

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 30 September 2021 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.30 pm

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Juliette Ash
Councillor Hannah Banfield
Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Imade Edosomwan
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Bethia Thomas
Councillor Nigel Simpson
Councillor Michael Waine
Councillor Andrew Gant (In place of Councillor Kate Gregory)

Other Members

in Attendance: Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council; Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services; Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care; Councillor Mark Lygo, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equalities; Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services; Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment; Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition; Councillor Jane Murphy, Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Officers:

Whole of meeting: Ansaf Azhar, Corporate Director for Public Health; Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director for Adult and Housing Services; Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director for Children's Services; Anita Bradley, Director for Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer; Jodie Townsend and Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services.

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

1/21 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2021/22

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Ian Corkin was nominated for Chair by Councillor Nigel Simpson and seconded by Councillor Andy Graham. Councillor Ian Corkin was elected Chair nem con.

2/21 ELECTION OF A DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2021/22
(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Kate Gregory was nominated for Deputy Chair by Councillor Andy Graham and seconded by Councillor Imade Edosomwan. Councillor Kate Gregory was elected Deputy Chair nem con.

3/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 3)

Apologies had been received from Councillor Kate Gregory (substituted by Councillor Andrew Gant).

4/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE
(Agenda No. 4)

There were no declarations of interest.

5/21 DEVELOPING THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION
(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee considered a report setting out proposals and initial ideas to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function.

The Chair opened the discussion by noting the diversity of elected members on the Committee and how he believed that would lead to better decision making. There was an opportunity with the current review of scrutiny to design a system to better serve the public and other councillors who are not on scrutiny committees.

His experience as a councillor was that the opportunity for other Members to impact policy making at a time when it made a difference were limited in the Leader and Cabinet model. He believed that the Committee would be most effective if it spoke with one voice and was able to win the trust of Cabinet and officers.

Members introduced themselves and described their own background and divisions. Those Cabinet Members and senior officers participating also introduced themselves and their roles.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, stated that she wanted to ensure that the Committee had the support that it needed to do its work.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, welcomed the formation of this important committee and the enthusiasm of its Members. She stated that she was particularly interested in hearing suggestions as to where the Council could do more for its residents.

Jodie Townsend, Democratic Services, introduced himself and the report. The development plan had already been presented to the Health and Place overview and

scrutiny committees. It was important that scrutiny be Member-led. He noted that at the scrutiny training sessions there had been support for prioritising issues in order to have a more thorough scrutiny on a shorter list of issues rather than trying to cover everything.

There was a strong commitment from officers and Cabinet to facilitate more effective scrutiny. Training and development had started and would be a continuous process to look at best practice.

Members made the following comments on the report:

- It was a good start which they could refine as the committee progressed.
- There should be a review process – perhaps after 6 months.
- There should be a greater role for the public than the current opportunities for petitions and public address.
- Joint scrutiny with city and district councils should be considered.
- Having data is important and knowing what data is already in the system.
- Does the Committee want to focus on outcomes rather than outputs?
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was an impartial source of data across the Council and partners and it informed the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- It was sometimes important to look back at the history of an issue for context and the decision-making process that took place.
- Reports should be circulated with the agenda in good time and most of the time in the meeting should be made available for questions.
- There was a need to consider the involvement of the following:
 - co-opted members of the former Education Scrutiny Committee
 - faith groups
 - those working with Looked After Children
 - service users
 - external expertise
 - people beyond those who are already engaged
 - public representatives at other levels and locality meetings

The Chair concluded with a summary of the discussion:

The Committee was looking to promote greater public participation. There was a desire to engage with stakeholders and a paper would be needed to discuss options around that. The Committee needed to be flexible in its work programme. In the Public Health area there was a need to focus on preventative, upstream measures. Cabinet Members should front the responses from the administration, supported by officers as appropriate. There should be an item on the agenda for Full Council meetings to discuss scrutiny.

This was agreed as a summary.

Actions: provide a report on how the Committee could engage with stakeholders.

6/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 (Agenda No. 7)

The Committee had before it a report to support and advise Committee members on determining their work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Councillor Michael Waine noted that the agenda pack did not include the items from the former Education Scrutiny Committee. He had circulated those to Members before the meeting. He believed that the most important items to include were the annual opportunities to scrutinise the work of the Regional Schools Commissioner, Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency.

Jodie Townsend, Democratic Services, emphasised that the Committee did not have to agree the whole work programme for the rest of the municipal year at this meeting. A limited process had been conducted to get an initial list of ideas. However, a more complete process was to be developed for prioritising items for work programmes going forward.

The Committee could also consider activities outside the meetings such as Task and Finish Groups, deep-dives, briefings and public engagement days for example.

The Chair suggested that the Committee could work best by taking a strategic overview rather than discussing operational issues. He suggested considering the list of items in the appendix under Children and Young People first:

- Home to School Transport – perhaps needing a Task and Finish Group
- Engagement with Young People
- Family Solutions Plus – possibly an external evaluation
- New strategy for neurodiversity, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans) and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) - especially since the pandemic
- Looked After Children – a national review is expected in the new year
- Safeguarding annual reports
- Care providers, including out-of-county
- Lessons learned from Covid
- Identifying gaps in provision for Young People
- Community and voluntary infrastructure will be coming to Cabinet for decision

The following issues were suggested under Adults:

- Workforce challenge – there was a new government initiative to examine
- Preparing for the new inspectorate for health and social care from 2023
- Impact of transformation
- Costs of care in Oxfordshire
- Front door, first contact
- Transition from young people's to adult services

Under Public Health:

- Community and voluntary sector
- Physical fitness

- Health inequalities - most deprived areas
- Smoke-free Oxfordshire
- Domestic abuse
- Preventive approach

Under Education:

- Regional Schools Commissioner
- SEND funding
- Workforce including wellbeing
- Lessons learned from lockdown
- Access to broadband
- Early Years and 0-5 Reform
- School Management
- Parental choice
- Inclusion

The Chair suggested that the following summary of priorities –

- Children & Young People
 - Engagement with Young People
 - Family Solutions Plus external evaluation
 - Safeguarding
 - Workforce
 - Mental Health
 - Community and Voluntary Sector
- Adults
 - Transition
 - Front door
 - Workforce
- Public Health
 - Preventative mental health
 - Physical fitness
 - Smoking
 - Most deprived wards
- Education
 - Regional Schools Commissioner
 - Ofsted
 - Stakeholders
 - Early Years provision
 - Recruitment/retention
 - Home to School Transport
 - Inclusion

Jodie Townsend suggested that in the longer term work programme the Committee could consider bringing partners together on wider issues such as cost of rail travel, County Lines, post-Covid recovery.

Action:

The Chair proposed that the list be further prioritised at a meeting between the Chair, Deputy Chair and Officers to produce a list for circulation to the Members of the Committee. This was agreed.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing