

# CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Wednesday 12 January 2011

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillors Price (Chair), Cook, Lygo, Malik, Smith, Tanner and Timbs.

## 120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Bance, McManners and Turner.

## 121. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Timbs - personal interest in agenda item 4 (minute 123 (parking issues) refers) - family member was a regular user of Headington car park.

## 122. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

“Item 5 on the published CEB agenda is a recommendation to increase Fusion Lifestyle fees and charges. The council will gain no guaranteed additional revenue out of this increase, and so is simply rubber-stamping additional income for Fusion Lifestyle to be paid for by users of the City’s leisure facilities. Why is the council recommending an agreement for Fusion to increase fees and charges by RPI at 4.7%, when the recognised rate of inflation is CPI, 3.3%?”

Answer from Councillor Price

"In common with all Councils whether they run their leisure centres in house or through a trust the Council reviews its fees and charges each year. In setting fees and charges the Council takes into account:

- The Council's charging strategy - which in outline is to recover costs and charge market rates to those who can afford them and subsidise services to those on low incomes.
- Financial performance over the previous year
- Cost pressures
- The overall financial position of the Council

After detailed discussions with Fusion and debate at the Leisure Partnership Board, it had been agreed to recommend the fees and charges increases to the Board.

The bonus concessionary slice group of users is significant and growing. The bonus concessionary slice has not been increased at all this year.”

(2) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

“Item 5 on the published CEB agenda is a recommendation to increase Fusion Lifestyle fees and charges. The Council will gain no guaranteed additional revenue out of this increase, and so is simply rubber-stamping additional income for Fusion Lifestyle to be paid for by users of the City’s leisure facilities. Why is the Council recommending an increase of 2% for VAT, when Fusion as a “not for profit” organisation has VAT exemption?”

Answer from Councillor Price

“Fusion as a not for profit charitable organisation does not have to charge VAT on the fees and charges. However, crucially it does have to pay VAT on goods and services it purchases. If leisure trusts do not charge VAT they are restricted in their ability to recover the VAT they pay. Therefore the rise in VAT has a real impact on them.”

(3) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

“Item 5 on the published CEB agenda is a recommendation to increase Fusion Lifestyle fees and charges. The Council will gain no guaranteed additional revenue out of this increase, and so is simply rubber-stamping additional income for Fusion Lifestyle to be paid for by users of the City’s leisure facilities. Why is the Council stating that the increase is 6.7%, when in fact the annualised increase is over 8%?”

Answer from Councillor Price

“There is a marginal increase on some fees and charges when they are rounded up to the nearest 10p, or £1.00. Some fees and charges are also rounded down on this basis, but the net effect is a small increase.”

(4) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

“Item 5 on the published CEB agenda is a recommendation to increase Fusion Lifestyle fees and charges. The Council will gain no guaranteed additional revenue out of this increase, and so is simply rubber-stamping additional income for Fusion Lifestyle to be paid for by users of the City’s leisure facilities. Why is the Council not working on behalf of its citizens in recommending an increase now, rather than defer any increase until April?”

Answer from Councillor Price

“Fusion have flagged that they are keen to have one increase rather than adding the 2.5% VAT now and then the inflationary increase in April.

Any surplus Fusion attain in line with their charitable status is re invested into leisure.”

(5) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

Item 10 on the published CEB agenda covers the minutes of the previous CEB on December 8th, in which Councillor Price responded to a question from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson.

In the first part of the answer, he stated that both Council and the City Executive Board have received information on costings to refurbish the pool at Temple Cowley. It was decided that it would not be financially viable to refurbish the pool.

The latest figures for carbon emissions at Temple Cowley Pools have improved dramatically, with the total being one third of that expected for this type of building, and raising TCP's rating from D to B, demonstrating the effectiveness of Fusion's operation. The Council is also now faced in its latest budget with approving £16.5m expenditure on the proposed new pool while cutting frontline services. Given this much improved operation of TCP and the pressure on its budget, will the CEB please explain why it will not consider the self-funding refurbishment option for TCP that will thus enable it to minimise cuts in frontline services?

Answer from Councillor Price

"Nothing has changed since the previous reports to the CEB regarding the provision of swimming pools to the south of the City. The option to build a new pool adjacent to the leisure centre at Blackbird Leys is affordable due to the savings in running costs from merging two centres, the capital receipt from the Temple Cowley site and the increased income from the vastly improved usage numbers coming from a modern, state of the art swimming pool. This is simply not possible at the Temple Cowley site and I do not believe that a self funding option exists."

(6) Received from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson

Item 10 on the published CEB agenda covers the minutes of the previous CEB on December 8th, in which Councillor Price responded to a question from Jane Alexander and Nigel Gibson.

In the second part of the answer, he stated that extensive consultation has been carried out – the result of which shows a great deal of support for a new swimming pool to the South East of the City.

Can you please provide evidence of the "great deal of support" for a new swimming pool specifically adjacent to the ageing and underused Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre (when compared to the huge amount of support for keeping Temple Cowley Pools open)?

Answer from Councillor Price on behalf of Councillor Timbs

"Whilst I am aware of the high profile campaign by the Save Temple Cowley Pools group I am also aware from considerable number of people that I meet (as the Board member for Leisure) of a great deal of support from a wide variety for

the Council's proposal to get to grips with the ageing swimming pools to the south of the City and to provide a new pool that the City can be proud of. I am encouraged by the remarkable increase in use of the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre over the last year. We are now on target to get usage up to 200,000 even before the new pool is built. This, combined with the work we have done to date and the reaction of the people of Blackbird Leys and beyond reinforces my view that we are following the right course.

Support has been evidenced through:

- Representative focus groups that have been running from May to November
- Meetings with numerous partner agencies including Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association.
- Door knocking from local councillors
- The planning consultation, which included public drop in sessions”

(7) Received from Graham Jones

"The last car park increases in the City centre led to a significant drop of car-borne visitors, including serious shoppers and tourists, and a worrying decline in the City Council's own car park income.

At a time when the local economy is going through a very difficult and testing period, please can you have a very long look at the possible further negative impact these new proposals will have on Oxford and your own income and, working with business, consider more constructive alternatives?"

Answer from Councillor Cook

"The new tariffs made a proposal to decrease the charges for the Westagte centre on Saturdays with the express intention of attracting shoppers to the City. The Council believes that the national VAT rate rise will have more of a detrimental impact on the local economy."

(8) Received from Graham Jones

"If you cannot justify car parking charges in public parks, which calls upon you to spend thousands of pounds on equipment and on policing, which goes against your policy of encouraging people to use the Parks for many good reasons and which will lead to cars being parked in neighbouring residential streets without appropriate parking measures, please can you kill this idea?"

Answer from Councillor Price

"This is a proposal contained within the Council's budget which is now out for public consultation. We would be glad to hear the views of residents on this and the other proposals in the budget"

## **123. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Parking Issues**

The Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) presenting the Committee's findings in relation to the two called-in items from the December 2010 Board meeting (minutes 109 – Changes to suburban parking tariffs and 110 – Parking in areas adjacent to parks).

In response to the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee the Board

#### **Resolved to:-**

- (1) Revise the tariff proposed for St. Leonard's Road and Old High Street, Headington car parks in the bands 0 to 1 hour and 1 to 2 hours to:
  - 0 to 2 hours - £1.20
  - A fixed charge of £1.20 for the period 8pm until 8 am daily;
- (2) Give officers delegated authority to promote, determine comments and implement a scheme to allow season tickets for staff from local businesses in Headington on the understanding that the vitality of the shopping area was preserved;
- (3) Request that officers report in the autumn to both the Board and the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee to review the effects of tariff changes at all suburban car parks, considering:
  - Usage
  - Income generation
  - The operation of concessions
  - Business advantage and disadvantage
  - Effects on residents and local groups

### **Regeneration Framework**

The Communities and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) presenting the Committee's views and recommendations on the "Tackling inequalities and support for communities" strand of the Regeneration Framework.

