



Notice of a Meeting

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 22 September 2021 at 1.00 pm

Council Chamber - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

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 meeting 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 a lateral flow test in advance of the meeting.

Membership

Chair – To be confirmed

Deputy Chair – To be confirmed

Councillors:

Brad Baines
Charlie Hicks
Dan Levy

Kieron Mallon
Jane Murphy
Sally Povolotsky

Judy Roberts
Ian Snowdon
Richard Webber

Notes: *Date of next meeting: 24 November 2021*

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Chair	- To be confirmed
Committee Officer	- <i>Deborah Miller, Tel: 07920 084239; E-Mail: deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk</i>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Rees'.

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

September 2021

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 6 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

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, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. Election of Chair for remainder of 2021/22 Municipal Year
2. Election of Vice-Chair for remainder of 2021/22 Municipal Year
3. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments
4. Declaration of Interests - see guidance note on the back page
5. Petitions and Public Address
6. Developing the Overview and Scrutiny Function (Pages 1 - 4)

The purpose of the report is to set out proposals and initial ideas to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function for consideration. Members should consider if they support these proposals and how they would like to develop them further.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider the contents of the report and agree on how to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function moving forward.

7. Work Programme 2021/22 (Pages 5 - 10)

The purpose of the report is to support and advise Committee members to determine their work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) ***Consider the results of the limited work programme engagement exercise as detailed in Appendix 1;***
- (b) ***Consider suggestions made by the Cabinet and Senior Officers;***
- (c) ***Consider the methods by which the Committee would like to undertake its Overview and Scrutiny activity;***
- (d) ***Consider and agree the work programme for the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year;***
- (e) ***Agree on whether to create any task group reviews and appoint membership of that review;***
- (f) ***Identify any specific training and support needs required to deliver the 2021/22 work programme.***

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/Insite/Elected+members/> or contact Glenn Watson on **07776 997946** or glenn.watson@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a hard copy of the document.

Divisions Affected - All

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 SEPTEMBER 2021

DEVELOPING THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION

Report by Director of Law and Governance

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to consider the contents of the report and agree on how to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function moving forward.

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to set out proposals and initial ideas to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function for consideration. Members should consider if they support these proposals and how they would like to develop them further.

New approach to Overview & Scrutiny

2. It will take time to embed and develop the new approach to Overview and Scrutiny. If the Overview and Scrutiny function is going to truly add value then it will need to be supported by Members, both Scrutiny and Cabinet, and by Officers.
3. Creating a strong organisational culture that supports scrutiny work can add real value by, for example, improving policy-making and the efficient delivery of public services. In contrast, low levels of support for and engagement with the scrutiny function often leads to poor quality and ill-focused work that serves to reinforce the perception that it is of little worth or relevance.

An Annual Report

4. An Overview and Scrutiny Development Plan would set out how the Council, its Members, Officers and Partners intend to improve and develop the function. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should produce an annual report that sets out the activity it has undertaken and how it has added value, to gauge where the function is, it is proposed that each annual report contain an assessment or health check of how the function is performing and developing.
5. Members could agree their own Scrutiny Development Actions that they assess against each year or could examine the function against the Statutory guidance

for Overview and Scrutiny set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

Develop Core Scrutiny Principles

6. To make sure Overview and Scrutiny can fulfil its role in having adequate opportunity to hold decision-makers to account and contribute to policy development. It is proposed to operate Overview and Scrutiny as follows:
 - **Be Member-led:** that Members own the work programme and decide what evidence to seek. That we ask all Members to take an active role in the scrutiny process, for example by going on visits, taking part in consultation activities with service users, residents and discussions with local organisations as required.
 - **Take a consensual approach:** Effective scrutiny works towards developing a consensus-based view of the service or issue under consideration, focused on the needs of service users and residents and not on party politics.
 - **Be evidence-based:** Scrutiny should take evidence from a wide and balanced range of sources in order to develop a rounded view of the issues under consideration. Recommendations made by scrutiny should be firmly supported by the evidence gathered.
 - **Dive deeper:** Alongside taking a wider and more balanced range of sources, Scrutiny should take 'deeper dives' into the areas of greatest challenge for the Council and those of greatest concern to the public. That is likely to mean focusing on a limited number of items in detail at each meeting.
 - **Provide constructive challenge:** Good scrutiny should foster a style of constructive challenge to the Cabinet and decision-makers, with the support of officers and other witnesses, enabling sharing of views in an open and positive manner.
 - **Seek to amplify the voice and concerns of the public:** Making sure we are looking at topics that can genuinely make a difference to the public and looking to engage the public in the function wherever possible.

Develop Scrutiny Operating Procedures

7. The Council has new Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, adopted by Council in July 2021, these procedure rules set out how the Committees are intended to operate. In order to support delivery of an effective Overview and scrutiny function it is proposed that this procedure be regularly reviewed to ensure it fits with the Council's developing approach to delivering Overview and Scrutiny.

Developing a Cabinet/ Scrutiny Protocol

8. This procedure could be strengthened through the development of a Cabinet/ Scrutiny Protocol as recommended in the statutory guidance for Overview and Scrutiny.

9. It is proposed that such a protocol would further develop and facilitate the working relationship between Scrutiny and Cabinet, good relationships and clear lines of communication between Scrutiny and Cabinet are important to facilitate effective scrutiny that adds value to the work of the council. It is important to set out agreed ways of working, especially at a time when the scrutiny function is developing. It is important to have clarity and clear expectations about communication, attendance at meetings, response times, etc.
10. Effective Scrutiny tends to focus on ensuring it can add value to a selected number of topics in order to maximise its outputs against available resources of Member and Officer time and support. To do this effectively the function needs to innovate in how it deals with items such as annual reports, information items and updates. It is proposed that best practice approaches be examined by officers, working with Committee Chairs, to develop an approach for Oxfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure that these items are not lost but that Committee time remains focused on its core items.

Annual Work Programme Development

11. Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive, and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value.
12. It is therefore vital that the Council's new approach to Overview and Scrutiny seeks to focus on the 'right' topics in order to maximise the functions' ability to positively contribute to the direction of the Council and the delivery of public services.
13. It is also important that Scrutiny is involved in topics of significant interest and value to Members, Partners and the public. A limited work programme engagement exercise has recently been undertaken, the purpose of this exercise was to provide some initial input to assist Committees in determining a work programme for the remainder of the year. Such an exercise needs further development to better support Committees moving forward.

Developing Support

14. The approach described in this paper will require that both Councillors (chairs and committee members) and officers are provided with support to understand their roles, obligations and responsibilities. Training and development are an important part of the improvement process – it will help councillors and officers to enhance their roles under the new arrangements and ensure that they have additional skills and expertise to further develop the scrutiny function in the future.
15. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny have been commissioned to deliver a number of development sessions in September, these include:
 - Chair and Vice Chair Training
 - Scrutiny Essentials, covering the fundamentals of the function

- Health Scrutiny Training

16. Ongoing training and development will be key, not just through dedicated training but also through information sharing, examination of best practice and developing briefings on emerging issues and council services.
17. It is proposed that the Council considers how best to support ongoing training and development.
18. There is a range of written materials in existence on effective scrutiny, any approach to ongoing development should consider how best to make this information available to Members. Consideration should also be given to developing an Oxfordshire Scrutiny Handbook to support those members tasked with delivering this important function.
19. Officer support for the function is vital, officers support the function through interaction and engagement with Committees, providing information and answering questions. The Council should also consider through the budget cycle how it can provide further dedicated specialist officer support to directly develop and support the Overview and Scrutiny function.

