

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Monday 7 January 2008

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors John Goddard (Chair), David Rundle (Vice-Chair) Mohammed Altaf-Khan, Antonia Bance, Jim Campbell, Jean Fooks, Sajjad Malik, Patrick Murray, Matthew Sellwood and Caroline Van Zyl.

OFFICERS PRESENT FOR THE WHOLE OF THE MEETING: Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), Tim Sadler and Michael Crofton-Briggs (Interim Executive Directors), Sue Shutter (Head of Personnel), Sarah Fogden (Head of Financial and Asset Management), Lindsay Cane and Brenda Lammin (Legal and Democratic Services).

OFFICERS PRESENT FOR PART OF THE MEETING: Andrew Davies and Julia Woodman (Legal and Democratic Services), Roger Pitman (Environmental Health), Graham Stratford (Community Housing and Development), John Kulasek and Adrian Wood (Financial and Asset Management) and Louisa Dean (Policy, Performance and Communications).

229. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

230. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

231. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Councillor Paul Sargent asked the following questions.

1. Question to Councillor Van Zyl – Play Facilities Action Plan (minute 233)
Too many people in Oxford view the way the Liberal Democrat administration has dealt with the issue of play facility sustainability in the City as shambolic. A perfect example of this is the handling of the Sermon Close Play Area. Why did the portfolio holder agree to the inclusion of Sermon Close Play Area in Risinghurst when the Council had already agreed to sell off the land for housing?

Response

It is true that the Sermon Close Play Area site is earmarked for development. Proposals are for better housing and this will include a new play area. However, until such time as the proposed development can proceed, the maintenance and safety of the existing play facility remains the responsibility of the Council and therefore it had to be included.

2. Question to Councillor Goddard - Westgate Temporary Car Park and Initial Demolition Works (minute 238)

What central Oxford alternatives are being investigated for decant Westgate car parking? If sites are being considered has Network Rail been approached about single decking on their car park in Becket Street or on the disused railway sidings?

Response

Other sites have been investigated but none were sustainable except possibly the Beckett Street car Park. It is part of the longer term plan for the West End to have a second deck for parking on that site. Network Rail has been approached to see if they are willing to bring this forward, but to date no response has been received.

3. Question to Councillor Campbell - Finance Scrutiny Committee response the October consultation budget (minute 241)

One of the main problems of delivering the Council's budget is the monitoring of adjustments in terms of tracking progress of specific savings in the budget. What is the administration going to do with respect to systematic monitoring and management of savings?

Response

There has been regular monitoring of the savings proposed in this year's budget and this process will be continued next year. There has also been close working with the Finance Scrutiny Committee's budget risk analysis group.

4. Question to Councillor Murray - Finance Scrutiny Committee response the October consultation budget (minute 241/242)

What proposals are the administration bringing forward to bridge the eye watering HRA budget gap and does the portfolio holder intend to protect progress of the Council towards our decent homes targets?

Response

The new housing subsidy calculations appear to work against those local authorities that have retained their housing stock and that is regrettable. As stated in item 11 the City Council is expecting reimbursement of over £1 million next year. There is still a budget gap of £50k to be bridged.

232. SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Board considered recommendations of the Finance Scrutiny Committee relating to sickness absence management (previously circulated and now appended). Councillor Bob Price (Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Committee) addressed the Board regarding the recommendations.

Resolved that the recommendations be accepted, noting the following: -

- (1) Although serious efforts had been made to deal with sickness absence there was disappointment that the required progress was not yet being

made;

- (2) All the elements of a plan to deal with sickness absence management were already in place but there was a need for proactive and sympathetic action from middle managers;
- (3) It was acknowledged that there were valid reasons for higher sickness absence levels in some business units (such as City Works and Oxford City Homes) and the role of the Occupational Health Service in addressing this issue was recognized;
- (4) The way that casual staff were used in Leisure was to be examined
- (5) The Chief Executive was planning to introduce consistent corporate targets appraisals for sickness management performance into appraisals for middle managers.

(No member voted against.)

233. PLAY FACILITY ACTION PLAN

The Board considered recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Committee relating to the call in of the Board's decision on the Play Facility Action Plan (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that the interest shown by the Community Scrutiny Committee and Area Committees in the Play Facilities Action Plan the Board be welcomed, and it be noted that their recommendations and comments would be taken into account as part of the consultation feedback on the draft Cultural Strategy.

(No member voted against.)

234. FREE SWIMMING FOR CHILDREN

The Board considered recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Committee relating to review of the first year's operation of the free swimming scheme for young people (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that the recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Committee be accepted.

(No member voted against.)

235. HEALTHY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The Board considered recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Committee relating to the Healthy Schools Programme (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that the recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Committee regarding Healthy Schools and links with Leisure and Cultural Services be NOT accepted, it being noted that the need to work with schools and others to provide opportunities for improving health was already recognized and being put into practice across the Council, and it would not be helpful to impose additional bureaucracy upon the Head of Leisure at this time.

(No member voted against.)

236. THE HEALTH IMPACT OF POOR HOMES

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a letter (previously circulated and now appended) received from Councillors Joe McManners, Paul Sargent and Stuart Craft relating to a report submitted to the Health Scrutiny Committee on the Health Impact of Poor Homes. Councillor Paul Sargent (signatory to the letter) addressed the Board regarding the recommendations.

Resolved that the recommendations contained in the letter be accepted, noting that the introduction of a discretionary housing scheme was expected to help improve the standard of private sector rented housing.

(No member voted against.)

237. LITTLEMORE BAPTIST CHURCH - EASEMENT

The Head of Financial and Asset Management submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that approval be given to an extension to the area covered by an easement allowing the proposed development to proceed, at no cost to the English Churches Housing Association.

(Councillor Bance took no part in the discussion or voting on this item because she was a member of the South East Area Committee, which was determining a planning application relating to the site.)

(No member voted against.)

238. WESTGATE DEVELOPMENT – TEMPORARY CAR PARK AND INITIAL WORKS

The Head of Financial and Asset Management submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that: -

(1) approval be give to the provision of temporary additional car parking at

Redbridge Park and Ride, as set out in the report, instead of the previously proposed two temporary decked car parks totalling 900 extra spaces located on Oxpens;

- (2) the Chief Executive be authorised to negotiate and enter into appropriate contracts with Westgate Partnership to allow the initial works proposed to the Westgate car park (as set out in the report) to proceed prior to the Development Agreement becoming unconditional.

(Councillor Sellwood voted against.)

239. LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Head of Environmental Health submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that: -

- (1) progress with the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) feasibility study be noted;
- (2) the Head of Environmental Health be asked to write to Oxfordshire County Council requesting that future discussions with the bus companies in relation to the Bus Quality Partnership should be carried out as a joint undertaking, as part of the LEZ process;
- (3) Oxfordshire County Council be requested to work with the City Council towards the adoption of a joint Low Emission Strategy (LES) in Oxford;
- (4) Further public consultation, other than with the bus companies, was not required for the implementation of a Low Emissions Zone, although there would be a need for a short, well-focused consultation on the Low Emissions Strategy at the appropriate time.

(No member voted against.)

240. WRITE-OFF OF UNCOLLECTIBLE DEBTS (TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION)

The Head of Community Housing and Development submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that approval be given to the writing off of uncollectible debts totalling £123,937.74, as set out in the report.

(No member voted against.)

241. FINANCE SCRUTINY RESPONSE TO THE OCTOBER CONSULTATION BUDGET

The Finance Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended). Councillor Bob Price (Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Committee) addressed the Board regarding the recommendations.

Resolved that: -

- (1) The Finance Scrutiny Committee be thanked for all its work on the consultation budget 2008/09;
- (2) The report be accepted, noting that several of the recommendations had already been taken into account in preparation of the Budget Progress report (minute 242).
- (3) The following points raised at the meeting be noted:
 - The national concessionary fare scheme being introduced in April presented the greatest risk and the Chief Executive was lobbying via the Local Government Association for a fair national funding arrangement for the scheme;
 - Another significant risk was the single status agreement - it was noted that negotiations were ongoing and that there was a limited pot of money for this;
 - In the current political and economic climate it was essential for the City Council to improve its efficiency and effectiveness so that it gave better value for money;
 - The way in which consultation was carried out with area committees and the general public was to be reviewed;
 - The need to begin planning for the next budget immediately after finalisation of this budget was acknowledged, and it was recognised that various factors had conspired against that happening last year;
 - The outcome of consultation via the Citizen's Jury was being analysed and a summary would be made available to all party groups very soon.
- (4) The Finance officers be thanked for all their hard work in pulling the report together.

(No member voted against.)

242. BUDGET 2008/09 PROGRESS REPORT

The Heads of Financial and Asset Management submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that: -

- (1) The report be noted and officers be instructed to bring the proposed 2008/09 revenue budget with options back to the Executive Board on 28 January 2008.
- (2) The capital programme (Appendix 2) be approved for consultation.

(Councillors Bance, Malik and Sellwood abstained.)

243. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2008/09

The Heads of Financial and Asset Management submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved that Council be RECOMMENDED to agree that: -

- (1) the 2008/09 Council Tax Base for the City Council's area as a whole be set at 46,180 in accordance with the calculation set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) the projected level of collection be set at 98%;
- (3) the following tax bases for each of the parishes, and for the unparished area (in accordance with the calculations set out in Appendix 2 to the report) be set at: -

Unparished area of the City	37,563
Littlemore Parish	2,442
Old Marston Parish	1,305
Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish	1,200
Blackbird Leys Parish	3,670
<u>City Council Total</u>	<u>46,180</u>

(No member voted against.)

244. FUTURE ITEMS

No issues were raised.

245. MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of the Board held on 26 November and 3 and 10 December 2007 be approved as a correct record subject to it being noted that, in respect of minute 200 on 3 December 2007 relating to Peers Sports Centre, Ruth Wilkinson and the Save Peers Sports Centre supporters wished to record their thanks to Councillor Rundle for the considerable time and effort he had spent in challenging the robustness of the data supplied by the officers and consulting staff and users of the facility.

(No member voted against.)

246. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

This item was not required.

The meeting began at 9.00 am and ended at 10.43 am.