

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 23 June 2014

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Simmons (Chair), Hayes (Vice-Chair), Anwar, Altaf-Khan, Coulter, Darke, Fry, Hollick, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Sanders, Smith and Upton.

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT: Councillor Rowley, Executive Board Member for Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lucy Cherry (City Leisure), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Val Johnson (Policy Team Leader), Sadie Paige (Policy, Culture and Communication), Pat Jones (Principal Scrutiny Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee and Member Services Officer)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2014/2015

The Scrutiny Committee appointed Councillor Simmons as the Chair for the Council Year 2014/15.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2014/2015

The Scrutiny Committee appointed Councillor Hayes as the Vice Chair for the Council Year 2014/15.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Board Members Cllrs Turner and Simm and Peter McQuitty, Head of Policy, Culture and Communications.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. SCRUTINY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND PREPARATION FOR THE 2014/2015 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning the suggested carry forward items from the 2013/14 programme. The Committee Services Manager presented the report to the Committee.

The following comments were made.

Topic	Councillors Allocated for 13/14
Thames Water investment to improve flooding and sewerage issues in the City.	Panel to continue Lead: Councillor Darke Councillors Pressel, Thomas and Liberal Democrat (to be determined)
Discretionary Housing Payments	Work to continue and go to the Housing Standing Panel Lead: Councillor Coulter.
Performance monitoring A quarterly report of progress against a selection of performance measures selected by the Committee.	To continue Councillors Simmons, Coulter, Darke and Liberal Democrat (to be determined) to select the measures on behalf of the Committee.
Council Tax exemption for students. Is this being applied consistently and managed.	Work to continue Lead: Councillor Simmons.
Enfranchisement and Empowerment. Review report completed by the Committee. Officer responses to proposals not yet seen so recommendations have not been presented to the City Executive Board	Panel to disband but Officer's report to come to Scrutiny Committee – as soon as possible. Further work around enfranchisement to be considered by committee at Sept meeting.
The effects and value of the City's investment in educational attainment at primary level. Important issue to members with outcomes still to be seen in detail.	Panel to continue Lead: Not nominated Councillors Coulter, Paule, Thomas and Altaf-Khan. Former Councillor Campbell to be approached to continue work as a co-opted member if no other councillor interested. Key Stage results report from Education Attainment Officer to come to Committee. (when available) List of schools in programme to be presented to Committee in Sept.
Tracking the experience of a few families affected by benefit changes to record the affects in a holistic way.	Committee to see the results of research commissioned by Paul Wilding in this area.
Finance Standing Panel	To continue Chair: Councillor Simmons

To consider spending, treasury management function and conduct the Budget Review	Councillors Fry, Darke and Fooks
Housing Standing Panel To complete the on-going review of the “Oxford Standard” and any other Housing issues from the programme	To continue Chair: Councillor Smith Councillors Hollick, Sanders and Liberal Democrat (to be decided) and to include a co-opted Tenant.

New panel topics will be discussed and determined at the September meeting. All non-executive councillors are asked to send in their topic ideas to the Committee Services Manager.

The Committee resolved to Approve the Committee Operating Principles listed in the report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee resolved to call from the Forward Plan the following items to pre-scrutinise:

- Business in the Community- Working in Partnership
- Oxfordshire Growth Board
- Towards Mental Wellbeing and Community Resilience in Oxford

Item to go to the Finance Standing Panel

- Treasury Management Annual Plan

Item to go to the Housing Standing Panel:

- Leaseholder Payment Options for Major Work

Councillors Fry and Lloyd-Shogbesan to discuss the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy with officers outside the Committee.

7. FUSION LIFESTYLE - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE 2013/2014

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Communities submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which provided a performance update of the city’s leisure management contract with Fusion Lifestyle 2013/14.

Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Leisure Contracts and Community Partnership Grants; and the Leisure & Performance Manager presented the report to the Committee. They highlighted that:

- the financial subsidy that the Council pays per user to fusion will be zero by 2016/17.
- Participation levels are levelling off – this may be due to the Blackbird Leys leisure centre yet to fully open and the gradual shift from people in Cowley using other facilities causing participation rates to even out.

- Continue to monitor quality and customer satisfaction through the use of a quality framework. 96% of users surveyed satisfied but how many feel we deliver an excellent service?
- The Council has a positive relationship with Fusion.

Jane Alexander spoke on the report. She was concerned about the transparency of the report and requested that the confidential appendix be made public because if Council ran the leisure centres directly than the financial figures would be publically available. She felt the report did not give enough information on participation rates or customer satisfaction for the committee to fully understand the performance of Fusion.

The Committee raised the following points:

- Is it true that Council offers a commercial loan to Fusion with below market rate terms? Officers were not aware of a commercial loan being given to Fusion. Fusion might have received an energy efficient grant to invest in the buildings (which are council owned). Officers to report back to the Committee in September with the exact details.
- Poor performance was addressed through regular client meetings between Council officers and Fusion.
- Queried the need for the confidential appendix as it was agreed at the June meeting in 2013 that the running costs of the facilities would be shown including all capital investment and loan cost in the next report.
- The images used in the Active Woman campaign were considered to be too stereotypical and gender biased. The officer stated that this was a national campaign run by Sports England and so the influence the Committee could have was probably limited.
- Are workers being paid the Oxford Living Wage? – Yes
- Is the energy efficiency of the BBL pool going to be better than the Temple Cowley one? The pool has been designed to maximise solar heating and the expectation is that it will be one of the most energy efficient pools in the county.
- Will BME women be offered the same classes at BBL's as they currently get at Temple Cowley. Yes – the timetable will be the same.

The Committee resolved

1. To see the issues raised and the actions/penalties taken by Fusion over the last year for poor performance.
2. That officers take the issue of stereotypical and gender biased campaign images in the Active Woman campaign to Sports England and report the outcome back to the Committee.
3. To see any information the Council has on the views and experiences of non-card users
4. To see more detailed data and information on failing attendance rates amongst young people, so as to understand more fully the reasons behind it and whether it was a particular set of circumstances or a trend.
5. That officers reconsider the need to publicly exclude the running costs to the Council of each leisure facility with Fusion and let them know the outcome.

6. That officers report back to the Committee in September with the exact details of any additional financial assistance or grants given to Fusion lifestyle in the last year.

8. END OF YEAR INTEGRATED REPORT 2013/2014

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Council's finances, risk and performance as at the end of Quarter 4, 31st March 2014.

The Council's finances are in good shape and there had been an £5.371M underspend in the General fund, 77% of corporate performance targets have been either delivered as planned or exceeded and the capital programme of £22M, made up of 93% of the latest budget.

David Williams spoke on the Council's proposal to purchase the Gladiator Club's building. He requested the committee's support for the proposal and queried whether the proposed pledge of £250,000 would be enough to secure the property.

The Committee made the following comments:

- Housing and homelessness are both corporate targets – are we getting on top of these problems? - 1.2M has been carried forward for these. Is this enough, given the recent County Council cuts?
- We need to maintain a healthy balance in the HRA fund to allow for future house building.
- There was a £20M slippage in the capital programme last year, how can we make sure that this doesn't happen again? We have adopted a more rigorous process which requires project plans to be cleared before they start to make sure they are completed on time.

The Committee resolved to

1. Welcome the Council's proposed purchase of the Gladiator Club's property and recommend that CEB do what they could within the 'best value' principle to secure the property.
2. Welcome the recent housing acquisition
3. Recommend to CEB that they reconsider the amount of money in the homelessness contingency in light of the recent County Council cuts.

9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2014/2017 - ADOPTION OF THE PLAN

The Head of Policy, Culture and Communication submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the draft Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014 – 17.

The Consultation Officer presented the report. She outlined that the Policy Statement encompassed all consultation plans across the Council.

Cllr Lloyd Shogbesan asked that engagement with faith communities be included in the Policy Statement.

Cllr Sanders asked why the consultation of the Policy Statement was so poor with 13,000 questionnaires produced and only 48 received. People only consult if they feel that what they say will make a difference. The likelihood or participation increases if people are going to be affected by the proposal.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to CEB:

1. To provide a clear statement in the principles on the ambition for engagement focusing on depth as well as breadth.
2. To provide information on the engagement ambitions set for all consultations during the last year, what was achieved and how this fits with the principles set within the Policy Statement.
3. To suggest to the Scrutiny Committee an up and coming engagement/empowerment exercise that can act as a pilot study to demonstrate the effectiveness of the principles within this report.
4. To provide a table that shows how all comments received during the consultation on this Policy Statement have been handled.

10. MINUTES

The Committee resolved to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2013.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 2 September 2014.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.20 pm