVELOPING A LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE STRATEGY**

(Agenda Item 5)

The Committee had before it a report which provided members with background information and work undertaken to develop the emerging Libraries and Heritage strategy which would be considered at Cabinet on 21st December 2021. The Cabinet Lead Member for Community Services and Safety, Councillor Fawcett, the Corporate Director, Customers Organisational Development, Claire Taylor, the Interim Assistant Director for Cultural, Lesli Good and the Director of Customer Experience & Cultural Services, Mark Haynes, had been invited to the meeting to give a

presentation on the Strategy (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the minutes).

Councillor Fawcett introduced the report. He welcomed developing the Libraries and Heritage Strategy and said that he believed that Libraries provided a very important link between the council and residents across Oxfordshire. It was a widely used and loved service with around 2.3 million library visits last year. Oxfordshire had not had a clear Strategy in place for many years and the new Strategy aimed to give very clear direction to the services moving forward. Officers had listened to a wide variety and stakeholders and councillors drawing up the document. The Strategy was not the full implementation plan, if the Strategy was approved in the spring, there would be a further stage looking in much more details looking at libraries and heritage across the County.

Claire Taylor introduced the presentation. She reported that extensive pre-engagement and development activities had taken place. A formal consultation on the plan would then be undertaken next year. She welcomed the input of the Committee and undertook to bring the actions in the five-year plan to Committee following the consultation.

The Interim Assistant Director for Cultural, Lesli Good, then gave a presentation on the Strategy (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the minutes). Key points were as follows:

- 22 libraries managed by county council staff
- 22 Community Supported Libraries run by staff with the support of volunteers
- Home Library Service supporting 670 clients
- Prison library Service in Huntercombe and Bullingdon
- the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock
- the Museums Resource Centre at Standlake, housing the reserve collection
- a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade 1 listed medieval barn at Swalcliffe, providing accessible storage for large agricultural and trade vehicles
- Oxfordshire History Centre in St Lukes Church, Cowley
- all three museum locations and the History Centre are Accredited (meeting nationally agreed standards for museum and archive services to inspire the confidence of the public and funding and governing bodies)
- Victoria County History, a literary charity whose purpose is to publish the complete history of Oxfordshire
- The museum service also has a legacy responsibility for the remains of the Bishop's Palace in Witney

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The services were highly valued and used by residents. Key performance data in 2019 as the last full year of operation before the pandemic was set out below:

- 2.3m visits to libraries
- 3.4m items borrowed from libraries
- 159,071 of these were e books or e audio books
- 166,255 searches for e magazines
- 670 housebound residents supported by the Home Library Service
- County Library has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest borrowing figures in Great Britain
- 8,355 events in libraries attended by 98,000 people
- >1,200 volunteers supported delivery of services
- 127,092 visits to the Oxfordshire Museum
- 3,645 visits to the Oxfordshire History Centre (17% of visitors were first time visitors)
- 3,600 remote enquiries answered by the history centre

Services for children were well attended as follows:

- 47,000 children visited libraries to borrow books
- 1.5m items were borrowed by children
- 598 events supporting children's reading and literacy
- 9,000 children participated in Summer Reading Challenge
- 1,780 Rhymetime, family events and Play and Stay sessions were delivered
- 26,000 children and young people (early years to Year 12) attended a class visit with teacher – for many of these it was the first visit to a library
- 1,900 Bookstart packages gifted to under 5s
- 1,500 children engaged in informal learning activities in the Museum
- 8,500 school children engaged with the museum service through loans of boxed collections of objects, workshops at the Museum and in school

Two workshops were held with staff, two with Friends of Libraries groups, two with volunteers and 1 with external stakeholders. Councillors were invited to a workshop and presentations were made to all Locality Meetings. Officers across the council were also engaged through a series of presentations. The public were invited to share ideas for libraries, museum and history service through the Let's Talk Oxfordshire portal.

The impact of the pandemic was considered.

Libraries, the museum, and history centre were closed during periods of lockdown in 2020 and 2021 with staff being re-deployed to support other services such as registration and making shielding calls, however the home library service continued to visit our housebound library members. Services wherever possible were delivered digitally including Rhymetimes and activities for children, Reading Groups and some library activities for adults.

Museum activities to support children learning and history centre website content were also significantly enhanced.

During the pandemic, the library service saw an exponential increase in on-line membership and e-book borrowing. From November 2020 during the second lockdown libraries offered a 'click and collect' service where residents could ask library staff to select books for them to collect from our largest branches and a small number of free PC bookings were made available in recognition that some residents were facing prolonged digital exclusion due to lack of personal devices and/or connectivity.

As a result of the pandemic, they had identified some drivers for change, including putting more of an offer online, there was a need to merge physical with virtual for a seamless experience for customers. In terms of community need, there was a need to focus local services on local need with increased profiling. Widening access also needed to be addressed in terms of equality, diversity, and inclusion. There was also a need to be mindful of population growth and better use of properties was also being looked at. The Strategy was based around three themes; people, place, and partnerships.

During debate, members made the following points and observations:

- In relation to consultation, the importance of engaging and consulting with 'casual users' of libraries was raised.
- Further data on quantity of staff employed was requested.
- Widening access hours needed to be given further consideration (for working people).
- Rural services needed to be given further consideration.
- The Committee indicated that a different word than 'modern' should be used in the vision document.
- The Committee queried whether libraries could be used by small businesses and other community groups and that libraries as a shared space should be explored further, including Wi-Fi, photocopying etc.
- The Committee felt that, particularly in rural areas, libraries could be used by youth groups and early years provision and could become hubs; widening access needed to be looked at including opening hours.
- Members queried whether any counties could/had been identified who were bucking trends with the number of visits/book withdrawals to draw on best practice.
- The issue of the ability for people to reserve books and rotating stock was raised.
- Members queried whether the strategic themes had been linked to desired outcomes.
- Members queried what was being done in relation to the prison service and meeting their needs.
- Members queried whether consideration was being given to the placement of libraries for new developments.
- Members queried whether there was any data around how many of the 2.3m were 'repeat customers' and whether there would be comparative data on before and after the Strategy.

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- Members queried whether officers were speaking to other heritage sites across the County that were not under Council ownership.
- Members queried whether there were staff in the team who had the expertise to expand digital capabilities and what proportion of the budget would be spent on it
- Members queried what co-location would look like, for example cafes, children's services.
- Sharing economy and circular economy – was the library looking at sharing of other things.
- Members queried how consultation and engagement was undertaken and whether there was going to be in-person workshops at libraries. Had any work been undertaken with coms on how best to achieve it.
- Members queried whether co-location had taken account of people working from home.
- Members queried whether there could be a mobile delivery and return service for Rural Areas.
- Members requested that coms were increased around the County's Heritage Services.
- Members welcomed the format of the Strategy.
- Members queried whether there could be more interactive sessions to increase usage by children. (engage playgroups further mobile services outside playgroups and schools) and queried whether there was any data on whether there was an age where children/adults dropped off.
- Members queried whether the library box collection service could be expanded.
- Members queried whether there was any plan with regards to retrofitting libraries to meet the Council's Climate Action targets and queried how books were moved around the county.
- Members queried what opportunities there were for moving books to schools and what life the books had.

Claire Taylor reported that one of the main outcomes of the Libraries Peer Review had been to look for good practice elsewhere and that details would be set out in the final document. Each vision would have clear priorities including an Asset Plan for each of 44 buildings – looking at co-location, usage and opening hours. There was a need to look at staffing requirements relating to service requirements. Lessons learnt from the Pandemic would be expanded upon.

Lesli Good reported that there was currently a good library management system, but that she was going to ask the new Library Services Manager to look at stock and how the Council engaged with the local community. The Asset Management Plan would look at the placement of libraries. Heritage – the County Museum Service provided advice and support to Council and voluntary led museums – but there was a need to increase the level of engagement with partners in the sector. The skills set of staff to deliver the Strategy needed to be looked at, with a view to investing more in staff and imbedding it into the service. The Digital Inclusion Strategy was looking at making a space in the County Library for engaging people in a broader range

in technological uses. There were however, some capacity issues around space. Officers were also looking at physical assets, for parenting classes and youth group etc. Officers were also using the let's talk Oxfordshire portal to engage and see what they wanted to see at the Libraries.

Mark Haynes explained that he had been working with Adult Social Care Team, Children's Services and the Transformation Board to increase the range and scope of services provided. They had also been talking to Age UK and The Community Information Network. Co-location with other Councils was also being considered.

Claire Taylor reported that the Consultation Strategy was considering making libraries a welcoming, open place to engage. In relation to the operational issues raised by the Committee, she undertook to produce a note on the operational side of Library Services and invited members to visit and see how the libraries operated.

Following the question and answer session, the Committee **AGREED** to submit the points above to inform the emerging Strategy.

## **11/21 STREET DESIGN GUIDE**

(Agenda Item 6)

The Committee had requested background information to inform the review and discussion of the recent Cabinet decision to adopt the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide. Oxfordshire County Council aimed to enable Oxfordshire as a whole to become zero-carbon by 2050. The Design Guide presented how the Council could prioritise active and healthy travel through street design in new developments contributing to the Council's carbon reduction ambitions. The Design Guide provided design standards for streets in new developments. Promoting high quality placemaking whilst achieving high quality infrastructure for walking, cycling and buses.

This guidance was also intended to support the development industry in the preparation and submission of development proposals through the provision of up to date and transparent guidance. This should both de-risk and accelerate the preparation and determination of development proposals for developers and the County Council.

The Committee had attended several workshops with officers on the Street Design Guide.

The Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, Councillor Duncan Enright introduced the item. He emphasised that although the Street Design Guide had been approved by Cabinet, that there was still an opportunity for input by Scrutiny as it was 'a living document' and was subject to constant monitoring and review and improvement. The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) consultation was also happening in January 2022, including all member workshops, and that, together with other documents,

would all be taken into account in the developing of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

Chanika Farmer then gave a presentation to the Committee (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes) which outlined the functions of the Street Design Guide and how it related to other guidance, together with areas for development following consultation with the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, including:

- Connectivity to areas surrounding new developments,
- Design of car-free / low car housing developments,
- Changes in shopping habits; accommodating deliveries in new developments,
- Junctions in new developments,
- Build on feedback from users of the Street Design Guide including stakeholders, District Councils, internal officers, and developers.

Following discussion, the Committee made the following points:

- Members wished to see the next version of the Street Design Guide taking a 'Living Streets' approach that streets should be for Community, for Children, for relaxing, for commercial, for socialising and being adaptable for other means and should connect to Public Health Strategy around Healthy Place Shaping.
- In the current document, there was no section on Car Free Developments, which would help meet the Climate Targets set out LTCP.
- The document should be helping the LTCP meet its aims.
- There was no mention of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging in the document – would like to see a specification that EV charging will be in a parking space rather than on the pavement.
- There was no specification in the document around no through traffic developments.
- The School Streets specification did not meet the aims of the School Street Programme intentions.
- Members questioned why the next version of the document was due for 2023 when it stated that it would be reviewed annually.
- The Committee noted that there was no mention in the engagement section of the document of any future engagement with the Scrutiny Committee.
- In relation to page 4 of the Street Design Guide, members expressed concern that the descriptive words used could be interpreted in different ways; there was a need for a clear narrative of what the Council's interpretations were.
- In relation to page 10, members felt that the language used seemed to imply that the Council would be swayed by external pressures and felt that the language should be changed or removed.
- Members queried how many times the Council had objected to a planning application based on proposals for street design or highway

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times and how many times it had been turned down due to those objections.

