

Recommendations and updates from other committees to Cabinet 11 August 2023



Joint Audit and Governance Committee

The committee met on 4 July to consider the annual report on the operation of the code of conduct, the annual report from internal audit, and the review of internal audit's activity in the first quarter of this financial year. No recommendations have been made to Cabinet.

Joint Scrutiny Committee

The committee met on 10 July to discuss the Integrated Care Strategy. The committee invited a representative of the Integrated Care Board to the meeting, who gave a presentation and answered members' questions. A positive discussion ensued, after which the Board's representative was thanked for his attendance and input. No recommendations were made to Cabinet.

Scrutiny Committee

The committee met on 12 July to consider a call-in request of an officer key decision. The decision by the head of development and corporate landlord was to provide vehicles to carry out shared grounds maintenance, toilet cleaning and facilities services. The committee did not refer the matter back to the decision-maker and accepted that the decision had been made properly. Therefore, the decision took effect immediately. However, the officer was asked to provide a report on progress to the Scrutiny Committee, six months after implementation.

The committee met again on 31 July to discuss grant funding affordable housing. The committee welcomed the policy and made a range of observations, asking for these to be actioned where possible. The following suggestions were made to further improve the policy:

- It was requested that wording was strengthened in the report to emphasise that the money for bids is ring-fenced
- Paragraphs 20-21 in the report – clarity requested on the spend limits for full Council approval
- Paragraph 3 of the policy – clarify wording to explain this applies to housing sums only
- Paragraph 4 of the policy – amend wording to explain the delivery of affordable housing and that affordable housing in perpetuity was a requirement
- Paragraph 4 of the policy – distinguish between essential and desirable. It was confirmed that this was in line with the Housing Strategy
- Wording requested in the policy to explain that a report on the assessment of the bid would be shared with the applicant

- The criteria from page 2 of the policy could have more explanation, without being overly prescriptive as this may deter some bidders
- Please remove undefined acronyms or provide explanation, as it is a public facing document
- Please clarify what “low cost” housing means. Officer to add wording on asking bidders to explain what the resident’s experience would be for utilities/low cost housing
- Make “low running costs” a markable criteria. This would include non-carbon utilities such as water
- Clarity needed on what “adding social value” is
- On page 3 of the policy, the committee believes that the wording suggested for South Oxfordshire on gas boilers being given a rating of zero should be replicated for Vale, but with reconsideration of the wording. The committee is keen to balance encouraging bids with the commitment the council has to tackle the climate emergency, noting that officers are intending to not exclude potential properties that already have gas boilers installed, but will work with bidders to move towards efficient zero carbon options that have low running costs. If gas boilers scored low, this is one of many criteria and should not deter bidders if the wording is considered carefully
- Please check whether bidders need to provide architect’s drawings at this stage

The Scrutiny Committee noted that South Oxfordshire’s Scrutiny Committee would consider the draft policy on 7 August, and there would be joint discussions between the South and Vale Cabinet members thereafter to agree the best wording that would encourage bidders and stand by the aims of the councils.

Democratic Services

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