

Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Report of panel to consider consultation draft of the Asset Management Plan 2011-14

Further to resolution 40.2 of the meeting of the VAP Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2012, Jean Fooks and Oscar Van Nooijen met on 17 March 2012 to examine the content of the consultation draft in detail.

The following recommendations are presented by Cllrs Fooks and Van Nooijen on behalf of the scrutiny committee to the Deputy Leader ahead of his Single Member Decision on the content of the consultation draft. Please note that the final recommendation (19) simply consists of a number of typographical or clarificatory points. All page references relate to the version of the consultation draft which was reported to the scrutiny committee meeting on 28 February.

1. The retrospective discussion of prior year achievements on pp. 7-12 obfuscates the introduction to the strategy paper, and should be deleted or moved to the covering report.
2. The asset management objectives should be re-ordered and re-worded for clarity:
 - (i) Objective 6 should become Objective 3, with subsequent objectives renumbered;
 - (ii) Objective 2 should be re-worded so that it reads 'We want all of our property (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account) to be well-managed giving value for money';
 - (iii) Objective 4, renumbered as Obj 5, could read ' During the period covered by this plan we only want to own and/or occupy the minimum amount of operational property that is needed to fulfil the objectives of the services we provide, in the context of the corporate plan
 - (iv) Objective 5 , renumbered as Obj 6, could read 'We want our General Fund investment property to make the greatest possible financial contribution to the Council within the context of good estates management and good investment management, thereby protecting and where possible, enhancing, asset value, subject to fulfilling the broader social objectives of the Council;
 - (v) Objective 6 (renumbered as Objective 3) should be re-worded so that it reads 'We shall work in partnership with other service providers/landowners where appropriate';
 - (vi) Use of bold type should be avoided throughout these high-level objectives.
3. The dates of the categorisations mention in section 2.2.2 (p. 11) should be stated.
4. The meaning of the 'ultimate target' needs clarification by quantification: what does 'primarily' mean in this context?

5. In section 3.1 (pp. 14-15) each target needs a target date stated either at objective level, or in the individual target.
6. More detail is required on p.16 to explain the process of potentially transferring ownership of pavilions.
7. In the supplemental policy objective at 3.1.iii (p. 17) the mechanism by which the Council will approve any exceptional arrangements needs to be stated.
8. The unclear table outlining the Council's performance against CIPFA benchmark data in section 3.3.1 (p. 17) needs to be deleted and replaced with a clear paragraph describing the position, which should also state the date at which the Oxford data were benchmarked. A date for the data cited in 3.3.2 (p. 18) is also necessary and the last sentence in the paragraph starting with 'Based..' should be deleted.
9. Page 23 - we suggest that the section could be improved by deleting the details, starting with 'The Council has recently embarked.. etc ' - this is not part of the Strategy so the rest of this section should be deleted.
10. The presentation of the strategy as it related to the individual asset classes in sections 4.1 – 4.16 (pp. 19-31) should be improved by removing the redundant tables and gridlines, which hinder comprehension rather than helping.
11. A separate asset class is required to cover 'countryside' assets, including Port Meadow and the other SSSIs. There is no mention of these assets in either of classes 4.1 or 4.10. There is also no direct mention of parks.
12. The statement in section 4.2 (p. 20) as to the likely content of the Green Spaces Strategy in respect of specific per capita ratios for allotment provision should be deleted, as there is no reason to duplicate the content of one strategy in another.
13. The sole action point in section 4.4 (p. 21) refers to activity in 'early 2012': this should be updated or deleted before publication of the consultation draft.
14. In section 4.5 (p. 22) the sentence 'These leases will be between one to three years, but will not have guarantee (sic) future security of tenure' should be deleted.
15. The principal text of section 4.7 (p. 23) should be reworded to read 'The Covered Market is one of the most important assets within the Council's investment property portfolio. Despite its notional high value in property investment terms, the Council is committed to maintaining ownership of this asset in perpetuity because of its historic and future significance to the wider city community and its contribution to the offering for tourists and other visitors. The Council has adopted a Leasing Strategy for the market, which provides...'
16. Section 11.2 of appendix 3 (p. 58) should be re-worded to read 'In relation to covenants the Council has imposed, it will seek to enforce such covenants where it is rational, sensible and proportional to do so, or, where no longer required, seek reasonable payment for its release or partial release where lawful to do so.'

17. Section 17.0 of appendix 3 (p. 60) should be re-worded to read 'Where the Council implements Rent Reviews and Lease Renewals, it will seek to establish the highest market rental value supported by comparable evidence, to preserve the capital value and income flow of the portfolio, subject to other relevant requirements of the Asset Management Strategy.'
18. The meaning of Section 19.0 of appendix 3 (p. 60) is unclear and appears to cut across the responsibilities of the Neighbourhoods and Communities team of Community Housing. It is recommended that it should be deleted in its entirety.
19. The following typographical errors and apparent errors of detail should be amended:
 - i) the word 'principal' should be spelled correctly throughout the document, when its meaning is distinct from the word 'principle';
 - ii) Section 2.2.3, p. 12, should read 'was £466m' not 'is £466m';
 - iii) Section 2.2.3, p. 13, delete 'balanced against' and replace by 'offset by';
 - iv) Section 2.2.3, p. 13, insert correct date for the 2009-10 'value at' column;
 - v) Section 2.2.3, p.13, add a footnote to explain the value change of the HRA;
 - vi) Section 3.1.i, p. 16, update the first bullet point in line with the new corporate carbon target;
 - vii) Page 16 - Community Groups etc - spell 'pavilions' correctly
 - viii) Section 3.3.1, p. 17, punctuate 'Council's' correctly, replace 'seeks' with 'aims' for consistency, delete 'In summary' and insert a date for achieving the targets;
 - ix) Section 3.3.2, p. 18, the table format is unhelpful as the information presented is simply a list;
 - x) Section 4.0, p. 19, delete the organogram, which is misleading because it suggests that Supplemental Policy Objectives and Benchmarked Performance Measurement data carry the same weight as the Asset Management Objectives;
 - xi) Section 4.3, p. 21, delete the historic reference to St Clement's car park, on which a disposal decision was made some years ago;
 - xii) Appendix 1, p. 41, insert a date for the last return to CIPFA.

**Cllr Jean Fooks & Cllr Oscar Van Nooijen
on behalf of the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee
17 March 2012**