

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee



held on Monday, 9 September 2024 at 7.00 pm
at Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWHDC) Councillors: Katherine Foxhall (Chair), Judy Roberts (Vice-Chair), Ron Batstone, James Cox, Hayleigh Gascoigne, Robert Maddison.
Substitute members Emily Smith and Kiera Bentley.

Officers: Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer)

Guests: Cabinet member for Policy and Programmes, Councillor Andy Foulsham

Also present:

Officer: Ricardo Rios (Planning Policy Team Leader), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services)

1. Chair's announcements

Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. The chair provided an update on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) scrutiny review report that members received in early summer. Chair explained that the report would be given to the new Head of Legal and Democratic / Monitoring Officer when he starts in October, noting that scrutiny chairs looked forward to welcoming him. After this, work will continue and the chair thanked the Head of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive for Transformation and Operations, who were progressing this by finding a suitable opportunity for members to discuss this report.

Chair highlighted that the VOWHDC Scrutiny Committee had provided comments and questions on a report on the 'future of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP)' over the summer via an informal meeting where comments were collated and sent to the Council Leader, who had suggested that members give their views. This topic would be going to Joint Scrutiny Committee on 30 September and the chair encouraged members of separate scrutiny committees to join this discussion (to watch or register to speak), considering their contributions over the summer.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Debby Hallett and Oliver Forder. Councillors Kiera Bentley and Emily Smith were welcomed, both present as the respective substitute members of the committee.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The committee considered the Scrutiny Committee minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2024. There was a discussion about minuting of confidential items and the difference between public and confidential versions, which members have access to.

Resolved:

The committee agreed the minutes as a correct record, the chair would sign them as such.

4. Declaration of interests

None.

5. Urgent business

None.

6. Public participation

None.

7. Work schedule and dates for all Vale and Joint scrutiny meetings

The committee reviewed the work programme. Chair gave thanks to Councillor Emily Smith for the joint work on scoping a housing delivery strategy item (in her role at Joint Audit and Governance Committee). This would come to a future scrutiny committee and had been sent to officers. The new Corporate Plan item had moved to early next year, as officers had to focus on the Joint Local Plan over the coming months.

8. Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 2 review

Scrutiny Committee considered a Cabinet report with recommendations to Cabinet and Council on the Local Plan Part 2 review. The item was introduced by the Cabinet member for Policy and Programmes. This was related to the VOWHDC current Local Plan and was a review of Part Two (LPP2), which was a statutory duty. It was not regarding the developing Joint Local Plan (JLP). Members were welcomed to ask questions of the Cabinet member. The officers supporting the item were the Planning Policy Team Leader, who was online. The Head of Policy and Programmes was in the meeting room.

It was explained that the review was a requirement and that the forming of a Joint Local Plan (which was at an advanced stage) would have many updated and improved policies - 2 policies in LPP2 were being carried forward in the JLP; 5 policies were being deleted; and 50 policies were being replaced. Members asked questions about the deleted policies and wanted clarification. Members were assured that the JLP would bring updated policies and sooner, than if the LPP2 was reviewed again at this stage.

The Cabinet member explained in response to questioning that if the JLP was not accepted at examination, the council would probably be asked to make modifications to the JLP. We were obligated to do the LPP2 review now. JLP would help us to have up-to-date policies sooner. If the JLP did not pass examination, officers would then review existing plans. The appendix to the report was the LPP2 review documents. Members were assured that there were not any known risks to this in the nine months before the JLP.

It was confirmed that the councils had more up to date plans than many other authorities. The work of the review took into account the context of an advanced JLP. The methodology of the review considered this, focussing on the difference between LPP2 and the JLP preferred options version that was consulted on with the public. The review identified and compared policies of the LPP2 and the JLP in order to achieve up to date policies.

Specific policies were queried:

- CP15C (reference page 26) was deleted - through development management process, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was not required. A member raised a local issue - Grove had an allocation of 400 to 600 homes and needed the SPD. The Cabinet member offered a written response to Councillor Batstone. The Team Leader added that this was a factual statement – it would not be in JLP in the form it was in, yet it could be scrutinised at a later stage. Members were encouraged to speak to such issues as Full Council in October.
- CP14A – Thames strategic storage reservoir – the Secretary of State had approved the management plan. Members expressed the need for local councillors to be able to input into this and make sure it was managed appropriately.
- CB8B – Dalton Barracks strategic location - a member asked was there a risk of increasing housing numbers. Members were reminded that this was a review and not an update.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): it was confirmed that when this was updated by Government, we weren't at risk.
- Typographical error raised at CP18A page 30 of the pack – 'Thames River Crossing between Culham and Didcot'

Members completed their questioning and discussed the three options given in the report. Members were made aware that requesting officers to make changes to the Local Plan Part Two would take longer than the completion of the JLP, which would bring many updated policies sooner. The committee voted as follows:

Recommendation to Cabinet

Committee voted in favour of **Option 1** as listed in the officer report: To approve the Regulation 10A review of LPP2 for publication in October 2024 and decide not to revise LPP2 policies.

The report explained that this action would comply with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The review within the report shall fulfil the Council's duty to consider whether to revise the document. Whilst this review concluded that there were LPP2 policies that required updating, the preparation of the JLP makes the revision of LPP2 policies not necessary as it would not produce a set of up-to-date development plan policies sooner than via the JLP process that was already underway and at an advanced stage. This was the recommended option from officers.

Concerns raised in the meeting on higher allocation at Dalton Barracks and Grove can be raised at Full Council, with the Cabinet member also welcoming queries which would be given a written response.

9. Exclusion of the public

Not required

10. Exempt minutes

Not required

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm

Chair:

Date: