

CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Wednesday 23 April 2014

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Price (Leader), Turner (Deputy Leader), Brown, Cook, Curran, Kennedy, Lygo, Rowley, Seamons and Tanner.

173. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

174. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received

175. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Full written questions with answers were distributed at the start of the meeting. These are attached to the minutes as appendix one.

176. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON ANY ITEM FOR DECISION ON THE BOARD'S AGENDA

None

177. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no reports from the Scrutiny Committee.

178. FLOOD SUPPORT PACKAGE

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning a range of support schemes for households and businesses affected by flooding in winter 2013/14. Councillor Bob Price presented the report to the Board and invited Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance) to provide some background and context to it.

Nigel Kennedy informed that Board that 60 letters had been sent to premises that had been directly affected by flooding; and further batch would be sent to those properties that had been indirectly affected. The Council had received 19 applications for help so far, with a further 2 for future resilience measures, and these were being evaluated at present. One group of residents had made a combined application for a sump pump that would help them protect their properties in future. It was not clear yet whether or not the Council could claim back its administration costs from the Government; however it was submitting a "Belwin" claim and hoped to receive approximately £200,000 to cover expenses incurred during the winter flooding event.

In answer to a question from Councillor Tanner, Councillor Price indicated that there was a flooding reserve allocated in the Budget, which could be used if necessary. Members of the Board felt it was important to make sure that people knew about this scheme. It was noted that there was information on the Council's website; that letters had gone out and that Ward members were made aware of it, but it was suggested that community groups and community centres should also be contacted to ensure widest dissemination of the information.

The Board resolved to agree:-

(1) The following support schemes for the payment of:

- Support to businesses including
 - Business rates flooding relief;
 - Business support grants;
 - Repairs and renewals grants

- Support for homeowners, including
 - Council tax discounts and
 - Repairs and renewals grants

And that the schemes are in line with approved Government guidance and follow the principles set out in Appendix A of the report;

(2) That members of the Board delegate the administration of the above schemes to the Executive Director of Organisational Development and Corporate Services.

179. LEASE OF 1930S OFFICE BLOCK OF TOWN HALL FOR SERVICED OFFICE USE

The Regeneration and Major Projects Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning a proposed lease for the North Wing of the Town Hall. Councillor Turner presented the report to the Board and provided some context to it. He observed that this was good news for the Council in that it will produce an ongoing revenue stream.

The Board noted that there was a confidential appendix to the report.

Resolved to:-

- (1) Approve the proposed lease of the surplus office space within Oxford Town Hall. The outline details of the lease are set out in the not for publication confidential appendix to the report. The detailed provisions of the lease are to be approved by the Regeneration and Major Projects Service Manager;

- (2) Grant authority to the Regeneration and Major Projects Service Manager, in consultation with the Board Member, to vary or extend the areas to be leased as detailed herein, provided the transaction continues to represent best consideration and operational benefit.

180. HEADINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA - NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Head of City Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning the proposed designation of the Headington Neighbourhood Area. Councillor Colin Cook presented this report to the Board.

Sarah Harrison (Senior Planning Officer) informed the Board of a late comment from the Centre for Islamic Studies; which had expressed concern that it had not been consulted by the Headington Neighbourhood Forum. Their contact details will be passed to the Forum so that they can be involved in future.

Councillor Cook observed that it was not always possible to consult everyone, and that it was necessary in this case to work within the Ward boundaries.

Councillor Susan Brown had been given assurances that it would be possible for planning gain funding to be spent legitimately outside the designated neighbourhood area – in this case, parts of Wood Farm and Lye Valley. Money raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was fairly mobile, and while 25% of it should be spent within the neighbourhood area, 75% could be used elsewhere.

Councillor Turner felt that this idea was a good one, but added that he would not wish to see areas of the City with neighbourhood plans receive all the attention when it came to consultation.

With the agreement of the Board, Mike Ratcliffe (Chair of the Steering Group) addressed the meeting and confirmed that he would be happy to talk with the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. The group aimed to make plans that were coherent for Headington, and although the task ahead was onerous they had plenty of enthusiasm!

Resolved to:-

- (1) Designate the proposed Headington Neighbourhood Area;
- (2) Not designate it as a business area.

181. FUTURE ITEMS

Nothing was raised under this item.

182. MINUTES

Resolved to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2014.

183. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

Resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the items in the exempt from publication part of the agenda in accordance with the provisions in Paragraph 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2000 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Summary of business transacted by the Board after passing the resolution contained in minute 179

The Board received and noted the contents of not for publication appendix to the reports at item 7 (minute 179 refers).

184. LEASE OF 1930S OFFICE BLOCK OF TOWN HALL FOR SERVICED OFFICE USE

The Board received and noted the contents of a not for publication appendix (previously circulated, now appended) to the report at agenda item 7 (minute 179 refers)

The Board decided not to release the appendix from confidentiality because the information contained within it was, and remains, commercially sensitive.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.02 pm

Question from Member of the Public City Executive Board – 23 April 2014

Consultation

The plan has not been adequately advertised, in particular it does not appear on the Oxford City Council Consultations page and process, although residents have made informal efforts to publicise it via social media.

Area

The historic centre of Headington is St Andrews church, with the parish boundary reaching to Bayswater Brook forming the north boundary of the Barton Park development, it is regrettable this is in another area.

The area should include all quadrants around the Headington Roundabout (Green Road) which clearly identify themselves with Headington – The line of shops to the SE and St Mary's describe themselves as "Headington"

Generally the area adopts the boundaries of the "Urban Village" used in the Green Spaces Survey 2007 and suffers from the same problem, it is essentially practically ungovernable as much important data required for the evidence base does not conform to its boundaries.

Most important government statistics from census information and others come from either electoral or invariable CAS wards (statistical wards), further granularity is normally not possible as this intrudes on privacy.

This means even simple information such as what was the population growth in the Headington Forum area, or more importantly derived information such as how much green space has been lost, or how many HA of space per 1000 persons is almost incomputable, therefore, the next phase of gathering the evidence base will be based on broad assumptions via unclear data, as will grant and funding applications and the like.

The above confusion may have been a major factor in the loss of the former Barton Cricket Ground and the grant of planning permission to the nearby Barton Park development that will have less unrestricted green space than Tower Hamlets in central London - the relevant information was not easily available.

Clearly it is very hard to match the governmental boundaries with those of the community as either approach will lead to illogical outcomes, but further efforts need to be made to reduce these to any absolute minimum or with computable deltas.

Mark Pitt

Response:

Consultation

The original email from Headington Heritage was sent to a different group email address to the one specified in the consultation material, and unfortunately was not received by the officer dealing with this matter in time to be included in the CEB report. A change in committee dates meant that this committee report had to be written immediately after the close of the consultation period.

The consultation on the area application was publicised on the neighbourhood planning section of the City Council's website, and letters and emails were sent to a large number of local groups in Headington and surrounding areas. Many of those groups in turn helped to publicise the proposals, as did local ward Members. A poster was produced and distributed to over 30 community noticeboards in the area, while the area application documents were placed on display at libraries in Headington, Old Marston and Cowley, together with the central library and at the City Council's customer services centre in St Aldate's.

Area

The central thrust of the comments made by Headington Heritage is that the neighbourhood area should be based on established electoral or ward boundaries in order to ensure that census information and other forms of data are available to support the Headington Neighbourhood Plan. The objector is concerned that the evidence base will otherwise be founded on "broad assumptions via unclear data".

These are relevant issues to consider and are already addressed in paragraphs 5-6 of the committee report. The report notes that the Neighbourhood Forum has put a lot of work into attempting to draw up a suitable boundary. It identifies that the proposed area includes the whole of Headington ward, together with the part of Quarry and Risinghurst ward outside of the parish boundary and the part of the Churchill and Wood Farm ward that is outside the Wood Farm regeneration area. The area also includes a polling district in Barton and Sandhills ward that is within the ring road and the part of Headington Hill and Northway ward that falls within the Headington Hill conservation area.

While it will be more challenging to compile statistical data for the proposed area than it would be for an area that simply follows an existing ward boundary, it is possible to obtain detailed statistical data for Super Output Areas that are smaller than ward level. Indeed the City Council has already published on its website a profile of the characteristics of the area covered by the Headington Neighbourhood Forum according to the 2011 Census. This can be accessed from the following link: <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Statistics/AreaProfiles/Headington%20Neighbourhood%20profile.pdf>

The committee report also notes that electoral services were consulted with regard to the proposed electoral boundaries, to ensure the referendum can run smoothly.

With regard to the specific geographical comments made, the Barton Park development is considered to fall within the community of Barton, while the shops to the SE of Green Road roundabout cannot be included because they fall within the Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish Council area. Paragraph 12 of the committee report explains that the Localism Act precludes a neighbourhood forum from being designated if its' neighbourhood area would cover the whole or part of a parish council area. This is because Parish Councils are expected to take the lead on neighbourhood planning within parished areas.

Adrian Roche
Planning Policy Team Leader

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