

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 14 December 2017 at 7.00 pm

Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Debby Hallett (Chairman), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Mike Badcock, Vicky Jenkins, Sandy Lovatt, Chris Palmer, Judy Roberts and Ben Mabbett (In place of Mohinder Kainth)

Officers: Gerry Brough, Adrian Duffield, Ben Duffy, Helen Novelle, Clare Roberts and Ron Schrieber

Also present: Councillors Roger Cox and Elaine Ware

Sc.45 Apologies for absence

Councillor Mohinder Kainth (substituted by Ben Mabbett) submitted apologies.

At the Council meeting on 13 December, Councillor Ed Blagrove had been appointed to the Cabinet and so ceased to be a member of the Scrutiny Committee.

Sc.46 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.47 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The Chairman announced that she would be standing down as Chairman for the housing delivery update report.

Sc.48 Public participation

None.

Sc.49 Housing delivery update

The vice-chairman was in the chair for this item.

The committee considered the report of the head of planning services which detailed the council's housing delivery performance since 2011 compared with the housing requirements in the Adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

The report also detailed how the Joint Housing Delivery Strategy (JHDS) would assist in delivering the district's housing requirement and provided details of the council's five-year housing land supply (FYHLS) and the production of the Authority Monitoring report (AMR).

Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning, introduced this item. Also present to answer questions were Adrian Duffield, head of planning services, Clare Roberts, principal planning policy officer, Ben Duffy, monitoring officer (planning policy) and Helen Novelle, principal development officer.

In response to members' questions, the committee was informed that:

- The total housing requirement of the district sub areas was 21,061, which was slightly over the overall district's objectively assessed need (OAN) of 20,560 as set out in Local Plan Part 1. This over-provision could potentially contribute to meeting the Vale's proportion of Oxford's unmet need.
- The missing figure in Table 6 for the affordable housing dwellings in 2017/18 (to date) was 137, which meant that delivery in that year was 55 dwellings above target. Since 2011/12 there had been a net gain of 1377 dwellings against a target of 1775 giving a difference of -398. However, the committee noted that the target figures had changed following the adoption of the Local Plan Part 1.
- The large difference between the number of housing completions and target in the south-east Vale sub area as set out in Table 3 was substantially due to a number of large scale developments which were in progress, such as Grove Airfield.
- The local authority considered a house to be complete once it was watertight, i.e. had a roof, windows and doors. This data was used by local authorities nationally to assess the FYHLS and planning appeals.
- The number of dwellings projected for the next few years, as set out in Figure 1, were expected to exceed target.

The committee thanked the Cabinet member and officers for their informative report.

RESOLVED: to

1. Note the report; and
2. Request the head of planning services to submit the Authority Monitoring report to a future meeting.

Sc.50 Slippage of development and housing capital schemes

At its meeting on 28 September 2017, the committee considered a report on the financial outturn 2016/17 and had expressed concern about the overall amount of slippage and, in particular, slippage in development and housing capital schemes. Accordingly, it had requested the interim head of development, regeneration and housing to report to a future meeting on the reasons for the delay in implementing his service's capital schemes.

Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for housing, introduced the report. Also present to answer questions was Gerry Brough, interim head of development, regeneration and housing.

The committee was informed that some of the budget identified as slippage had actually been spent. However, at the time of the outturn report, some expenditure had not been invoiced or payment for invoices had not yet been received. Once invoices had been received and paid, the changed position would be reflected in the next quarterly budget report.

In response to members' questions, it was reported that:

- Funding allocated for a specific purpose, e.g. to bring forward a housing association project, was not available for any other purpose. If the project could not be commenced then the budget could not be vired for another use.
- Provisional budgeting took place before projects were worked up. This meant that it was not always possible to spend the provisional budget, as intended, in any one year.
- When a housing scheme was delayed or cancelled, the expectation was that the funding would remain available until a suitable housing project was identified. Officers were currently working with potential partners to bring forward two potential schemes.
- The Open Market Homebuyer scheme was dependent upon the receipt of suitable applications from members of the public. Unfortunately, there were no applications for sums less than the residue of funding remaining. This funding would not be carried forward and would be returned to the general budget at the end of the financial year.
- The budget for the implementation of online web advice had been spent but was identified as slippage as it took some time for suppliers to issue invoices.
- The £13,000 budget for housing allocations had been largely spent.
- The budgets for Abingdon housing and Elmside Hostel had been created with the intention of purchasing properties and refurbishing the hostel. However, a review concluded that neither of these projects could be justified within the context of a district-wide temporary accommodation strategy.

The committee thanked the Cabinet member and officer for their informative report.

RESOLVED: to

1. Note the report; and
2. Request the Cabinet member for finance and head of finance to consider the feasibility of including the reasons for the slippage of capital schemes in future budget reports.

Sc.51 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee noted its work programme.

The chairman reported that longlisting and shortlisting sessions would be scheduled in April and May 2018, respectively, to identify topics for the committee's future consideration.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm