



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 8 January 2024

Councillors present:

Gina Blomefield – Chair
David Cunningham
Roly Hughes
Angus Jenkinson

Gary Selwyn –Vice-Chair
Dilys Neill
Michael Vann
Tony Slater

Clare Turner
Jon Wareing

Officers present:

David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business
Manager
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Monitoring Officer
James Brain, Forward Planning Manager
Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic
Services Support Assistant

Observers:

Councillors

Joe Harris, Leader of the Council
Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services
Mike Evely, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

OS.15 Apologies

There were no apologies received.

OS.16 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

OS.17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OS.18 Minutes

Members made the following amendments to the minutes;

Meeting held on 28 November 2023;

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- On Page 5, under the final bullet point of the Q2 performance report it should read “That this policy was still being carried out”
- Page 4, “The Leader stated that the form of affordable housing that the Council was aiming to deliver was tenure blind affordable housing should state “The Leader stated that the council aimed to provide tenure blind **social rented** housing”
- The word ‘to’ on page 9 should be delayed

Meeting held on 16 November 2023;

- Page 3, “and that bringing most services back in house would provide greater control, as well as improve recruiting practices.” Should read “and that bringing most services back in house would provide greater control, as well as improving the Council’s ability to recruit staff.”

RESOLVED: To APPROVE the minutes of the meetings held on 28 November and 16 November.

OS.19 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair’ announcements.

OS.20 Matters Arising From the Minutes

The matters arising document was discussed, and the Senior Democratic Services stated that a response to the OS.294 from 31 October would be distributed to members.

OS.21 Public Questions

Eileen Viviani, from Moreton-in-Marsh asked a public question. The public speaker asked whether the Committee would be scrutinising climate change implications of development.

The Chair thanked the public speaker for their question and stated that this would be addressed later as part of the item on the Local Plan.

OS.22 Member Questions

Councillor Daryl Corps asked a member question.

“As the member for Moreton West, I felt compelled to ask the Chair of the O&S Committee the following regarding the local plan update and potential new plan on behalf of the residents in Moreton in Marsh that takes up a considerable amount of the local plan update document you will be discussing.

Chair, on behalf of the residents in Moreton in Marsh, a town familiar with extensive, some may say 'badly planned over development' over the past 15 years - can we please have a proper environmental study conducted? And for a master plan, the sheer scale of the number of dwellings right around the town surely warrants this right now, as part of this process? 1500 homes, albeit over time will dramatically change the town, and we need to know what we can actually cope with.

It's what the town deserves considering the scale and extremely high numbers of potential new dwellings the document mentions. Cirencester has a masterplan and such scale warrants one for Moreton to investigate the genuine feasibility. Harm has been done to Moreton in the

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past without such a plan. We cannot repeat bad decisions of the past when we have the opportunity to do the right thing for the people of Moreton today.

It's very scary to think that the current 'mega-estate' at Dunstall Farm, currently being built by Spitfire Homes is heading for a condition breach at just 50 homes - just 50! Regarding Thames Water and the inability of the existing pumping station to deal with sewage from the development, we could be facing a potential public health disaster in the middle of our town if the sewage pumping station fails at 51 houses.

The numbers mentioned warrant a full and extremely urgent full environmental study, and development plan that residents, the North Cotswold Hospital, Doctor's surgeries and business owners can have complete visibility over. The Hospital, Doctors Surgeries and Business's will want to know about the infrastructure, but it will be the Residents who will want to know their homes will not be waterlogged.

Can the Residents of Moreton in Marsh rely on The Cotswolds O&S Committee to fully scrutinise any future proposals and ensure that the Council is kept fully up to date as any new information regarding future proposals comes through in the future on behalf of the Residents in Moreton in Marsh.

Thank you to the Chair for hearing my questions and request.”

The Chair thanked Councillor Corps for the question and stated that they were aware of the concerns they raised. The Chair suggested that the Committee recommends that Cabinet set up a Working Group to address the issues raised by Councillor Corps and by the member of the public, and that they would discuss this further as part of the item on the Local Plan.

Councillor Corps asked a supplementary question to request a timescale for the group being set up. The Chair agreed with the member stated that this would be discussed as part of the item on the local plan, as it would be for the Committee to decide.

OS.23 Corporate Plan 2024-2028

The Chair of the Committee invited the Leader of the Council to introduce the item;

The purpose of the item was to present the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 to the Committee, ahead of its approval by Cabinet on 11 January.

The Leader of the Council provided an overview of the Corporate Plan, emphasising that changes would be made to it prior to its submission to Council for final approval. The document, subject to changes, focused on key priorities: delivering genuinely affordable housing, supporting the local economy, and addressing the climate emergency. The Leader of the Council acknowledged the financial challenges faced by the Council and stressed the need for efficient service delivery.

The Committee commented on the report and asked questions, discussing definitions of affordable housing, and the Leader stated that the preferred form of affordable housing for the Council was socially rented housing.

The Committee made the following suggestions to amend the plan which were accepted by the Leader;

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- Greater clarity was required on objectives - to be clear about what tangible things the Council wants to do and what the outcomes will be.
- Focus on key deliverables with a 'less is more' approach as opposed to a focus on the wider aspirations of the Council.
- Tackling the ecological emergency should have greater emphasis in the Corporate Plan.
- A note to explain where/who the photos show would be useful.
- Amend wording to remove 'recreate' in Aim (noting the Leader advised this page was likely to be deleted).
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to review progress against target dates (item for 2024/25 workplan) and the Leader gave a commitment to update the Committee. Key Performance Indicators to be aligned with Corporate Plan to show what success looks like.
- That the presentation of the document would be updated before the presentation to Full Council on 24 January 2024.
- Note that any changes to staff responsibility would need to be updated periodically and these updates reported to the Committee.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report

OS.24 2024/25 Budget Consultation Feedback Report

The purpose of the item was to provide feedback to Cabinet from the recent consultation on the Administration's budget proposals.

The Chair invited the Deputy Leader to introduce the item. The Deputy Leader highlighted the Council's commitment to transparency, and publishing the consultation responses, including critical ones.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- Members raised the need to distil themes from the responses, particularly in the car parking section. The Deputy Leader acknowledged the value of responses, especially in understanding public sentiment amid budgetary pressures.
- Members also expressed a desire for more concrete information on how the feedback would influence decisions.
- Members asked if residents who added comments received acknowledgment, and the Deputy Leader confirmed that an automatic response had been generated.
- It was stated that it was difficult for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to exercise its 'critical friend' function at this stage in the process, and wished to feed into the design of the survey at an earlier stage.

The Committee made the following suggestions;

- That Further communications to be provided by the Council to help residents understand the context of the questions e.g. note which statutory services are provided by the Council and highlight in the introduction which services the District Council do not provide but are commonly raised i.e. potholes.
- That future draft surveys are brought before the Committee for consideration before the survey is launched.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report

OS.25 Cotswold District Local Plan - Partial Update

OS.25 Cotswold District Local Plan Update and Cirencester Town Centre Framework Masterplan

The Committee took a ten-minute break, reconvening before proceeding onto this item.

The Chair introduced the item, and recommended that due to the size and scope of the Local Plan Partial Update, the Committee focused on:

- Whether the Council should start preparing the Development Strategy and Site Allocation Plan now;
- The development strategy options;
- Moreton-in-Marsh as highlighted by the Members Question and Public Question.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report. The purpose of the item was to:

- Consider the recommendation to Council to start preparing a new local plan for the period 2026 to 2041 and to consult on a document that includes development strategy options:
- To consider the recommendation to consult the public on a set of draft policies that update the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-31 (the adopted Local Plan):
- To consider the recommendation to consult the public on an 'initial ideas' Cirencester Town Centre Framework Masterplan consultation document; and
- For Cabinet to approve the updated Statement of Community Involvement and the updated Local Development Scheme documents.

The Cabinet Member provided an overview of the report, and explained that the purpose of updating the Local Plan was to address Climate Change and ensure that communities are given the opportunity to shape how future needs are delivered across the district and in their communities. It was also explained that having an up-to-date Local Plan will help to ensure the council maintains an enduring housing land supply and guard against speculative applications for development. The Cabinet Member further explained that the intention is to join the adopted Local Plan partial update: draft policies (annex x) and a new Local Plan (which would include a new development strategy and site allocations for the plan period 2026-41) together ahead of the Government's Planning Reform deadline of 30 June 2025. However, Council would be updated on whether this is possible by the end of the year. It was stated that if it is deemed not possible, then the Local Plan partial update (i.e. a finalised version of Annex C) would be submitted separately and the new local Plan 2026-41 would transition in to the government's new planning system in 2025.

Members discussed the report and raised the following points, which were answered by the Cabinet Member and Officers;

- The Forward Planning Manager assured members that although the deadlines were tight, the consultation would be delivered to the necessary deadlines.
- Members stated that it would be necessary to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure, including flood mitigation and the appropriate environmental studies were in place before building more housing in Moreton-in-Marsh. The Forward Planning Manager stated that they would continue to engage with stakeholders such as

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Gloucestershire County Council. He also explained the importance of ensuring the Public identify infrastructure issues in their communities as this will aid how the plan progresses and the type and scale of new infrastructure required.

- Members asked about the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment document (SHELAA), which the Forward Planning Manager stated would be updated later in the year. He explained that a the consultation would include a 'call for sites' that will aid the SHELAA update.
- The Forward Planning Manager stated that the online consultation would be launched on 1 February at your.cotswold.gov.uk a note to all members will notify them of this.
- Members commented on the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan and whether pedestrianisation was still in scope. The Forward Planning Manager stated that the document set out a broad vision and several principles to guide future development of which active travel / pedestrianisation is a feature.

RESOLVED: To agree that Cabinet Recommend to Council that Cotswold District Council begin the preparation of a new Local Plan that would extend the plan period from 31 March 2031 to 31 March 2041 and approves the Vision, Objectives and Development Strategy consultation document, as presented at Annex B, to be published for a six week public consultation;

Voting Record

For 10, Against 0, Abstentions 0, 0 Absent/Did not vote

RESOLVED: That the Committee makes a recommendation to Cabinet that a working group is set up to consider the development of a Strategic plan for Moreton in Marsh.

Voting record

For 10, Against 0, Abstentions 0, 0 Absent/Did not vote

Recommendation: That the Council establishes and defines the terms of reference for a cross-party working group to consider the development of a strategic plan for Moreton in Marsh.

A timeline for the set-up of the working group to form part of the recommendation to Cabinet

That the Committee support twin tracking the Local Plan development as set out in the recommendations.

Voting Record

For 10, Against 0, Abstentions 0, 0 Absent/Did not vote

OS.26 Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Chair reminded members that the next Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to take place on 30 January.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Publica Transition plan would be deferred to the meeting afterward as this was going to be considered by Cabinet on 7 March 2024

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The Meeting commenced at 4:00pm and closed at 6:46pm

Chair

(END)