



County Council

13 July 2021

Agenda

These proceedings are open to the public

Please note that Council meetings are currently taking place in-person (not virtually) with social distancing at the venue. Meetings will continue to be live-streamed and those who wish to view them are strongly encouraged to do so online to minimise the risk of Covid 19 infection.

If you wish to view proceedings, please click [on this Live Stream Link](#). However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Places at the meetings are very limited due to the requirements of social distancing. If you still wish to attend this meeting in person, you must contact the Committee Officer by 9am four working days before the meeting and they will advise if you can be accommodated at this meeting and of the detailed Covid-19 safety requirements for all attendees.

Please note that in line with current government guidance *all* attendees are strongly encouraged to take two lateral flow tests in advance of the meeting, one of the morning of the Meeting if possible.

Declarations of Interest

The duty to declare.....

Under the Localism Act 2011 it is a criminal offence to

- (a) fail to register a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election or co-option (or re-election or re-appointment), or
- (b) provide false or misleading information on registration, or
- (c) participate in discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Whose Interests must be included?

The Act provides that the interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**

- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member;
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners.

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest).

What if I remember that I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the Meeting?.

The Code requires that, at a meeting, where a member or co-opted member has a disclosable interest (of which they are aware) in any matter being considered, they disclose that interest to the meeting. The Council will continue to include an appropriate item on agendas for all meetings, to facilitate this.

Although not explicitly required by the legislation or by the code, it is recommended that in the interests of transparency and for the benefit of all in attendance at the meeting (including members of the public) the nature as well as the existence of the interest is disclosed.

A member or co-opted member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest at a meeting must not participate (or participate further) in any discussion of the matter; and must not participate in any vote or further vote taken; and must withdraw from the room.

Members are asked to continue to pay regard to the following provisions in the code that *“You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself”* or *“You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned.....”*.

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting should you have any doubt about your approach.

List of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

Employment (includes *“any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain”*.), **Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Corporate Tenancies, Securities.**

For a full list of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and further Guidance on this matter please see the Guide to the New Code of Conduct and Register of Interests at Members’ conduct guidelines. <http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/lnsite/Elected+members/> or contact Glenn Watson on **07776 997946** or glenn.watson@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a hard copy of the document.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

To: **Members of the County Council**

Notice of a Meeting of the County Council

Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 10.30 am

Spiceball Leisure Centre, Banbury



Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

July 2021

Committee Officer: **Deborah Miller**
Tel: 07920 084239; E-Mail: deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note**

Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.

- 3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 (**CC1**) and to receive information arising from them.

4. Official Communications

5. Appointments

To make any changes to the membership of the Cabinet, scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups.

6. Petitions and Public Address

This Council meeting will be held virtually in order to conform with current guidelines regarding social distancing. Normally requests to speak at this public meeting are required by 9 am on the day preceding the published date of the meeting. However, during the current situation and to facilitate these new arrangements we are asking that requests to speak are submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting i.e. 9 am on 7 July 2021. Requests to speak should be sent to Deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk together with a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting.

Where a meeting is held virtually and the addressee is unable to participate virtually their written submission will be accepted.

Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public

8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council

9. Report of the Cabinet (Pages 9 - 14)

Report of the Cabinet Meetings held on 16 March 2021, 20 April 2021 and 22 June 2021 (CC9).

10. Review of Scrutiny Arrangements

Report by the Monitoring Officer (CC10) **Report to follow**

At the Annual Meeting, Council re-appointed the Education and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committees that had existed under the previous administration. This enabled the work of these committees to continue pending a review of scrutiny arrangements. It is now proposed that these arrangements be reviewed and that a broader set of overview and scrutiny committees be established in place of the two current overview and scrutiny committees. This is to enable a greater range and depth of scrutiny activity inclusive of a wider range of members of the Council. This item invites Council to consider establishing these committees and

their terms of reference and, if established, to make appointments to them on the basis of political proportionality.

11. Scrutiny Annual Report (Pages 15 - 36)

The Scrutiny Annual Report (**CC11**) highlights the key work undertaken by the Council's scrutiny committees to address current and emerging issues including the delivery of improved services for the residents of Oxfordshire.

The report 2020-2021 is presented here to full Council, having been considered by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 3 June 2021. Comments from the Committee will be summarised by the Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee at the Meeting.

Council is RECOMMENDED to receive the report.

12. Audit & Governance Annual Report (Pages 37 - 54)

Report by the Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee (**CC12**).

The Annual Report sets out the role of the Audit & Governance Committee and summarises the work that has been undertaken both as a Committee and through the support of the Audit Working Group in 2020/21.

Council is RECOMMENDED to receive the report.

Pre-Meeting Briefing

There will be a virtual pre-meeting briefing on **Monday 12 July 2021 at 12.45 pm** for the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders

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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 May 2021 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.45 pm.

Present:

Councillor John Howson – in the Chair

Councillors:

John Howson	Glynis Phillips	Mohamed Fadlalla
Hannah Banfield	Susanna Pressel	Andrew Gant
David Bartholomew	Eddie Reeves	Andy Graham
Tim Bearder	G.A. Reynolds	Kate Gregory
Liz Brighouse OBE	Judy Roberts	Nick Leverton
Kevin Bulmer	Alison Rooke	Dan Levy
Yvonne Constance OBE	Roz Smith	Dr Nathan Ley
Ian Corkin	Dr Pete Sudbury	Ian Middleton
Arash Fatemian	Michael Waine	Freddie van Mierlo
Neil Fawcett	Liam Walker	Calum Miller
Ted Fenton	Richard Webber	Jane Murphy
Nick Field-Johnson	Charlie Hicks	Michael O'Connor
Stefan Gawrysiak	Donna Ford	Michele Paule
Jane Hanna OBE	Juliette Ash	Sally Povolotsky
Jenny Hannaby	Brad Baines	David Rouane
Damian Haywood	Robin Bennett	Geoff Saul
Tony Ilott	Felix Bloomfield	Nigel Simpson
Bob Johnston	Nigel Champken-Woods	Ian Snowdon
Liz Leffman	Andrew Coles	Jayne Strangwood
Mark Lygo	I.U. Edosomwan	Bethia Thomas
Kieron Mallon	Duncan Enright	

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 and Schedule of Business, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

30/21 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2021/22 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda Item 1)

Before inviting nominations for the office of Chair of the Council, Councillor Les Sibley (the retiring Chairman) took the opportunity to reflect on his year in office as Chairman of the Council, and in particular his civic duties promoting Oxfordshire County Council and meeting a broad spectrum of staff. He thanked the Vice-Chairman (Councillor Howson), his Personal Assistant (Sara Lenihan) and Tim Stimpson for their support throughout the

year. He then presented his wife and Consort with some flowers as a token of his appreciation for their help and support during the Year.

Councillors Leffman, Brighthouse, Reeves and Sudbury and paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman thanking him for his fairness, hard work and effort over the year.

The Monitoring Officer, Anita Bradley then invited nominations for the office of Chair of the Council for the 2021/22 Council Year.

Councillor Leffman moved and Councillor Brighthouse seconded that Councillor John Howson be elected as Chair of the Council for the 2021/22 Council Year.

There being no other nominations and no dissent, Councillor Howson was duly declared elected by a show of hands (nem con). Upon election, Councillor Howson read out and signed the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

RESOLVED: (nem con) that Councillor John Howson be elected as Chair of the Council for the 2021/22 Council Year.

31/21 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2021/22 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda Item 2)

The Chair called for nominations for the office of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Brighthouse moved and Councillor Leffman seconded that Councillor Susanna Pressel be elected as Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2021/22 Council Year. There being no other nominations and no dissent, Councillor Susanna Pressel was duly declared elected by a show of hands (nem con) Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2021/22 Council Year. She read out and signed the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

RESOLVED: (nem con) that Councillor Susanna Pressel be elected Vice-Chair of the Council of the 2021/22 Council Year.

32/21 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 5)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 March 2021 and 7 April 2021 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

33/21 CONSTITUTION CHANGES TO REFLECT RETURN TO PHYSICAL MEETINGS

(Agenda Item 6)

The Government had confirmed that The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and

Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 had not been extended to apply to meetings from 7 May onwards. The regulations had allowed the virtual meetings held in the past 12 months.

Council had before it a report, which set out for information proposed temporary changes to the Constitution necessary for the effective running of physical meetings during the restrictions brought about by the corona virus pandemic.

During debate, Members expressed concern regarding the proposed September Review Date. In response, the Monitoring Officer undertook to bring a report back to the July Meeting of Council.

RESOLVED: (on a Motion by Councillor John Howson, seconded by Councillor Susanna Pressel and carried nem con) to:

- (a) note the amendments to the Constitution that the Monitoring Officer has made to ensure the safe return to physical meeting whilst covid restrictions remain;
- (b) agree that the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Chairman of the Council be authorised to make changes to the meetings process and, as necessary, the Constitution in the light of practical experience of meetings during covid restrictions and in the light of changing circumstances; and
- (c) that the position be reviewed before the Council meeting on 14 September 2021.

34/21 OFFICER SCHEME OF DELEGATION

(Agenda Item 7)

At its Annual Meeting, Council was required to agree the officer scheme of delegation within the Council's Constitution. The Scheme of Officer Delegation was contained in Part 7.1 of the Council's Constitution. The Scheme itself gave delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service, directors and other chief officers whose titles and/or areas of responsibility are set out in Part 2, Article 13 of the Constitution. The Council had before them a report by the Monitoring Officer (CC7) which set out the proposed changes to the Council's Officer Scheme of Delegation set out in the Constitution.