Resolved to accept and endorse all of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, namely:-

- a) That the action plan be refocused around deliverables and outcomes that can be evaluated and contributors held to account;
- b) That an engagement and communication strategy be linked to the Regeneration Framework to ensure the Council reached as many

communities and groups within those communities as possible with the aim of achieving broad consensus and involvement;

- c) That actions within Area Plans be linked to deliverables in the Regeneration Framework, and focus and actions be adjusted within the Framework, led by Area Plans;
- d) That the Regeneration Steering Group consider opportunities for pooling money, resources and expertise to achieve focus and better results;
- e) That anti-social behaviour be monitored closely over the coming year so that the Council can highlight issues quickly and consider solutions;
- f) That all opportunities be taken to lobby for improvement in the educational outcomes for our young people and to consider if spending in communities should be focused more directly around supporting this very important issue;
- g) To recognise within Area Plans the needs of small communities and ethnic minority groups whose poor outcomes are masked by their neighbours and to link these actions within the Regeneration Framework;
- h) That in terms of deprived communities:-
  - i. more involvement and focus from those driving economic development in the development of youngsters should be achieved to make them “work ready” and the up-skilling of adults who are not sustainably engaged in the work market;
  - ii. All possible links be explored in the growth of the high tech high skilled industries with the up-skilling drive within deprived communities;
  - iii. Better communication and more support for small and community business be linked to their needs;
  - iv. To be sure that facilities to welcome new companies to the City are fit for purpose;
  - v. To continue to work to establish the Council’s role within the Local Enterprise Partnership and to ensure this partnership is a strong part of the Council’s response to regeneration.

## **124. FUSION LIFESTYLE FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12 FOR LEISURE FACILITIES**

The Head of City Leisure submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) seeking the Board's agreement for Fusion Lifestyle to increase fees and charges at Council leisure facilities.

### Resolved to:-

- (1) Approve the fees and charges proposed by the Fusion Lifestyles for 2011/2012 and that they be implemented on 19 January 2011 or on the expiry of the call-in period, whichever is the later;
- (2) Ask the Head of Finance to provide Members with a briefing paper on VAT chargeable services.

## **125. WRITE-OFFS – UNCOLLECTABLE DEBTS**

The Head of Customer Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) seeking the Board's agreement to write-off various debts.

### Resolved to:-

- (1) Approve the writing-off of the amounts shown in the report on the understanding that if new information or payments are received, the debts would be resurrected;
- (2) Ask that for the future, further details of debtors are included in the report.

## **126. DE-DESIGNATION OF DESIGNATED ELDERLY ACCOMMODATION**

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

### Resolved to

- (1) Approve the proposed changes to the designation of designated elderly housing accommodation as detailed in the report, namely:
  - a) To allocate all bungalows listed in Appendix 1, as set out in paragraph 13 of the report, effective from 1 April 2011;
  - b) To de-designate the stock listed in Appendix 2, as set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the report, on a annual rolling programme, as set out in paragraphs 29 to 31, starting from 1 April 2011;
- (2) Delegate to the Head of Community Housing and Community Development, the authority to amend the programme dates, as set out in the report, as

considered appropriate, in light of the annual review processes set out in paragraphs 18 and 21;

- (3) To note the other measures, outlined in paragraphs 20 to 28 of the report, designed to mitigate any detrimental impact from this change.

## **127. COUNCIL TAX BASE**

The Interim Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) in order to set the Council Tax Base for 2011/12 (as required by section 33 of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992).

Resolved to RECOMMEND to Council that the:-

- (1) 2011/12 Council Tax Base for the City Council's area as a whole be set at 46,984 (calculation shown in Appendix 1 of the report)
- (2) Projected level of collection be set at 98%
- (3) Following tax bases for each of the parishes, and for the Unparished area (calculations shown in Appendix 2 of the report) be set at:

Unparished Area of the City	38,535
Littlemore Parish	1,924
Old Marston Parish	1,298
Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish	1,526
Blackbird Leys Parish	3,701
<b>City Council Total</b>	<b>46,984</b>

## **128. FUTURE ITEMS**

Nothing was raised under this item.

## **129. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.10 pm.