Financial Implications

20. This report does not raise any financial implications.

Legal Implications

21. This report does not raise any legal implications.

ANITA BRADLEY

Director of Law and Governance

Annex: Nil

Background papers: Report to Council 13 July 2021 – Review of Scrutiny Arrangements

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September 2021

Divisions Affected - All

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 SEPTEMBER 2021

WORK PROGRAMME 2021

Report by Director of Law and Governance

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (a) Consider the results of the limited work programme engagement exercise as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (b) Consider suggestions made by the Cabinet and Senior Officers;
- (c) Consider the methods by which the Committee would like to undertake its Overview and Scrutiny activity;
- (d) Consider and agree the work programme for the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year;
- (e) Agree on whether to create any task group reviews and appoint membership of that review;
- (f) Identify any specific training and support needs required to deliver the 2021/22 work programme

Executive Summary

2. The purpose of this report is to support and advise Committee members to determine their work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
3. This report sets out the following information to assist the Committee in this process:
 - The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
 - The roles and responsibilities of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - The findings of the consultation exercise undertaken with councillors and Council senior management;
 - Support available to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine, develop and deliver its 2021/22 work programme

New approach to Overview & Scrutiny

4. The Council agreed in July 2021 that three new overview and scrutiny committees would replace the two existing council scrutiny committees. The aim was to afford greater opportunity to review services on a thematic basis with regards to cross-cutting but defined areas of Place, People and Performance and Corporate Services. Increasing the scrutiny arrangements by one committee aimed to enable a wider range and depth of scrutiny activity than was previously possible.
5. The new overview and scrutiny arrangements contain three new elements:
 - i. A membership of 9 elected members per committee
 - ii. Chairs of these committees would be expected to come from the Council's Opposition Group (the Conservative-Independent Alliance Group).
 - iii. Call-in of executive (key) decisions would no longer fall only to one committee (the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee) but to each committee having regard to its own terms of reference and service scope

The Scope of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is as follows:

Committee	Scope
Place	Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place-based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

Principles of the Work Programme

6. The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Committee is determining its work programme:
 - Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.

It is recommended that Members limit the number of items they wish to consider at a meeting to 2 or 3 to maximise the time and attention they can give the topic and maximise the potential for adding value.

- **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Committee.
7. Effective Overview and Scrutiny should provide extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Committee.
 8. Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, this engagement can help the Committee to understand the service user's perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. The Committee is encouraged to ensure it considers opportunities for engagement with service users and the public when agreeing its work programme.

Models for carrying out scrutiny activity

9. There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Committee	The Committee can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter.
Task Group	A small group of Members, with officer support, meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/ sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/ or Officers/ Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Committee with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews.
The Committee asks for a report then takes a view on action	The Committee may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report to give them more details
Individual Members doing some initial research	A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the Committee if s/he still has concerns.

	This can only be done if agreed by the Committee which must consider the impact on resources and officer time in commissioning such items. Any emerging reports would need to go through the Council's reporting clearance process.
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10. Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to allow the Committee to make a direct contribution, the Committee may choose to take some "information only" items outside of meetings, for example by email.

Limited Work Programme Engagement Exercise

11. To assist the Committee in developing a work programme a limited engagement exercise has taken place to seek the views of County Councillors and Senior Officers, the results of which are attached at **Appendix 1**.
12. As the aim of the work programme is to ensure that scrutiny makes the biggest impact possible the exercise advised that suggestions for inclusion consider the following criteria:
 - a. Is the issue a priority area for the Council?
 - b) Is it a key issue for local people?
 - c) Are improvements for local people likely?
 - d) Is it an opportunity to contribute towards significant policy development?
 - e) Does it examine a poor performing service?
 - f) Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?
13. The engagement exercise also provided guidance to consider the priority themes outlined in the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance 'A Fairer deal for Oxfordshire' which will direct the Council's approach to a new corporate plan and public consultation and engagement. This would maximise the opportunity for pre-scrutiny work and help shape the development of these priorities.

Agreeing a work programme

14. Committee Members are asked to consider the results of the engagement exercise and the contents of this report in agreeing a work programme for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year.
15. Committee is also asked to consider suggestions made by the Cabinet and Senior Officers which will be reported at the Committee meeting on the 22 September.
16. The Committee is also asked to agree whether to create any task group reviews and appoint membership of that review and to identify any specific training and support needs required to deliver the 2021/22 work programme.

Financial Implications

This report does not raise any financial implications.

Legal Implications

This report does not raise any legal implications.

ANITA BRADLEY

Director of Law and Governance

Annex: Appendix 1 – Response to limited work programme engagement exercise

Background papers: Report to Council 13 July 2021 – Review of Scrutiny Arrangements

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September 2021

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