

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 7 September 2015

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COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Simmons (Chair), Hayes (Vice-Chair), Darke, Fry, Gant, Henwood, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Smith, Taylor, Upton and Thomas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Bob Price (Leader of the Council) and Councillor Mike Rowley

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Edwards (Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing), Ian Brooke (Head of Community Services), Lucy Cherry (Leisure and Performance Manager), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Catherine Phythian (Committee Services Officer)

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coulter and Councillor Hollick (substitute Councillor Thomas).

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. LEISURE & WELLBEING STRATEGY 2015-20

The Head of Community Services presented the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy, 2015 – 2020, explaining that this replaced the previous Leisure Strategy. As the draft Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy had previously gone to the City Executive Board at the pre-consultation stage the Committee focused the majority of its discussion on how the City Council had responded to feedback received in the consultation.

A member of the public addressed the Committee on this agenda item, expressing concerns about the consultation methodology, the response level and the lack of leisure provision in some areas of the city.

The Head of Community Services said that the Council had invested in facilities and that leisure centre usage had increased, especially amongst target groups. The Leisure & Wellbeing Strategy used Sport England models which showed

that the city as a whole was well served for leisure provision. The Committee heard that the new Leys pool was performing very well in terms of visitor numbers, some of whom were travelling in to the city.

In response to a question about black and minority ethnic participation, the Head of Community Services said the consultation had also included meetings with representatives of community groups, public health, the County Sports Partnership, teachers and focus sessions with target groups. The Board Member assured the Committee that taken together, the consultation data gathered provided a robust view.

The Committee noted that it was not possible to say whether the increase in participation levels at Council facilities was at the expense of private leisure centre usage because the private companies did not publish such commercially sensitive information.

The Head of Community Services said that one consistent message received in the consultation responses was that the Council could be better at communicating the leisure service offering. He said that the Council was working on different initiatives to achieve this and cited the new Bungee mobile app for young people as an example of the Council working with local schools to improve communication within a target group. The Committee questioned whether this could be extended so that service users could use Council apps to book classes or crèches at leisure facilities. The Head of Community Services said that this was not currently possible but was something that the Council hoped to deliver in the future. It was suggested that Fusion Lifestyle should be encouraged to develop its own app to enable leisure bookings.

The Committee also suggested that the strategy should include more emphasis on integrating leisure facilities with the city's broader leisure offer, which included anywhere that sport and physical activity could take place, such as community centres and community buildings such as schools, churches and village halls.

The Committee also asked questions about cycling, whether the targets for increasing leisure centre usage were viable and the financial cost of delivering the strategy. The Board Member said that providing an overall figure would be misleading, as some money had been budgeted for and other figures would be conjecture.

The Committee requested an update on facility running costs, including capital and revenue spend, following on from a scrutiny recommendation on the Fusion Lifestyle Performance 2013-2014 report, in June 2014.

In a subsequent discussion under agenda item 6: Integrated Performance Report Q1, 2015-16 (minute 30 refers) the Committee noted that one of the performance indicators (LP106) suggested that the level of participation at our leisure centres by target groups was below target for 2015/16 quarter 1.

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to AGREE to make the following recommendations to the City Executive Board:

1. That the City Council looks into extending the functionality of its mobile apps to enable leisure bookings.
2. That the City Council's Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy includes a greater emphasis on strengthening integration between leisure centres and the broader leisure offer, including community centres.
3. That the City Council continues to monitor the accessibility of leisure provision across Oxford, including in those parts of the city that have no swimming pools within a 20 walk, such as Littlemore and Cowley, and how this relates to leisure target groups (the Committee noted that corporate performance measure LP106: To increase participation at our leisure centres by target groups was below target for 2015/16 quarter 1).

Councillor Fry left the meeting during this item.

28. OXFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD

Councillor Price briefed the Committee on the work of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and on the outcomes of the most recent meeting in July 2015. The Committee noted the apologies of the Growth Board Programme Manager who was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Oxfordshire Growth Board for their written response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations. Discussion focused on the challenges of balancing the individual policies of the different sovereign councils with the need to take a more holistic approach to sustainability and planning matters.

In conclusion the Committee agreed that they should continue to maintain a watching brief on the work of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to arrange for the Oxfordshire Growth Board committee papers to be circulated to the members of the Scrutiny Committee.

29. OXFORD GROWTH STRATEGY

Councillor Smith, Chair of the Scrutiny Housing Panel, briefed the Committee on the recent Housing Panel discussion with the Board Member for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services and officers on the Growth Strategy. She confirmed that they Panel were satisfied with the good answers to its questions and that the Panel was broadly supportive of urban extensions to Oxford with improved transport links.