- There was no mention of 20 mph in the document.
- Members felt that there should be better promotion of walking and cycling to school.
- Paragraph 3.2 – some members felt that greater consideration should be given to School Drop off, although other members felt that rural considerations needed to be taken into account.
- Paragraph 3.4 – should include other plants with the capacity to absorb pollutants.
- Paragraph 3.5 - there needed to be careful Electric Vehicle planning set out in the document about where vehicles were charged and how they were charged.
- Paragraph 3.6 – consideration could be given to recycling such as Eddington in Cambridge; with communal shoots around the edge of the development including composting.
- Street lighting should have Central Management Systems attached to it.
- Greater consideration needs to be given to air pollution and car use.
- There was a need to ensure that developments were not planned in isolation and that joined up infrastructure was given consideration for community cohesion.
- All published adopted highway, which extended beyond streets, such as access side paths should be given consideration in the design of developments.
- The lack of bus infrastructure should be added to the challenges set out in document.
- Members queried who the stakeholders listed in the document were and asked to be sent a comprehensive list.
- Members should be added to the list of engagement consultee groups.
- Home delivery needed to be taken into account in the document.
- There needed to be closer co-operation before the one voice was written and careful consideration needed to be given to wording used.
- In relation to outdated parking standards, members queried what could be done now and what regulations needed to be kept under review to consider possible future changes.
- Some members felt that car free spaces options should be set out in the guide, supported by good public transport links
- Members felt that the repurchasing sections could be strengthened.
- Members expressed concern over the enforceability of the design guide.

Councillor Enright agreed that elected councillors should be added to the consultees, but felt that councillors should take more of a champion role on consultation and help reach the right people in their local communities. He agreed with the points around transitioning to zero carbon and electric vehicle charging considerations. In relation to the difference between rural and urban, he didn't feel that there was a difference, but in the LCTP they would be looking at mobility hubs as a way of boosting active and public



transport in rural areas, which was very important because of the stress on the bus services.

The Committee thanked officers for their presentation and **AGREED** to submit the points above for consideration.

## **12/21 LOCAL TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY PLAN CONSULTATION** (Agenda Item 7)

At its Meeting on 13 October 2021, the Committee had requested a report on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) consultation plan and the draft questionnaires. It was proposed that those documents formed the basis of the LTCP public consultation commencing in January 2022.

The Assistant Director for Infrastructure and Planning, Rachel Wileman introduced the report. She explained that the Local Transport Plan was a statutory document, required under the Transport Act 2008. Oxfordshire County Council were calling the new Oxfordshire document the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, to better reflect the Council's strategy, both for digital infrastructure and for connecting the whole County. They had developed and consulted upon the LTCP in three stages. This process had allowed for ongoing public engagement at each stage of the project. We have therefore been able to refine proposals before final inclusion in the LTCP.

In support of the LTCP, officers had developed supporting strategies for freight and logistics, active and healthy travel and innovation. Those strategies built upon the high-level policies in the LTCP but provided more detail about the proposals and how they would be delivered. Those documents, as well as an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, were shared alongside the LTCP and were also endorsed by cabinet for public consultation. She emphasised that consultation would be online, face to face, through hard copies, and telephone conversations.

Melissa Goodacre set out in detail how the public consultation and engagement would be undertaken as set out in paragraphs 7 to 15 of the report. The Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, Duncan Enright, added that they would also be carrying out roadshows across the County.

During discussion, members made the following points:

- Members queried whether there was a target for the consultation in terms of how many people they wanted to respond.
- Members expressed the importance of including representative bodies in the consultation to ensure the 'middle group' of people were not missed and requested to see the definitive list of stakeholders that would be consulted.
- Members expressed an interest in seeing how the plan would be changed as a result of the consultation.

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- Members felt that the number of empty boxes to give views provided in the consultation documents would not be helpful to officers trying to analyse opinions and that further questions should be added instead. A suggestion was also made that a 'for or against' box be added to the questionnaire.
- Greater attention needed to be given to providing explanations of jargon throughout the document to make sure it was inclusive.
- Members felt that the consultation questions did not try to capture what people's prioritisation of the issues were that the LTCP was trying to address.
- Members suggested that open respondent boxes were needed to understand why people held a certain view.
- Members queried where the references to "thriving economy" were throughout the questionnaire and suggested that the 3 visions should provide a 'golden thread' throughout the document.
- Concern was expressed about the methodology of phrases like "partially support" etc. being used and would welcome work to understand what responses meant as 'partially oppose' could be people who didn't like the proposal or didn't think it went far enough.
- Members suggested grading to see what priorities were rather than just binary support/oppose and expressed concern that the consultation only asked what people thought at the moment but did not explain what the benefits were of implementing policies.
- Members queried whether representative polling or weighting could be used and whether the consultation and engagement team had considered sampling bias, and queried whether Let's Talk Oxfordshire could do things to counteract this?
- Members suggested more could be done around participatory democracy.
- Concern was expressed that the consultation literature was not set out in layman's terms.
- Members suggested that the questionnaire should be more vision based asking people what they want and then formulating policies to reflect this.
- Members questioned whether there were any user experience designers at the Council and whether there was anyone that understood representative polling/sampling.
- Members felt that there was a need for behavioural change but that the option of promoting this did not present in the questionnaire.
- In relation to page 76 question 6, 'PM57' was mentioned, members queried what this was.
- A suggestion was made that a 1-10 scale was more effective.
- Members queried whether officers were aware if there was a drop in participation from other consultations.
- Members felt that zero-carbon movement and zero-tailpipe emission in the freight strategy was old fashioned term.
- Members felt that there needed to be a more holistic overview and that it needed to reflect the people we are trying to reach.

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- Further consideration needed to be given to the language used throughout the documentation and how things were explained .
- Members requested that the Innovation Framework be brought to the Scrutiny Committee at a later date.
- It was noted that the questionnaire only asked what district people were from and did not ask if people are from rural / urban areas.
- Members queried whether all protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010 were covered.
- Concern was expressed about how many people would complete the whole questionnaire and whether there was any way to filter the questionnaire so that key issues were captured.

Councillor Enright thanked the Committee for their input and undertook to work with consultation and engagement colleagues to refine the questionnaire and highlighted how in-person engagement could help.

**13/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

(Agenda Item 8)

Following an informal session on the 4 November 2021 held by the Committee to discuss the content of its work programme for 2021/22, the Committee had before it a report which presented the findings of the informal session and advised members in determining their work programme for the 2021/22 financial year.

A discussion took place on the work programme suggestions which had been received. Reference was made to the limited time available as the Committee only had four meetings and it was noted that Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups could work on scrutiny reviews and submit reports to the Committee with their findings.

The importance of Scrutiny having the opportunity to comment on Cabinet reports was discussed and Members noted that there was an opportunity for any Member of the Council to attend Cabinet and ask a relevant Cabinet Member a question.

Members requested that consideration be given to establishing a Member's Hub to provide briefing notes, background papers etc. Jodie Townsend reported that officers were currently looking at ways to disseminate information to members, including the possibility of using existing technology at the Council.

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED to add the following items to the work programme:

2 February 2022	
	Property Strategy
	Climate Change and Carbon Reduction

	National Bus Strategy
6 April 2022 – Annual Crime & Disorder Scrutiny meeting	
	<p>Community Safety Matters - focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Best Practice and how OCC compares</li> <li>○ Current approach and partnership working</li> <li>○ Community Safety Partnership</li> <li>○ PCC and links to Police and Crime Plan</li> <li>○ Fire &amp; Rescue Service Community Safety Plan</li> <li>○ Public perspective on key issues</li> </ul>
	Fire & Rescue Service Inspection Report

In addition to the items detailed above the Committee **AGREED** the establishment of two Scrutiny working groups as follows:

- ❑ **Carbon Reduction Targets:** Member Group to provide performance overview of current targets and make suggestions for development of future targets, the membership of the group being as follows: Cllr Hicks, Cllr Povolotsky.
- ❑ **Transport Policy Development** – Member Group to provide oversight of current and emerging transport policy development and consultation, the membership of the group being as follows: Cllr Hicks, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Levy, Cllr Baines and Cllr Mallon.

In addition to the items detailed above the Committee noted the following issues for future consideration:

- Flooding
- The Future of the High Street and Retail.

**14/21 COMMITTEE START TIME**

(Agenda Item 9)

The Committee had before it a proposal that from February 2022 the Committee Meeting start time be changed from 1.00 pm to 10.00 am as the permanent start time for the Committee moving forward.

**RESOLVED:** that from February 2022 the start time of the Committee Meetings will be 10.00 am.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....