The Monitoring Officer reported that new urgency provision had been included for the Head of Paid Service and the emergency powers to the Head of Paid Service and that the Head of Paid Service, in so acting, would be guided by budget and the policy framework, would consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and would report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

RESOLVED: (on a Motion by Councillor John Howson, seconded by Councillor Susanna Pressel and carried nem con) to approve the Officer

Scheme of Delegation (Part 7.1 of the Constitution) as in Annex 2 to the report.

35/21 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 8)

Council had before it the following appointments for Consideration:

(1) The Office of Leader of the Council

Councillor Brighthouse moved and Councillor ? seconded Councillor Liz Leffman for the Office of Leader of the Council.

Councillor Arash Fatemian made a statement paying tribute to the past Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Hudspeth.

The Motion was put to the vote and was carried nem con.

RESOLVED: (nem con) to elect Councillor Liz Leffman as Leader of the Council.

(2) to note the following appointments to the Cabinet by the Leader of the Council for the coming year and their respective portfolios as follows;

Leader – Cllr Liz Leffman

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Young People's Services – Liz Brighthouse

Cabinet Member for:

Corporate Services – Glynis Phillips

Community Services and Safety – Neil Fawcett

Climate Change Delivery and Environment – Pete Sudbury

Travel and Development Strategy – Duncan Enright

Highway Management – Tim Bearder

Finance – Calum Miller

Adult Social Care – Jenny Hannaby

Public Health & Equality – Damian Haywood

(3) The Office of Leader of the Opposition

RESOLVED: to note that Councillor Eddie Reeves as the Leader of the Opposition.

36/21 REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

(Agenda Item 9)

The Council had before it a report (CC10) which summarised the rules for the political balance on Scrutiny and other committees, together with Annex 2 confirming the political balance on the committees and Annex 3, showing the membership of all committees.

To enable the groups to report on Political Balance and Membership of the Committees (Annex 3 (including Annex 2)), the Meeting was adjourned from 11.18 am to 12.21 pm. Following the adjournment, the Council confirmed the political balance of the Council and appointed to the formal Meetings of the Council (Annex 3), as set out in Annex 1 to the Minutes.

RESOLVED: (nem con)

- (a) to confirm the political balance on committees shown in Annex 2 to the report;
- (b) to appoint to committees the councillors and co-opted members shown in Annex 3, subject to any changes reported at the meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Annex 2 and Annex 3

Liberal Democrat Green Alliance: 24; Conservative Independent Alliance: 23; Labour and Co-Operative Party Group 15; plus 1 Independent

Main Committees	LiDemGnAI	CIA	Lab & Co-Op	
Audit & Governance Committee(9)	4	3	2	
	Roz Smith Ch	Jane Murphy	Brad Baines D-Ch	
	Dan Levy	Donna Ford	Michael O'Connor	
	Judy Roberts	Nick Leverton		
	Ian Middleton			
Pension Fund Committee (5)	2	2	1	
	Bob Johnston	Nick Field Johnson	Name to be supplied	
	Richard Webber	Kevin Bulmer		
Planning & Regulation Committee (12)	4	4	3	
	Richard Webber D-Ch	Les Sibley	Geoff Saul Ch	
	Judy Roberts	Felix Bloomfield	Mohamed Fadlalla	
	David Rouane	Ian Snowdon	Imade Edosomwan	
	Robin Bennett	Yvonne Constance		
1 unallocated seat to be offered to the Independent Member				
Remuneration Committee (6)	2	2	1	
	Liz Leffman Ch	Eddie Reeves	Liz Brighthouse D-Ch	
	Alison Rooke	Jane Murphy		

1 unallocated seat to be offered to the Independent Member				
Education Scrutiny (7)	3	2	2	
	Kate Gregory D-Ch	Michael Waine Ch	Charlie Hicks	
	Andy Graham	Nigel Simpson	Susanna Pressel	
	Bethia Thomas			
HOSC (7)	3	2	2	
	Jane Hanna	Arash Fatemian	Imade Edosomwan	
	Freddie Van Miero	Nigel Champken Woods	Charlie Hicks	
	Nathan Ley			
Horton HOSC (8)	2	4	2	
	Freddie Van Mierlo	Arash Fatemian	Geoff Saul	
	Jane Hanna	Nigel Champken Woods	Hannah Banfield	
		Kieron Mallon		
		Eddie Reeves		
Performance Scrutiny (10)	4	4	2	
	Dan Levy	Eddie Reeves Ch	Brad Baines	
	Andrew Gant	Juliette Ash	Michael O'Connor D-Ch	
	Ian Middleton	Liam Walker		
	Sally Povolotsky	Name to be supplied		
Joint Shared Services & Personnel Committee (5)	2	2	1	
	Liz Leffman	Nick Leverton	Liz Brighouse	
	Andrew Gant	Eddie Reeves		

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Other Appointments - Proportionality is not mandatory but is usually applied where representation is 3 and over. The balance below sets out the arithmetic calculation.

These appointments delegated to MO in consultation with Group Leaders

Joint Partnership Working Group	5	2	2	1	5	0
OCC and Teachers Joint Consultative Committee	5	2	2	1	5	0
OCC and Employees Joint Consultative Committee	7	3	3	2	8	Decision required on the distribution of the 7 seats
OCC Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service	7	3	3	2	8	Decision required on the distribution of the 7 seats
Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel	1					
Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) Scrutiny Panel	3	1	1	1		Should not be a member of the Executive
OGB JSSP Sub Group	1(and substitute)					To be notified by Leader
OGB Infrastructure Sub-Group	1(and substitute)					To be notified by Leader
OGB Housing Sub-Group	1(and substitute)					To be notified by Leader
OGB Environment Sub-Group	1(and substitute)					Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environment

Divisions- N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 13 JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council

1. COVID-19: Progress and Planning Update

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered and approved a report describing the current local COVID-19 situation; summarising the response to COVID-19 over the previous six months, ongoing activity and the recovery status of Council services; and recommending that the local and organisational lessons learnt from the pandemic should be used to help direct long-term recovery planning and inform future corporate direction.

Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highway Management

2. Zero Emission Buses Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Schemes

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet agreed to authorise officers to finalise and submit an Expression of Interest for the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas funding initiative; and agreed a capital allocation of up to £6m in 2022/23 to provide additional council grant to bus operators, if operators can demonstrate this is required to make the scheme feasible.

Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader of the Council

3. Tenant Fees Act 2019 (and Associated Legislation) - Financial Penalty Enforcement Policy

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet considered and approved a new mechanism for the Trading Standards Service to take action against property agents for breaches of relevant housing legislation by means of civil financial penalties, as outlined in the supporting Enforcement Policy (adopted from the model implemented nationally by the National Trading Standards Estate and Lettings Agency Team).

Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care

4. Delivery of Supported Living Units Through Investment in the Resonance Supported Homes Fund

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet had before it a report outlining a proposal to invest £5m capital funding in the Resonance Supported Homes Fund in order to deliver up to 25 units of

supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities and autism. Cabinet agreed the recommendations.

Cabinet Member: Children and Family Services

5. Developing a Strategic Framework for Oxfordshire County Council Libraries and Heritage Services
(Cabinet, 20 April 2021)

Cabinet considered a proposal to change the design specification of the new build children's home from six to four beds.

Cabinet approved the proposal, subject to ensuring that the design of the property is future-proofed for wider Council uses, and confirmed the Council's commitment to high quality residential child care within the County

Cabinet Member: Community Services and Safety

6. Report on the Outcome of the LGA Peer Review of Libraries and Cultural Services
(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered a report on the feedback from a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review on Oxfordshire Libraries and Heritage Services Libraries and agreed to incorporate the recommendations into the council's business planning and development of the strategy.

Cabinet Member: Corporate Services

7. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 4 - January - March 2021
(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet noted a report that provided an update on key HR activities during Quarter 4, details of key people numbers and analysis of main changes since the previous report.

Cabinet Member: Education & Cultural Services

8. Developing a Strategic Framework for Oxfordshire County Council Libraries and Heritage Services
(Cabinet, 20 April 2021)

Cabinet considered and agreed a report seeking approval for the development of a clear vision and strategic framework for the planning and delivery of libraries and heritage services to strengthen the contribution they make to wider community outcomes.

Cabinet Member: Environment

9. Oxford Zero Emission Zone Pilot Formal Consultation

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet considered a report outlining a final proposal for the Oxford ZEZ Pilot which was published as part of a period of formal consultation between Friday 20 November 2020 and Sunday 17 January 2021.

Cabinet noted the content of the report and outcomes of the recent public consultation on the Oxford Zero Emission Zone Pilot; and approved the final Zero Emission Zone Pilot scheme at Annex 6 and authorised the scheme to be implemented.

10. Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet considered a report setting out to realise the government goal of an end to the sale of petrol and diesel vehicle sales by 2030 by providing a comprehensive, accessible and efficient charging infrastructure essential in enabling the rapid adoption of electric vehicles.

Cabinet adopted the recommended policies and key actions for the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (2020- 2025).

11. Oxfordshire Environment Partnership - Statement of Intent

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet considered and approved a report setting out the intention of the County Council to support the establishment of a new County wide environment advisory group (as part of Oxfordshire Growth Board Governance and subject to endorsement by the Oxfordshire Growth Board) and to agree the Oxfordshire - Cambridge Arc environmental principles (subject to endorsement at the OxCam ARC Plenary meeting).

12. England's Economic Heartland Final Transport Strategy

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet endorsed the England's Economic Heartland (EEH) Transport Strategy in broad terms but was concerned to note that the previous consultation response "...that there should be greater recognition in the strategy of the need for cross boundary working with surrounding sub-national transport bodies on connectivity and scheme proposals that have impacts across both areas," appeared to have been ignored.

Cabinet also agreed to continue our representation on the EEH Board and Strategic Transport Forum (STF) to ensure alignment with our emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

13. Objection to West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

(Cabinet, 16 March 2021)

Cabinet considered and endorsed the officer recommendation to raise an objection to the R19 West Berks Minerals and Waste Local Plan pre-submission draft.

14. Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire

(Cabinet, 20 April 2021)

Cabinet agreed the final Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long Term sustainable Development as the basis for informing future county council plans and strategy development, notably the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) and the future Nature Recovery Network Strategy.

Cabinet Member: Finance

15. Capital Programme Monitoring Report – January 2021

(Cabinet, 16 March 2020)

Cabinet had before them a report that set out the latest monitoring position for 2020/21 capital programme based on activity to the end of January 2021 and that provided an update on latest ten-year capital programme to 2030/31.

Cabinet noted the latest capital monitoring position for 2020/21 in Annex 1; and the latest forecast for additional costs to the Capital Programme associated with COVID-19 of £2.7m.

16. Provisional Capital Outturn 2020/21

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered and noted a report setting out the performance against the planned capital programme for 2020/21, reflecting the figures to be included in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.

17. Treasury Management 2020/21 Out-turn

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the Treasury Management performance in the financial year 2020/21. The report included Debt and Investment activity, Prudential Indicator Outturn, Investment Strategy, and interest receivable and payable for the financial year.

Cabinet noted the report, and recommended Council to note the Council's Treasury Management Activity in 2020/21.

Cabinet Member: Highways Delivery and Operation

18. Highway Maintenance Contract Extension

(Cabinet, 20 April 2021)

Cabinet considered a decision on whether to grant a two-year extension to its highways contract subject to both parties committing to a programme of service improvement, cost reduction and social value enhancement.

Cabinet supported an extension to the highway maintenance contract by two years to the end of March 2025.

Cabinet Member: Highway Management

19. National Bus Strategy - Proposal for an Oxfordshire Enhanced Bus Partnership

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered and committed to establishing an Enhanced Partnership across Oxfordshire under the Bus Services Act 2017 and gave formal notice of the Council's intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership and invite all local bus operators to confirm their intention to participate.

20. Releasing Development Strategy in Didcot and Surrounding Villages in the Vicinity of HIF1 Schemes

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet had before it and approved recommendations to implement a strategy to assist with the delivery of new development in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire districts to allow some growth to come forward in a controlled manner prior to HIF 1 funded infrastructure being open for public use based upon specified requirements.

21. Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 - In Principle Use of Statutory Powers

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered and approved a series of proposals to facilitate this programme the primary focus of which is to provide additional highway capacity and connectivity to resolve long-standing capacity constraints that are preventing new homes and jobs allocated in local plans from coming forward in a timely manner. Additionally, the infrastructure will include high quality and completely segregated cycling and pedestrian facilities. Coupled with creating the right environment for enhanced bus services in the area, the new infrastructure will provide residents with real mode choice.

22. Housing Infrastructure Fund 2 - In Principle Use of Statutory Powers

(Cabinet, 22 June 2021)

Cabinet considered and agreed a series of recommendations related to the provision of additional highway capacity and connectivity to encourage/facilitate modal shift, enabling more sustainable forms of travel to meet the Council's

zero carbon transport network ambitions focussing this around public transport and active travel.

Cabinet Member: All Cabinet Members

23. Business Management & Monitoring Report

(Cabinet, 16 March, 20 April and 22 June 2021)

Cabinet noted a series of reports that set out Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) progress towards Corporate Plan priorities for 2020/21 up to April 2021

The reports contained three annexes:

- Annex A gave the current performance against targets and summarised progress towards overall outcomes set out in our Corporate Plan.
- Annex B set out the Leadership Risk Register which had been developed as part of the Council's work to strengthen risk and opportunities management.
- Annex C gave a financial update

In March Cabinet approved

- virements relating to the planned use of the Public Health Savings to fund appropriate expenditure in other services, and the virement from the COVID-19 Budget to the services for the period November 2020 to March 2021;
- bad debt write-offs; and
- charges for 2021/22.

In April Cabinet noted the report and in June approved:

- the annual review 2020/21;
- the summary of the financial position for 2020/21 along with the year-end position on general balances and earmarked reserves;
- and that the underspend £5.9m should be transferred to balances.

LIZ LEFFMAN

Leader of the Council

June 2021



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Scrutiny Annual Report

2020-2021

Foreword

The Overview and Scrutiny function forms an integral part of the Council's operations. Its influence can be seen in the budget setting process, policy development, performance monitoring and the drive for continuous service improvement.

This annual report highlights some of the work undertaken by our scrutiny committees to address current and emerging issues and to deliver improved services for the residents of Oxfordshire. Our aim has been to provide challenge and insight to ensure that activities proposed or undertaken by the Council or the NHS serve the residents of Oxfordshire as fully as possible.

The committees have completed a vast amount of work via formal meetings, working groups and visits. Through the information received, scrutiny committees have made recommendations to Cabinet and partners in the NHS for policy changes and service improvements.

The achievements through the committees could not have been realised without the input and dedication of all our colleagues and partners, and we express our sincerest thanks to all the participants in this work over the past year.

We are proud of the achievements that the scrutiny committees have made this year and look forward to building on this. We hope you find this report interesting and informative.



Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE
Chairman of the
Performance Scrutiny
Committee



Cllr Arash Fatemian
Chairman of the
Oxfordshire Joint Health
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee and
Chairman Horton Joint
Health Overview and
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Michael Waine
Chairman of the
Education Scrutiny
Committee

Executive Summary

Overview and scrutiny play a crucial role in holding decision makers to account, bringing in the views and evidence of local people and service users and challenging and improving performance. The Council delegates scrutiny responsibilities to four committees; three of which are long standing committees, one (the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) is a more recently established committee.

In 2020-21, the County Council's overview and scrutiny committees focused on areas where they could have the greatest influence on outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire including scrutinising significant service redesign across the Council.

The **Performance Scrutiny Committee** has met formally eight times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included a meeting with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police to review the TVP Delivery Plan and considered the adoption of a revised Council budget, required due to the significant impact of the pandemic.

Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has met formally four times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included the continued conduct of a Task and Finish Group to review the rollout of the Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in the OX12 locality.

The Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Horton HOSC) has had a revised Terms of Reference agreed to expand its scope and allow scrutiny of a Masterplan for the Horton General Hospital. The Committee met once during 2020/21, in November 2020.

The **Education Scrutiny Committee** has met formally 5 times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included reviewing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities High Needs Top Up Funding Arrangements for 2020/21 and a dedicated meeting with the Regional School Commissioner and Ofsted in order to ask pertinent questions around academic performance on some schools.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Annual Report summarises the activities of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees between April 2020 and March 2021. Membership of the committees can be found in annex 1 of this report.
- 1.2 This report highlights key areas of work each committee has undertaken over the last year and where the influence of scrutiny has been greatest.
- 1.3 This year the scrutiny chairmen balanced the committees' time between the Covid-19 pandemic, performance monitoring, deep dives into specific areas, policy development and scrutiny of partnership arrangements.

2. The Role of Scrutiny

- 2.1 Overview and scrutiny arrangements were established under the Local Government Act 2000. They are a mechanism for non-executive Councillors to examine the policies and decisions of Cabinet and other executive decision makers, identify problem areas and issue reports. Overview and scrutiny also have a role in scrutinising crime and disorder issues, flood risk management and health.
- 2.2 Specifically, the powers and functions of overview and scrutiny committees include the ability to:
 - Hold inquiries and produce reports and recommendations to the Cabinet;
 - Require Cabinet members to appear before them; and
 - Require a response to its reports within two months.
- 2.3 Scrutiny provides the opportunity to challenge policy and decision makers through an evidence based investigative process that aims to resolve problems in the public interest and drive service improvements. It does this by holding the Cabinet to account but also through constructive dialogue between the public and councillors. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) stated that scrutiny has four principles:
 - Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers;
 - Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard;
 - Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process;
 - Drives improvement in public service.
- 2.4 HOSC committees have specific health scrutiny powers governed by statute. Chief among these powers is the ability to:
 - Require officers of NHS bodies to attend committee meetings;
 - Require the local NHS to provide information about the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the area;

- Make reports and recommendations to NHS bodies;
- Refer proposals for substantial changes to health services to the Secretary of State for decision if the committee believes the consultation has been inadequate, if there were inadequate reasons for not consulting, or if the proposals would not be in the interests of the local health service;
- The NHS is obliged to consult the HOSC on any substantial changes it wishes to make to local health services, in addition to its wider responsibility to involve and consult the public. The Committee and local NHS have an agreed process to help both parties determine if a proposal constitutes a substantial change, known informally as 'the toolkit'.

3. PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 The Performance Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors and is chaired by Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE. Cllr Jenny Hannaby is the Deputy Chairman. The committee met eight times during 2020-21.

3.2 The committee's key functions, as outlined in the constitution, include:

- Scrutinising the performance of the Council;
- Providing a focused review of corporate performance and directorate performance;
- Scrutinising financial reporting and budgets;
- Raising queries or issues of concern that may occur over decisions being taken in relation to adult social care, effectively providing a specific committee for addressing such queries;
- Discharging the Council's scrutiny responsibilities under the Police and Justice Act 2006; to review and scrutinise decisions made, or actions taken by community safety partners
- In addition, scrutiny has a role in developing and revising Council policies

Performance Management:

3.3 It was not possible to maintain the Council's monthly performance reporting due to the impact of the start of the pandemic and so the Committee in July and August reviewed reports for February-March and April-June before monthly reporting was restored.

3.4 The committee has continued to use the Business Management and Monitoring Report as a means for holding the Council to account for the pledges it makes in the Corporate Plan as well as assessing the revised budget discussed at the extra meeting in August. Through examining overall performance, the committee plays an important role in driving improvement across some of the Council's highest priority areas.

3.5 The committee also used the report to identify areas for closer scrutiny. Extra briefings were requested on Delayed Transfers of Care, School Transport costs

under Covid, the performance of CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and the timeliness of EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans).

- 3.6 The committee's pre-meeting briefings were brought forward to be held a few days in advance of the main meeting which allowed questions to be identified in advance so that responses could be brought to the meeting and improve the effectiveness of the meetings. The Chairman brought the views of the committee to the Cabinet meeting that discussed the report.

Key Areas of Scrutiny in 2020-21:

- 3.7 **Covid-19** (July 2020): The meeting in July was the first 'virtual' committee meeting since the pandemic hit, preventing face-to-face meetings. This first meeting examined a number of key areas focused on response to the Covid-19 pandemic including:

- the response of the Customer Service Centre in supporting vulnerable residents who needed to shield. Councillors thanked the officers and praised the magnificent efforts of staff during the crisis and the way in which private businesses stepped up, for example restaurants providing meals;
- the increased demand on the homecare budget and continuing difficulties in recruitment. The Committee suggested encouraging providers in the social care sector to avail of the government scheme to employ young people;
- the partnership work in discharging patients from hospital when the first peak hit and the lessons to be learned to ensure that the numbers in Delayed Transfer of Care do not reach high levels again.

- 3.8 **Transport and Travel** (July 2020 & January 2021): An extra meeting was held following the allocation of Tranche 1 of the government's Emergency Active Travel Fund from which the Council was awarded 50% of the indicative allocation. Members wanted to ensure that the reasons for this were clearly understood before the Council made its submission for Tranche 2. When the second allocation was announced in November the Council was awarded 125% of the indicative allocation.

- 3.9 The discussion in January focussed on the Local Transport Connectivity Plan with an update on Active Travel funding. Much of the discussion focussed on equality issues, seeking to ensure that benefits are experienced across the county and in all communities. Members also recommended ways in which the views and knowledge of local members could better feed into developments.

- 3.10 **Safeguarding** (November 2020, January and March 2021): The committee discussed two Serious Case Reviews from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board to examine the learning from the cases. The Committee considered what measures have been put in place to ensure that this does not happen again.

- 3.11 At the November meeting the committee received a presentation following the launch of Family Safeguarding Plus and the annual report on Safeguarding

Missing Children. Members congratulated the Cabinet and officers for their commitment to seeing the new safeguarding model implemented.

- 3.12 **Climate Change** (March 2021): The committee asked for an update on progress towards climate change targets. Apart from measures taken by the Council itself, the committee asked about the efforts to help schools, including academies, to reduce emissions and to encourage technological development through i-Hub.
- 3.13 **Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and the Thames Valley Police (TVP) Delivery Plan 2020-21** (November 2020): The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police attended to give a presentation of the TVP Delivery Plan and answer questions posed by the committee. The committee explored how the police service was going to increase recruitment while at the same time reducing its budget and how the service could strike a balance between protecting officers from attack while ensuring that they maintain their presence in the community.
- 3.14 **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Reports** (March 2021): The committee received two reports – an update on the action plan arising from the 2019 inspection report and the inspectors report on the service's response to the pandemic. The latter report acknowledged that having the fire and rescue service within the County Council had significant benefits. The committee recorded its thanks for all the work and leadership shown during the pandemic.
- 3.15 **Corporate Plan and Budget Planning** (August 2020, December 2020 & January 2021): The pandemic had a significant impact on the Council's budget which required the adoption of a revised budget which the committee considered at an extra meeting in August before the proposals went to Cabinet and then Full Council. Concern was expressed that the proposed savings might result in poorer delivery of services and committee members asked for an equalities impact assessment to be prepared on the budget proposals, to ensure any potential negative impacts on equalities had been fully considered.
- 3.16 The December meeting which is normally dedicated to service and resource planning for the following financial year was put back to ensure that the latest information was available following the government's Spending Review announced in late November. The committee considered the Budget Consultation report and was updated on the work to refresh the Corporate Plan. Members advised that there needs to be a closer alignment between the Corporate Plan and the budget proposals so that they can see how the budget is being used to meet the priorities. The January meeting considered the Capital and Investment Strategy and was generally supportive of the proposals.
- 3.17 **Education Health and Care Plans** (July 2020): An initial report had been requested by Cllr Brighouse and Cllr Waine to inform future reports to Education & Performance Scrutiny committees. It was agreed that the Performance Scrutiny Committee may need to look at later date at some of the wider children's mental health issues that have probably been exacerbated by the lockdown.

3.18 Other key matters considered by the committee during 2020-21:

- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework
- Safeguarding Children Annual Report
- Safeguarding Adults Annual Report
- Community Safety Services Annual Report

3.19 Forward Plan:

The new committee to be formed after the local elections in May is recommended to prioritise the following issues:

- Transport, place setting and Section 106 funds
- Education Health and Care Plans and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Home First
- Review the performance indicators, measures and targets to show the extent to which Corporate Plan outcomes are being achieved.
- Apprenticeships

4. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 The Education Scrutiny Committee is Chaired by Councillor Michael Waine and the Deputy Chairman is Councillor John Howson. The Committee met six times during 2020-21.

4.2 The Committee's key functions, as outlined in the constitution, include:

- Constructive challenge on performance issues highlighting issues where the Committee can support the improvement dialogue;
- Reviewing the Council's education functions including early years, Special Educational Needs and school place planning;
- Reviewing the progress of, and any issues emanating from, the School Organisation Stakeholder Group regarding admissions patterns and arrangements;
- Reviewing issues raised by the Schools Forum;
- Assisting the Council in its role of championing good educational outcomes for Oxfordshire's children and young people;
- Providing challenge to schools and academies and to hold them to account for their academic performance;
- Promoting joined up working across organisations in the education sector within Oxfordshire;
- Reviewing the bigger picture affecting academic achievement in the county to facilitate the achievement of good outcomes;
- Representing the community of Oxfordshire in the development of academic achievement across the county, including responding to formal consultations and participating in inter-agency discussions; and
- Contributing to the development of educational policy in the county.

4.3 It was not possible to maintain the Scrutiny Committee's usual overview of Annual reports and examination results due to the impact of the pandemic and

so instead the Committee provided a high level of questioning and challenge on a number of important areas of Strategy and had a regular update at every meeting from the Director of Children's Services on the ongoing effect of the pandemic on schools, teachers, parents and governors. The Committee not only focused on term time, but also questioned in relation to the provision of free school meals during holidays. As part of this overview, the Committee requested that all county councillors donate any unspent monies from their Councillor Priority Fund to purchase laptops for disadvantaged children in Oxfordshire. £69,866.32 was given to schools to support the following:

- Purchase of laptops & chrome books (if all were purchased by schools @£300, then 233 devices would have been bought).
- Licensing fees (1 school only)
- Upgrade of broadband (1 school only)
- Subscription for online portals (1 school only)

35 schools benefitted from the donation (26 were LA schools; 8 were primary academies, 1 was a special-school academy).

Key highlights from 2020-21 Committee meetings:

4.4 A Learner Engagement Strategy for Oxfordshire (June 2020): The Committee received a briefing on the Learner Engagement Strategy which had been co-produced by key stakeholders and partners engaged in optimising the inclusion in education of all Oxfordshire's statutory school aged children. The purpose was to ensure that children access their full educational entitlement to enable them to thrive as adults and fully participate in the economic, learning, personal and social life of Oxfordshire. The Committee established:

- All Children's Education Services (Learner Engagement, Special Educational Needs, Access to Learning and School improvement and Learning) had been fully operational during the lockdown period.
- Staffing had been shared internally across the four service areas to enable the teams to continue to deliver and set up new work streams e.g. the 'School Places Brokering Service' and the Early Years Teams which had run the Early Years places brokering service mainly through the Family Information Service.
- A grant had been provided to early years providers for the purchase of PPE. All schools were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff when their local supplies had limited access to PPE.
- The team had liaised with the Department for Education (DfE) on a weekly basis and Ofsted throughout the pandemic.
- There had been clear support and challenge for education officers from the Cabinet Member, the Interim Director of Children's Services and other councillors.
- Home to School Transport teams were working hard to ensure sufficient transport was in place for when more pupils return to school in accordance with government guidelines.
- The main admissions round for Reception Year, Year 7 and Year 10 in September 2021 had been completed on time.

- Early Years providers (childminders, preschools, day nurseries and nursery schools) had remained open for vulnerable children and children of Key Workers.
- All schools had remained open throughout the period to children of 'Critical workers' and those deemed vulnerable. During the lockdown, only 5% of schools had closed due to staffing shortages; mostly for less than two days. Where a school was closed for a brief period, all families requesting a place for their child in another school were placed by the newly formed 'School Places Brokering Service.'
- Weekly 'virtual' meetings had been held with Headteachers to support them through the phased expansion of places in schools and offer support and practical advice, with attendance from colleagues in Public Health.
- Practical written advice through documents, frameworks and Frequently Asked Questions sheets had been offered to all schools irrespective of status.
- Since 1 June 2020, primary schools had expanded their offer to include children in Years Reception, 1 and 6. From 16 June 2020 primary schools could, if they had the capacity (space and staffing, widen their offer to other Year groups.
- Children's Social Care and other Education service colleagues had worked together with schools to ensure that when children were not in school, the absence was followed up and appropriate safeguards were put in place. Attendance had been monitored daily.
- The Department for Education had offered to provide digital devices and internet access for disadvantaged families, children and young people who did not have access to them through another source, such as their school. Digital devices could be requested for:
 - care leavers
 - children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker
 - disadvantaged year 10 pupils

4.5 Update on the Impact of work on Reducing Exclusions (June 2020)

Exclusions in Oxfordshire had been a cause for concern to Members, Officers, Parents, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board and Children's Trust for several years. Education Scrutiny Committee commenced a deep dive investigation into the issues in 2018. The Committee heard that at the beginning of the academic year 2019/20, there was a rapid increase of permanent exclusions which was of great concern. Extensive work had been carried out at Senior Officer and Officer level, regarding the increase in trend and a new officer post had been funded out of existing funds to provide a response to schools when they required additional support. A multi-agency task and finish group had also been created which had created a behaviour pathway that schools are now expected to follow before they exclude a child which incorporates the need for an early help assessment that takes account of societal or family needs and assessment of any unmet Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Committee noted reasons cited by schools for exclusion included insufficient SEN provision in the County and a lack of affordable alternative provision and noted that a large piece of work was being undertaken to look at alternative provision, together with the joint commissioning work underway, and that the special school estate was also being expanded.

- 4.6 The Committee queried whether there was enough Continuing Professional Development available, that every possible alternative had been fully explored, and whether adequate training was provided for school staff on how to address persistent disruptive behaviour, particularly from an early age so that it did not escalate throughout school. The Committee requested trend data over the past two or three years, to support further conversations.
- 4.7 **Changes to SEND High Needs Top Up Funding Arrangements for 2020/21 (September 2020)** The Committee considered the report on SEND High Needs Funding prior to it being considered by Cabinet on 15 September 2020, Cabinet would consider a report on SEND High Needs Funding and would be recommended to approve a one-off change to the funding formula for top up payments for secondary schools for the academic year 2020/21.
- 4.8 The Committee heard from the Director of Children's Services that the report was to enact a decision of the Schools Forum and that work was ongoing regarding a wider SEND Strategy.
- 4.9 The Committee were in agreement with the recommendations and welcomed the approach in development of the SEND Strategy outlined by the Director of Children's Services which would ensure wider involvement by stakeholders and this Committee. The Committee asked that schools be notified as soon as possible about their allocations and the rationale behind them.
- 4.10 **Update on Alternative Provision (AP) commissioning arrangements (September 2020)** The Committee requested a progress update on commissioning arrangements for alternative provision for Oxfordshire's children. The committee had previously expressed concerns about the increase in permanent exclusions particularly the number of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children who were excluded and the number of children who were excluded that had a Team Around the Family (TAF) in place. The Committee learnt that further discussions had been initiated to secure effective and affordable alternative provision through the Radcliffe Academy Trust at Meadowbrook College for the interim period to September 2021 and that there had been extensive engagement with children, young people, parents and other interested parties.
- 4.11 Discussion took place on greater funding required for SEND and how this would be difficult with future financial pressures. The report provided details of the ways to mitigate the risk of fixed and permanent exclusions and areas of focus which included:
- Clear outcomes that Alternative Provision should deliver;
 - Children and young people are safe and feel safe;
 - Improved emotional health and wellbeing including resilience;
 - Improved engagement in learning;
 - Successful pathway back to mainstream school or onto post-16 opportunities;
 - Progress in learning;

- Improved social skills including friendships, relationships and involvement with the community.
- 4.12 The Committee noted that there was still more to be done and that this needed to be managed effectively due to the financial implications. It was noted that from the consultation exercise that 53% of respondents had expressed dissatisfaction with Alternative Provision in Oxfordshire.
- 4.13 Members were informed that 'Lots' had been created based on the needs of children and parents. New or existing Alternative Providers had to apply for any of these lots by joining a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), which enabled the Council to purchase Alternative Provision from quality assured providers using a standard contract and a standard individual placement agreement. The Committee agreed to receive further updates.
- 4.14 **Performance Update on Education Health & Care Plans in Oxfordshire (September 2020):** The Committee received a report on the Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) process and performance, including a focus on Exclusions, Elective Home Education, part time timetabling and the Early Intervention Service. Members were informed that a SEND Performance Board meeting had taken place and that an accelerated progress plan had to be submitted to the DfE shortly. A formal monitoring meeting would then take place with the DfE.
- 4.15 The Committee noted that the number of EHCPs had increased in recent years; predominantly in the primary school age group. It was noted that work needed to take place with families early on to avoid huge costs as placements in Independent schools were costly. The Committee concluded that the performance of EHCPs needed to be kept under review.
- 4.16 **Update on Special Educational Needs in Oxfordshire (November 2020):** The Committee had requested an update on the analysis of SEND and provision in Oxfordshire, together with the emerging strategy for implementing a transformative approach to supporting our children and young people with SEND.
- 4.17 The Committee heard that the local area SEND inspection revisit in October 2019 had identified that there was still work to do as a partnership and stated that "Leaders had an aspirational vision for the work they were doing to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. However, parents did not yet feel part of this vision and did not fully understand what work was being done to achieve it".
- 4.18 The Committee noted that a significant amount of work was ongoing with the co-production Board and at an individual officer level through virtual meetings with the parent carer forum representatives, with over 60 parents having signed up. Officers were also seeking to second an Oxfordshire Headteacher for an agreed period to lead the consultation and finalisation of the new SEND strategy with schools and settings. It was essential to use the opportunity to capture the

realities of the schools setting and develop insight that could help them work with schools on supporting children with SEND.

- 4.19 **Teacher Training Recruitment (November 2020):** The Committee had requested to receive a report from Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance on recruitment onto initial teacher training placements and the capacity of the workforce as a strong teacher force was fundamental for the Education Service. The Committee heard from SCITT Director of the Teaching School that the situation was slowly improving from the previous two years when it had been in crisis. The Committee noted that due to the pandemic, burnout amongst school leaders was a potential risk and agreed to monitor the situation, as Headteachers had not had a day off since the first lockdown.
- 4.20 **Elective Home Education (February 2021):** The Committee had kept an oversight of what was happening with Elective Home Education throughout the year in light of the pandemic and the Serious Case Review associated with this area. The Committee noted that extensive work had been undertaken in relation to Elective Home Education, with extensive systems and checks now in place. The Committee noted that numbers of parents who were knowingly home educating their child had gone up. From conversations held at the Performance Scrutiny Committee it was felt that there was work to be done with colleagues in other sectors like Health, to underline their understanding of what rights the Local Authority had in terms of entry into properties.
- 4.21 The Secretary of State had been written to, asking for a full review of Elective Home Education and the rights of local authorities, to ensure these matched in some way to the responsibilities.
- 4.22 **Zero Carbon Agenda for Schools Buildings (February 2021):** The Committee received an update on what was happening in relation to school buildings in light of the Council's agreed commitment to Climate Change, including the capital programme for new schools and the retro fitting of existing schools, and to receive an update on whether school transport vehicles were being looked at in terms of pollution. The Committee noted that the council renewed its terms and conditions in 2019 for awarded contracts and set a minimum standard of Euro 3 for its school buses and coaches, with longer-term ambitions of awarding carbon neutral contracts in 2031.
- 4.23 Working closely with the market and the council's own climate change team, environmental standards would be raised every four years as the Dynamic Purchasing System (through which contracts were awarded) was renewed. This would be in 2023, 2027 and then with the carbon neutral target in 2031. From September 2021 there was an ambition that tracking devices would be installed in all vehicles allowing detailed monitoring of emissions to inform a targeted action plan on how it might meet its 2031 ambitions and the standards it would need to set when the Dynamic Purchasing System was renewed in 2023.
- 4.24 The Committee heard that the Council was looking at the Carbon Neutral response in relation to building works in their existing schools and new schools. It noted that funding had been added to the Capital Programme, which would be

used to potentially top up and enhance some of the new build schemes that were subject to development agreements and had already been signed. It was noted that they could potentially use the fund to enhance expansion schemes and they were in the process of formulating a new policy for future negotiations, which would be making its way through the governance structure in due course.

4.25 Regional Schools Commissioner (November 2020): The Regional Schools Commissioner and her lead officers attended a private session of the Committee along with representatives of OFSTED and the Education For All (EFA) to answer questions from the Committee about their roles and responsibilities, and relationships with the Local Authority. The Commissioner was particularly pressed on how her office supports academies in Oxfordshire, including attainment and finance, and those operating in challenging circumstances. The Committee was very keen to continue the discussions in the future for the benefit of all the children in the County.

4.26 Forward Plan: At their last Meeting in April, the Committee looked back on the year to reflect upon the achievements and successes of the Committee, together with lessons to be learned for the future. As part of that process, the Committee identified the following suggestions and ideas for the new Education Scrutiny Committee:

- The Managing of School Roles – National Funding Formula and what is happening demographically;
- Education Attainment Gap;
- In-Year Fair Access Policy;
- Learner Engagement Strategy – what next;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Alternative Provisioning.

5. JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) is a joint committee comprising 12 non-executive voting members (seven county councillors and five district/city councillors) and three co-opted non-voting members. During 2020/21 the committee has been chaired by Cllr Arash Fatemian, the Deputy Chairmanship rotates annually and in 2020/21, this was Cllr Nadine Bely-Summers (Oxford City Councillor).

5.2 HOSC has a statutory role in reviewing or scrutinising health services commissioned or delivered in Oxfordshire, or jointly with any other local authority where such services are commissioned outside Oxfordshire but are delivered to the inhabitants of the county. HOSC holds health scrutiny powers, which include the ability to request information and the attendance of health commissioners and providers to the committee. HOSC is also able to make referrals to the Secretary of State where it is not satisfied that:

- Consultation on any proposal for a substantial change or development has been adequate in relation to content or time allowed (NB. The referral power in these contexts only relates to the consultation with the local authority, and not consultation with other stakeholders).
- That the proposal would be in the interests of the health service in Oxfordshire.
- A decision has been taken without consultation and it is not satisfied that the reasons given for not carrying out consultation are adequate.

5.3 The committee met formally four times in 2020/21, where the work of the Committee focused on the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the continued work of a Task and Finish Group to review the rollout of the Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in the OX12 locality (Wantage and the surrounding communities). The following describes some of the detail of issues considered by the committee in 2020/21.

Covid-19 pandemic

5.4 HOSC's first meeting of the financial year was due to be held in April 2020. However, following the global outbreak of Covid-19 and the pressure it created in the health and care system, HOSC's first meeting was postponed so that resources could be focused on tackling the pandemic.

5.5 In June 2020, the committee posed numerous questions to the system to understand the statistics on coronavirus in Oxfordshire, its impact in care homes, and its impact on access to primary care, planned care, dentistry and mental health services.

5.6 At its meeting in September 2020, the committee received information on how services were being restarted, recovered and renewed following the lockdown of spring 2020. The committee sought additional assurances on the restarting of several specialist outpatient services where significant backlogs and waiting lists required work across boundaries and the independent sector; including out of county referrals. The committee delved deeper into the impact of Covid-19 on waiting times for services, when in November 2020 they scrutinised detailed figures on elective treatment as well as cancer waiting times.

5.7 On an annual basis, the committee scrutinises the system approach to planning for winter pressures. Given the unprecedented challenge created by Covid-19, the 2020/21 Winter Plan looked at Covid-19 alongside flu and the increased demand and workforce constraints.

5.8 By the time HOSC met again in February 2021, there was a third national lockdown in place due to the significant rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths which created more than double the pressure in the health and care system than the initial wave (in March/April 2020). Accordingly, HOSC agreed to a shortened agenda to ensure resources were focused on the response to the pandemic. During its meeting in February 2021, the committee heard responses to Members' questions on hospital pressures, the impact on the care sector, testing regimes and the roll out of the vaccination programme.

Covid-19 vaccine and treatments

- 5.9 In June 2020 HOSC members received a presentation from Professor Pollard at Oxford University who was developing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for Covid-19. Professor Pollard outlined the process and timeline for developing a vaccine and explained how the lengthy research undertaken at Oxford University had enabled a Covid-19 vaccine to be developed at pace. The committee extended its support for any future funding bids for further vaccine research.
- 5.10 In November 2020, the committee heard from the Chief Executive Officer of Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) about the collaborative research being undertaken to develop treatments and understanding of Covid-19. The committee were grateful for the work being done in OUH to tackle the virus and the Chairman offered to write on behalf of the Committee in support of any future application for funding.

Changes to health scrutiny

- 5.11 HOSC has considered two proposals to alter health scrutiny arrangements in Oxfordshire to allow scrutiny of issues at the most appropriate geography.
- 5.12 In June 2020, the committee considered proposals to change the scope of the Horton HOSC. The change sought expansion from a narrow focus on obstetrics at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury to scrutiny of an entire masterplan for the hospital. The committee agreed the change and supported a recommendation to Oxfordshire County Council that health scrutiny powers be delegated to allow the Horton HOSC to scrutinise the Horton's master plan. This was agreed by Council in July 2020.
- 5.13 Also, in June 2020, the introduction of a HOSC across a Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West footprint (BOB) was considered. The proposal came forward to allow scrutiny of issues across the BOB Integrated Care System. HOSC agreed principles of negotiation with the other local authorities involved which includes the authorities of Buckinghamshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council.
- 5.14 Following negotiations across the BOB geography, and with advice from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a draft Terms of Reference for a BOB HOSC was considered by the Oxfordshire HOSC in November 2020. The committee voted on the Terms of Reference and supported a recommendation to Oxfordshire County Council to delegate health scrutiny powers on system-wide issues (subject to agreement by the other relevant local authorities). Council agreed the draft BOB HOSC Terms of Reference in December 2020 and a revised Terms of Reference were approved by Council in March 2021.

Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in OX12

- 5.15 In April 2016 HOSC assessed the closure of Wantage Community Hospital as a substantial change in service. The hospital was temporarily closed in July 2016 on the ground of health and safety. In July 2018 the HOSC Chairman wrote to request greater clarity from Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT) over the future options for Wantage Community Hospital.
- 5.16 A paper was presented to HOSC in September 2018 which set out how OCCG and OHFT intended to use a framework for determining health and care needs (and solutions) on a locality basis; this approach was termed the 'Local Health Needs Assessment Framework'. At the November 2018 HOSC it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to act as a 'critical friend' and provide more detailed scrutiny throughout the rollout of the framework in the Wantage, Grove and surrounding (OX12) locality.
- 5.17 The work of the OX12 Task and Finish Group began in March 2019 and a number of extensions (due to the project complexity and a general election) meant final reporting was delayed until February 2020. Although reports were presented by the Task Group and OCCG at that point, work remained to test the financial and clinical viability of solutions. HOSC members were concerned that no firm conclusions had been made on the status of the temporary closure of the beds within Wantage Community Hospital or the status of the hospital itself. It was agreed at the February 2020 HOSC meeting that the Task and Finish Group would continue.
- 5.18 The nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on the health and care system has meant that the work to bring firm conclusions to the OX12 health and care needs assessment framework project and Wantage Community Hospital have not progressed. The OX12 Task Group has therefore not yet concluded its work.
- 5.19 However, at the HOSC meeting in September 2020, the new Chief Executive of OHFT committed to taking a strategic approach to reviewing community services in Oxfordshire. Greater details were set out to HOSC in November 2020 whereby the development of this strategic approach, would see simultaneous development of proposals to pilot new services in the OX12 area and Wantage Community Hospital. In response to the commitments made, HOSC agreed that it would establish a Task and Finish Group to provide detailed scrutiny of these issues.
- 5.20 Details are needed to understand how the OX12 work and the community services strategy work will be set out.

Other items considered by HOSC in 2020/21:

- 5.21 Alongside consideration of patient and public views through a report at each meeting from Healthwatch Oxfordshire, the following items have also been considered at HOSC throughout 2020/21:
- Annual report from the Director of Public Health
 - Annual report from the Health and Wellbeing Board

- Quality reports from Oxford Health Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust.

Forward Plan

5.22 During 2021-22, amongst other issues, the committee intends to scrutinise the following:

- Covid-19 update: including the continuing roll out of vaccinations and how the health and care system will plan recovery.
- A system-wide approach to developing a 'Strategic Development and Quality Improvement Plan for Community Services', whilst simultaneously developing new services to pilot in the OX12 post code area and Wantage Community Hospital.

6. HORTON JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 6.1 The Horton HOSC was established after a referral to the Secretary of State over closure of obstetrics at the Horton General Hospital. It formed in September 2018, and held all health scrutiny powers, specifically on the issue of consultant-led maternity services at the Horton General Hospital. It is a joint committee with seven Councillors from Oxfordshire, one from Northamptonshire, one from Warwickshire and one co-opted member.
- 6.2 The Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) met once in 2020/21, on 27 November 2020. This was the first meeting since September 2019 and met to consider the committee's next steps following a referral to the Secretary of State. It was also the first meeting of the committee with an expanded scope to consider the development of a Masterplan for the Horton General Hospital (HGH).
- 6.3 In September 2019, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) took a decision to confirm an earlier Masterplan (from 2017) to have a single specialist obstetric unit for Oxfordshire (and its neighbouring areas) at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This also confirmed the establishment of a Midwife Led Unit (MLU) at the Horton General Hospital (HGH), for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the Horton HOSC submitted a referral to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the 2nd of December 2019 on the OCCG decision. The Secretary of State replied on the 15th of September 2020 to say he did not consider the referral to be valid. The Chairman of the Horton HOSC then wrote an additional letter in reply. No response has been received to date.
- 6.4 On 27 November 2020, the Horton HOSC considered advice on the potential pursuit of a Judicial Review of the Secretary of State's decision. The committee voted in favour of supporting a request to the OCCG Board to undertake a review of their September 2019 decision.
- 6.5 The Horton HOSC also considered a report on changes to the HGH in

response to Covid-19, recent service improvements at HGH and a summary of the vision for HGH. The committee agreed that they would meet in the early months of 2021 to consider greater details on proposals for the HGH.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report has outlined a comprehensive and robust programme of scrutiny which has been conducted through the Oxfordshire County Council scrutiny committees in 2020-21.

Annex 1 – Scrutiny Committees

This report covers the time period from April 2020 – March 2021 and the membership listed below corresponds to that time period

Performance Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)

Cllr Jenny Hannaby (Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Nick Carter

Cllr Mike Fox-Davies

Cllr Tony Ilott

Cllr Liz Leffman

Cllr Charles Mathew

Cllr Glynis Phillips

Cllr Judy Roberts

Cllr Michael Waine

Cllr Jeannette Matelot served with the Committee until March 2021

Cllr Liam Walker served with the Committee from March 2021

Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Arash Fatemian (Chairman)

Cllr Nadine Bely-Summers represented Oxford City Council (Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Mark Cherry

Cllr Jeanette Matelot

Cllr Alison Rooke

Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles served with the committee until September 2020

Cllr Mike Fox-Davies served with the committee until November 2020

Cllr Kevin Bulmer served with the committee from November 2020

Cllr Laura Price served with the committee until November 2020

Cllr Susanna Pressel served with the committee from November 2020

Cllr Sean Gaul represented Cherwell District Council, until September 2020

Cllr Kieron Mallon represented Cherwell District Council, from September 2020

Cllr Paul Barrow represented Vale of White Horse

Cllr David Bretherton represented South Oxfordshire District Council until February 2021

Cllr Jo Robb represented South Oxfordshire District Council from February 2021

Cllr Neil Owen represented West Oxfordshire District Council, until September 2020

Cllr Jill Bull represented West Oxfordshire District Council, from September 2020

Dr Alan Cohen (non-voting co-optee)

Barbara Shaw (non-voting co-optee)

Jean Bradlow (non-voting co-optee) – from September 2020

Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillor Arash Fatemian (Chairman)

Councillor Wallace Redford (Deputy Chairman, Warwickshire County Council)

Councillor Hannah Banfield

Councillor Rebecca Breese (Northamptonshire County Council)

Councillor Sean Gaul (District Councillor)

Councillor Kieron Mallon

Councillor Alison Rooke

Councillor Sean Woodcock (District Councillor)
Dr Keith Ruddle (non-voting co-optee)

Education Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Michael Waine (Chairman)
Cllr John Howson (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr Ted Fenton
Cllr Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Cllr Jeannette Matelot
Cllr Gill Sanders
Cllr Emma Turnbull

Carole Thomson – Oxfordshire Governors Association (non-voting co-optee)
Donald McEwan - Council of Oxfordshire Teachers' Organisation (non-voting co-optee)

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**Audit & Governance Committee
Annual Report**

**Report of the work of the Audit &
Governance Committee during 2020-21**

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1. Audit and Governance Committee Functions (extract from the Council's Constitution)
2. Audit Working Group Terms of Reference

Chairman's Introduction

Four years ago, following the 2017 elections, the Audit & Governance Committee found itself with only three 'old hands' among its members. It took a while for the others to get up to speed, but our officers admitted that the Committee was soon firing on all cylinders, was more ambitious than before, and was providing a more robust challenge than before.

Our momentum has been consistent since then, and this report for 2020/21 summarises the work we have undertaken this year both as a Committee and through the support of the Audit Working Group. The Committee follows the guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) and continues to provide independent and high-level support for good governance and strong financial management.

On the eve of the 2021 elections, it is appropriate that my valedictory report should contain a few name checks as well as some thoughts for my successor as A&G Chairman.

In my 16 years as a member of this Council, it has been my good fortune to work with some extremely talented and committed officers, and I would certainly place our Chief Internal Auditor, Sarah Cox, in that category. I am sure my successor will come to value her advice and support as much as I have.

I must give another hat-tip to the Committee's stalwart co-opted member, Dr Geoff Jones, who is the long-standing and unfailingly impressive Chairman of the Audit Working Group. The AWG's vital contribution to the Committee's activities is made all the more effective because Geoff combines an incisive analytical mind with an encyclopaedic memory of a wide range of often complex issues.

With the retirement of a number of members in May, however, the new Committee will quickly have to adjust to a considerable loss of continuity. A particularly large hole will be created by the departure of Cllr Charles Mathew, who has been a very assiduous member for many years and whose absence will be keenly felt.

Despite this continuity gap, the Committee will be well supported by extremely professional officers, not least our internal and external audit teams, who provide a high standard of reports and presentations.

A couple of thoughts for my successor are, firstly, that the Cabinet should make it a rule to invite the A&G Chairman to its meetings, in order to present a view on treasury management and other issues; and secondly, a strong and open line of communication is essential between the chairs of the A&G and main scrutiny committees.

In March the Committee began a review of the Council's Constitution, and I am proposing that this task should be completed by the new Committee following the elections. The comments and suggestions that have been made so far will no doubt assist that process.

It has been said by someone who is more articulate than I, that good governance is “the means of demonstrating sound management, generating support, trust and confidence, welcoming accountability, and delivering positive change. It is fundamentally about culture, in which everything works towards what the organisation exists for”.

As the custodian of the Constitution, the Committee’s review is all about governance and will enable members to ask some searching questions – for example, about our committee structure and scrutiny system; about the format and management of Council meetings; about the political proportionality rules; and even about the suitability of the Teams system to the workings of a political organisation.

As operational structures become more flexible, the review might consider how the Council’s policy and decision-making process could be made quicker and simpler, and it might also look at the constitutional implications of pursuing “ever closer union” with Cherwell DC. This review needs to support the aims and aspirations of the current County Council, but it may also be a useful rehearsal should a new constitution be required in the event of any further restructuring of local government.

COUNCILLOR NICK CARTER

Chairman, A&G Committee

Role of the Audit & Governance Committee

The Audit and Governance Committee operates in accordance with the “Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities” produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in 2018. The Guidance defines the purpose of an Audit Committee as follows:

1. Audit committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high - level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management.
2. The purpose of and Audit Committee is to provide to those charged with governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes. By overseeing internal and external audit it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The key functions of the Audit and Governance Committee are defined within the Council's Constitution; the relevant extract is attached as Annex 1 to this report. In discharging these functions, the Committee is supported by the Audit Working Group, their terms of reference are attached as Annex 2 to this report.

How the Committee has discharged its responsibilities during 2020/21

Key A&G Committee Activities	May 20	July 20	Sept 20	Nov 20	Jan 21	March 21
Financial Reporting						
Review of accounting policies 19-20	•					
Review of statement of accounts – narrative statement 19-20	•					
2019-20 Annual Statement of Accounts		•		•		
Review of Treasury Management Outturn 2019-20		•				
Treasury Management 2020-21 mid-term review				•		
Treasury Management Annual Investment Strategy 2021-22					•	
Treasury Management industry update briefing from Arlingclose					•	
Financial Management Code					•	
Internal Audit						
Annual Report of the Chief Internal Auditor 2019-20	•					
Internal Audit Strategy and Plan 2020-21	•					
Reports from Audit Working Group		•	•	•	•	•
Update on Highways / Highways Payments Audit					•	
Review of Internal Audit Reports and monitor of in-year progress		•	•		•	
Review of Internal Audit Charter and Quality Assurance Programme		•				
External Audit						
External audit progress updates and technical updates	•	•	•	•		•
Audit Results Report 2019-20				•		
Pension Fund Audit Results Report 2019-20				•		
Considered Redmond Review Outcomes				•		
Governance & Risk Management						
Approval of Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019-20		•				
Review of AGS action plan	•					•

Key A&G Committee Activities	May 20	July 20	Sept 20	Nov 20	Jan 21	March 21
Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Statement of Assurance				•		
Carilion Recovery Plan Update			•			
Cyber Security / Cyber Scams					•	
Provision Cycle				•	•	
Surveillance Commissioner's Inspection and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act			•			
Local Government Ombudsman annual report			•			
Monitoring Officer annual report			•			
Annual Report of A&G committee	•					•
Scale of election fees and expenditure	•					•
Model member code of conduct update on LGA consultation		•				
Members Advisory Panel - complaint					•	
Constitutional Review						•
Counter-Fraud						
Approval of Counter-Fraud Strategy and plan for 2019-20			•			
Counter-Fraud Plan update			•	•		•

The Committee is supported by the Audit Working Group (AWG):

Key AWG activities	June 20	Sept 20	Oct 20	Dec 20	Feb 20
Internal Audit & Counter-Fraud					
Internal Audit and Counter-Fraud update, including review of Internal Audit Reports and monitoring of progress with implementation of agreed management actions		•		•	
Review of Audit of Childrens Controcc Payments and implementation of management actions	•		•	•	
Review of Audit of Adults Direct Payments and implementation of management actions	•			•	
Review of Audit of Security Bonds and implementation of management actions		•			
Review of Audit of S106 and implementation of management actions		•			

Key AWG activities	June 20	Sept 20	Oct 20	Dec 20	Feb 20
Review of Audit of SEND and implementation of management actions		•			•
Review of Audit of Mental Health and implementation of management actions			•		
Review of Audit of Oxford City Works Agreement and implementation of management actions			•		
Governance & Risk Management					
Review of draft Annual Governance Statement, including Corporate Lead Statements and Action Plan	•				
Review of corporate risk management arrangements, including Leadership Team Risk Register			•		•
Review of directorate risk management arrangements including risk register – Adults			•		
Review of directorate risk management arrangements including risk register – CDAI.					•
Review of procurement award process				•	
Whistleblowing Annual Report				•	

2020/21 Key Achievements:

- The Committee and AWG has continued to review, and monitor material weaknesses identified from the internal audit reports with Senior Managers attending to provide assurance on how the issues were being addressed. This has supported the implementation of the actions plans to deliver the required improvements in key areas for the Council, for example S106, Security Bonds and Childrens ContrOCC payments.

S106 and Security Bonds – following several audits, graded Red, in both of these areas, the Committee / AWG have closely monitored the implementation of the agreed action plans resulting from those audits. The original weaknesses were reported back in 2017/18, subsequent follow up audits had concluded insufficient progress. The committee / AWG are now pleased to note the significant progress that has now been made to effectively address the weakness identified and implement the agreed improvement actions.

Childrens ContrOCC payments – an audit, graded red, had identified issues with the integrity of data and accuracy of payments following implementation of the new system in June 2019. The committee / AWG monitored the implementation of the improvement plan during the year and were pleased to note that significant progress made in addressing the weaknesses identified and mitigating the material risks.

- A continued focus for the Committee and AWG during 2022/22 will be to monitor the improvement actions agreed following audits of SEND and Adults Direct Payments, both areas graded as red, due to significant weaknesses identified. Officers are regularly required to attend the Committee/AWG and through this continued monitoring positive action is already in progress to improve the governance and control environment.
- The Committee are pleased to particularly note through review during the year of the Internal Audit reports and monitoring by the Committee & AWG of the agreed management actions that significant weaknesses in the system of internal control are being prioritised and addressed.
- The Committee have provided effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies. Receiving regular reports of activity, reviewing the treasury risk profile and adequacy of treasury risk management processes has contributed to good performance in this area.

Our work in 2020/21

The key activities of both the Committee and AWG are captured in the tables above. In summary:

Financial Reporting

The Committee reviewed and approved the annual statement of accounts on behalf of the Council and considered the external auditors report. The Committee reviewed the proposed accounting policies for the statement of accounts, including the enhancement of the accounting policy relating to the preparation of the accounts on a Going Concern basis in response to increased external audit focus on this area due to the financial impact of COVID-19.

The Committee receives reports from the Treasury Management Team three times a year, exercising its stewardship role. The Committee reviewed the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2019/20, the Treasury Management Mid-term Performance Report 2020/21 and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22. In particular, the Committee considered the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's investment returns, and the potential impact of negative interest rates on the investment and borrowing strategy. The committee members attended an industry update briefing presented by Arlingclose covering new legislation and potential risks; to help inform the review of the 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy.

Internal Audit

The Committee approved the Internal Audit Strategy for 2020/21, including the annual audit plan and counter fraud plan, which provides members the opportunity to challenge and influence the plan where the Committee has identified areas of concern.

The Committee receives regular progress reports from the Chief Internal Auditor, including summaries of the outcomes from Internal Audit work. Through the Audit Working Group, the Committee monitors the progress with the implementation of management actions arising from audit reports.

In response to Internal Audit reports the Committee/Audit Working Group, has looked in detail at the following areas; S106, Security Bonds, Oxford City Works Agreement, Mental Health, Highways Payments, Childrens ContrOCC payments, SEND and Adults Direct Payments.

The review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Audit, commissioned by the Committee was reported and considered in March 2019. Overall the results are very favourable and demonstrated a strong level of satisfaction about the nature and effectiveness of the service. There were no issues as regards the integrity, or capability, of any of the officers of Internal Audit; the comments continue to reflect that the service is well-regarded. The next review will be scheduled for 2021.

The Committee has continued to monitor the resourcing of Internal Audit. The Committee recognise the challenges in recruitment in this area and continue to be updated regarding the recruitment and retention strategies being adopted. The Committee were pleased to note that recruitment to vacant posts within the team have now been completed.

The completion of the Internal Audit Plan and the annual statement of the Chief Internal Auditor is produced for the Committee at the end of the financial year. Based on the evidence of the reports presented to the Audit Working Group and the Committee, the team continues to provide an effective challenge and therefore assurance on the key risk activities.

The Committee also met with the Chief Internal Auditor in a private session during September 2020 and are satisfied Internal Audit are free to carry out their duties without restrictions.

The Committee approve the Internal Audit Charter on an annual basis, this was approved at the July 2020 meeting.

External Audit

The Council's external auditors, Ernst and Young, attended all the committee meetings during 2020/21, providing regular updates on their work plan and any matters arising. The Committee received and reviewed the External Audit Annual Letter.

The Committee met with the external auditors in a private session in September 2020. The Committee is satisfied that they are free to carry out their duties without

restrictions. We are also assured that if identified they would bring any material issues to the attention of the Committee.

Governance & Risk Management

The Committee approved the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019/20. This included improvement actions for 2020/21, within the following areas; Security Strategy, alignment of AGS preparation between OCC and CDC, Review of post covid governance arrangements.

The Committee and AWG receives and considers updates from officers on areas such as Cyber Security and the Provision Cycle.

The Committee, through the Audit Working Group, has continued to receive risk management updates, which included detailed review of the Leadership risk register. The Audit Working Group have continued with a cyclical programme of reviewing the Directorate risk registers throughout the year. The Audit Working Group is satisfied from their review that the process for reporting, escalating and managing risks is being maintained and acknowledge the ongoing work to improve and properly embed risk management as a routine part of OCC's everyday work.

The Committee and Audit Working Group also considered the annual report of the Monitoring Officer; the annual report of the Local Government Ombudsman; the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA); review of scale of election fees; and the Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance. There were no material issues or concerns arising.

The Committee received and considered one report during the year in respect of an investigation into allegations of misconduct under members' code of conduct. The Committee also engaged with the national consultation on a Draft Model Code of Member Conduct, forming a cross-party working group of the Committee to consider views.

Counter-Fraud

The Audit & Governance Committee and Audit Working Group receive regular updates from the Chief Internal Auditor on any reported matters of suspected fraud, including investigations. Outcomes of investigations are reported to and monitored by the Audit & Governance Committee. The Committee plays a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's counter fraud arrangements.

The Committee received a report on Whistleblowing from the Monitoring Officer, that highlighted there have been very few cases.

Overall, the Council has a strong system of internal control, so it is not unexpected there is very little fraud identified; however nationally statistics show that fraud is on the increase, so it is important that we all remain vigilant.

Appeals

The Committee is responsible for the work of the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee a panel of members that is chaired by a member of the Audit & Governance Committee*. They carry out a range of appeals and tribunals:

Type of appeal	Number in Calendar Year 2020
Member Appeals:	
Appeal against dismissal	1
Appeal against redundancy	0
Raising concerns at work	0
Disciplinary and Capability	1
Job Evaluation formal appeals	0
Home to School Transport Appeals	19 Appeals were scheduled to be heard 7 Upheld (wholly or in part) 5 Refused 7 Withdrawn

* Excluding Home to School Transport Appeals where the Panel is made up of one councillor, one officer and one independent person.

Annex 1

Audit & Governance Committee Terms of Reference

Statement of purpose

1. The Audit & Governance Committee is a key component of Oxfordshire County Council's corporate governance framework. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment, the integrity of the financial reporting and governance processes. By overseeing internal and external audit it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Generally

2. To draw to the attention of the appropriate scrutiny committee, or Cabinet or any other committee, as appropriate any issues which in the Committees view would benefit from a scrutiny review or Cabinet's or a committee's further investigation.

Governance, risk and control

3. To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework and consider the local code of governance.
4. To review the AGS (Annual Governance Statement) prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.
5. To ensure compliance with relevant legislation, guidance, standards, codes and best practice, whether external or internal;
6. To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
7. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.
8. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.
9. To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee.
10. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
11. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
12. To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.
13. To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Internal audit

14. To approve the internal audit charter.
15. To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
16. To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
17. To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
18. To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
19. To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the head of internal audit. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
20. To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:
 - updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work
 - regular reports on the results of the QAIP (Quality Assurance Improvement Programme)
 - reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the PSIAS, (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards) considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the AGS.
21. To consider the head of internal audit's annual report:
 - The statement of the level of conformance with the PSIAS – this will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.
 - The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the committee in reviewing the AGS.
22. To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.
23. To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
24. To contribute to the QAIP and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
25. To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the AGS.
26. To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the head of internal audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

External audit

27. To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA (Public Sector Audit Appointments) or the authority's auditor panel as appropriate.
28. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
29. To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
30. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
31. To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

Financial reporting

32. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
33. To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Accountability arrangements

34. To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.
35. To report to full council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.
36. To publish an annual report on the work of the committee.

Treasury Management

37. To be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies. Receiving regular reports of activity, reviewing the treasury risk profile and adequacy of treasury risk management processes.

Ethical Governance

38. To promote high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.
39. To grant dispensations to councillors and co-opted members from the requirements relating to interests set out in the code of conduct for members
40. To receive a report from member-officer standards panels appointed to investigate allegations of misconduct under the members' code of conduct.

41. To advise the Council as to the adoption or revision of the members' code of conduct.

Elections

42. To appoint the County Returning Officer for the purposes of county council elections
43. To carry out other relevant electoral functions under Section D of Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, including the annual setting of the scale of fees for County Council elections.

Appeals & Tribunals Sub – Committee

44. The Committee will appoint an Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee which will have the following responsibilities and membership:

Responsibilities:

- (i) The determination of appeals against decisions made by or on behalf of the authority as specified in Paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Functions Regulations.
- (ii) To hear and determine appeals in cases where the relevant procedure rules require this function to be performed by a formally constituted committee or sub-committee.
- (iii) To hear and determine appeals in other cases under the relevant procedure rules.

Membership:

The Appeals & Tribunal Sub-Committee will meet as needed and its membership will be:

- (i) A member of the Audit & Governance Committee (or substitute)
- (ii) Two other members of the Council (one being a Cabinet member in the case of Fire Discipline issues)

November 2019.

Annex 2

AUDIT WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

The Audit Working Group shall consist of:-

The independent member of the Audit and Governance Committee who will chair the Group, together with four members of the Audit and Governance Committee, one of whom shall be the Chairman of the Committee. There will also be up to four named members of the Audit and Governance Committee who will deputise as required. Where the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee cannot attend the Audit Working Group, the Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee will be the named deputy.

The Director of Finance and/or Assistant Director of Finance Officer, Director of Law and Governance (& Monitoring Officer), and the Chief Internal Auditor, or their representatives shall attend the Group meetings.

Members of the Group and their deputies should have suitable background and knowledge to be able to address satisfactorily the complex issues under consideration and should receive adequate training in the principles of audit, risk and control.

All members of the Audit and Governance Committee can attend Audit Working Group Meetings as observers.

Role

The Audit Working Group shall:

act as an informal working group of the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to audit, risk and control to enable the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities effectively in accordance with its terms of reference;

routinely undertake a programme of work as defined by the Audit and Governance Committee;

consider issues arising in detail as requested by the Audit and Governance Committee;

receive private briefings on any matters of concern;

at least annually hold a private session with the External Auditors not attended by any officers, and a further private session on Internal Audit matters with the Chief Internal Auditor only.

Reporting

The Director of Finance will report to the Audit and Governance Committee on matters identified by the Group following consultation with the Chairman and members of the Group.

Meeting

The Group shall meet regularly in cycle with the Audit and Governance Committee. The Group may invite any officer or member of the Council to attend its meetings to discuss a particular issue and may invite any representative of an external body or organisation as appropriate.

Confidentiality

The Group will meet in private to allow full and frank consideration of audit, risk and control issues.

All matters discussed and papers submitted for the meetings including minutes of the previous meeting must be treated as confidential. Papers will be circulated in advance to all members of the Audit and Governance Committee for information whether attending the Group or not.

Where any other member wishes to inspect any document considered by the Group and believes that s/he has a "need to know" as a County Councillor, the procedure in the Council's Constitution relating to Members Rights and Responsibilities (Part 9.3) shall apply.

UpdatedJune 2021

Review Date.....March 2022

Officer Responsible:
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