The Committee questioned whether the Growth Strategy could provide more analysis of how growth would affect social housing. The Leader of the Council

said that there were both economic and demographic growth pressures in the city and that delivering 28,000 - 30,000 homes would be a huge challenge. The City Council required that 50% of new housing within the city was provided as affordable housing. However, the city had no such policy levers for new housing located outside the city boundaries as other authorities' local plans were sovereign. The Committee noted that increasing patterns of mobile working meant that distributed housing was becoming more feasible. Better Broadband for Oxfordshire provided such opportunities and the Committee suggested that this should be reflected in the Strategy.

The challenges around growth were not limited to Oxford but were particularly acute in the city. The Executive Director for Regeneration and Housing said that market housing would be needed to fund infrastructure improvements but that a proportion of new housing could be provided as key worker housing. The Committee heard that the Council had not reached the stage of developing parameters yet so any such opportunities sketched out in the strategy would be speculative.

The Committee noted that the Inequality Panel had recommended that factors around inequality should be considered in all major Council strategies. The Committee suggested that affordable housing should at least be alluded to at the strategy level and that there were opportunities to deliver affordable housing without affecting the sovereignty of local plans, such as through investing in 'real lettings'. The Committee noted the need for strategic thinking about affordable housing that aligns with this Strategy.

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to AGREE to make the following recommendations to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendation:

1. That the Council's strategic approach to providing new affordable housing should be aligned with, and referenced in, the Oxford Growth Strategy.
2. That the Oxford Growth Strategy includes a greater emphasis on mobile working and the opportunities presented by Better Broadband for Oxfordshire.

30. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2015/16

The Scrutiny Officer tabled the report which detailed the outcomes at 30 June 2015 (Q1 2015/16) for a set of corporate indicators which the Committee had agreed to monitor.

The Committee raised the following queries:

- BIT022: Level of efficiency savings – why was this a Green rating when it had 2 Red arrows for the year on year and year end trends?

- BV016a: Percentage of employees with a disability – which external partners had taken part in the workshops?
- LG002: Achieve the electoral registration rate target – did the Green rating take account of the known problems in early autumn in registering new university intake? How did this rating relate to boundary changes? What was the methodology used?
- PC027: Increase the number of people engaging with the Council’s social media accounts – why is the target lower this year?
- NI192: Household waste recycled and composted (YTD) – further explanation on the data requested.
- LP106: To increase participation at our leisure centres by target groups – why was this a Red rating and how does it relate to the evidence presented in the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy?
- BI002a: The number of training places and jobs created as a result of the Council’s investment and leadership – what were the reasons for this being an Amber rating?

The Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate written responses to these questions.

31. REPORT OF THE CYCLING REVIEW GROUP

Councillor Upton presented the report of the Cycling Review Group. She said that the first meeting of the Cycling Forum would be held on 9 September 2015. She said that although the report focused on the things that the City Council could do to improve cycling in Oxford it was essential to work with the County Council and other organisations on a “joined up” approach.

The Chair of Scrutiny thanked Councillor Upton, the members of the Review Group and the Scrutiny Officer for a thorough piece of work which had resulted in an excellent report.

In discussion the Committee noted recent developments in London regarding the introduction of sideguards on large vehicles and the possibility of introducing turning restrictions for large vehicles. They felt that the Council should monitor these initiatives with a view to introducing similar measures in Oxford. They noted that there had been a Council motion in December 2014¹ on improving

¹ Improving safety for cyclists

Council notes with great concern the recent accidents involving cyclists and lorries in Oxford. Council believes that accidents could be reduced by requiring lorries to have safety equipment, to the industry-led standard supported by the Mayor of London in December 2013. Council notes that it adopted a motion some two years ago which endorsed the need for goods vehicles to incorporate safety equipment of the type referred to.

It now asks the City Executive Board to amend Council policy to

- require all contractors working on council contracts in the city to have every vehicle over 3.5 tonnes fitted with sideguards to protect cyclists from being dragged under the wheels, and with mirrors giving the driver a better view of cyclists and pedestrians around their vehicles;
- urge the County Council to make a Traffic Regulation Order imposing similar conditions on all similar vehicles in Oxford, as proposed by TfL in London.

safety for cyclists that had proposed fitting sideguards to contractor vehicles working on council contracts in the city and asking the County to make a Traffic Regulation Order imposing similar conditions for the City. The Committee noted with regret that they were not aware of any progress on the implementation of that Council motion.

The Committee resolved to AGREE that the Cycling Review Group report should be submitted to the City Executive Board meeting on 10 September 2015 and that in presenting the report the Chair of Scrutiny or the lead member of the Cycling Review Group should refer the Board to the Council motion and seek an update on the status of the City Council's requirements on contractors and on the request to the County Council for a Traffic Regulation Order.

32. REPORT OF THE WASTE WATER FLOODING PANEL

Councillor Darke presented the report of the Waste Water Flooding Panel following the recent meeting with Thames Water Utilities on the progress of the Oxford Catchment Study. He said that this had been a very constructive meeting with Thames Water Utilities explaining their "Find and Fix" process for dealing with problems as they were identified as part of the catchment study.

The Committee confirmed the Panel's proposal to hold a further meeting with Thames Water Utilities to consider the outcomes of the catchment study. In discussion the Committee felt that there would be merit in changing the format of the next meeting to a Member Briefing session. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to facilitate this.

The Committee resolved to AGREE that the report of the Waste Water Flooding Panel should be presented to the City Executive Board meeting on 10 September 2015.

33. REPORT OF THE FINANCE PANEL - MUNICIPAL BONDS

Councillor Simmons, Chair of the Finance Panel, presented the report of the Finance Panel on Municipal Bonds and the suggested City Executive Board response to those recommendations as provided by the Portfolio Holder. The report would be presented to the City Executive Board meeting on 10 September 2015. The Committee noted that all of the recommendations had been accepted in whole or in part.

The Committee resolved to AGREE that the Finance Panel report on Municipal Bonds should be submitted to the City Executive Board on 10 September 2015 and that in presenting the report the Chair should make the following points:

CEB response to Recommendation 3: the Scrutiny Committee recognise that "the Council currently has no requirement to borrow in the immediate future" but

Following debate and voting, Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out above.

maintain that the recommendation would be relevant if the Council needed to borrow in future years.

Recommendation 3 and 4: What progress has the Head of Financial Services made in contacting other authorities who have invested in the fund, and in determining what preferential investment rates were available.

34. 2014-15 ANNUAL REPORT OF OXFORD CITY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair of Scrutiny presented the draft 2014-15 Annual Report. He thanked all Scrutiny members for their contribution to what had been a positive and successful year. The Committee joined him in extending particular thanks to the Scrutiny Officer for his hard work and support.

The Scrutiny Officer undertook to amend the draft to include the details of all members who had served on the Scrutiny Committee or Standing Panels for all or part of the year, and a quote from the previous Chair of the Housing Panel.

The Committee resolved to AGREE that the 2014-15 Annual Report should be submitted to Council on 23 September 2015.

35. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Officer presented the work programme report which detailed the:

- full programme of monthly Committee meetings
- full programme of Standing Panel meetings (3x Housing, 1x Finance)
- one-off Panel to pre-scrutinise the revised City Centre PSPO decision
- Guest Houses Review Panel in progress (4 meetings and a report)

He informed the Committee that there was capacity to support a maximum of 3 further review meetings before the Budget review started in December. The Chair of Scrutiny suggested that those 3 meetings should be used to scope and review just 1 additional topic rather than look at different topics at each meeting.

The Committee considered the list of potential review topics and noted that Tenant Involvement would be best added to the work of the Housing Panel and that Equality and Diversity would be the next review topic.

The Committee resolved to AGREE:

1. that Councillor Hayes would lead an Equality and Diversity Review Group
2. the scope for the Guest Houses Review Group.
3. that Councillor Gant would be lead member for the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) scrutiny meeting.
4. that the following items on the Forward Plan would be considered at future meetings:
October

- City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)
- Financial Inclusion Strategy (FIS) – Action Plan update
- Transfer Station for Recycled Materials
November
- Corporate Enforcement Policy
- Planning - Annual Monitoring Report

36. REPORT BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair of Scrutiny presented the report on CEB responses to Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

The Committee NOTED the report.

37. UPDATES SINCE THE LAST MEETING

The Committee NOTED that Mr Geno Humphrey had been appointed as the new tenant co-optee on the Housing Panel.

The Chair of Scrutiny confirmed that he would write to the previous tenant co-optee, Linda Hill, to thank her for her contribution to the work of the Panel over 3 years.

The Chair of Scrutiny informed the Committee that opposition group leaders would be invited to attend the October meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to allow them to comment on the CEB response to the Inequality Panel recommendations.

The Committee NOTED the dates of the next meetings for the Standing Panels.

38. MINUTES

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 as a true and accurate record.

39. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee NOTED that further meetings were scheduled on the following dates:

- 6 October 2015
- 2 November 2015
- 9 December 2015
- 12 January 2016
- 2 February 2016
- 7 March 2016
- 5 April 2016

All meetings being at 6.15 pm.

The Committee AGREED to change the date of the meeting in December to Wednesday 9 December 2015 to accommodate a civic reception. The Housing Panel meeting would move to Thursday 10 December 2015.

The meeting started at 6.15 pm and ended at 8.50 pm