

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD - THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2015

Agenda No Item

4. Scrutiny Committee Reports

The following scrutiny committee reports are attached:

Scrutiny Committee

Oxfordshire Growth Board

Educational attainment

New Council controls over anti-social behaviour

Finance Panel

Capital programme process review

Banking services provider

Housing Panel

Fuel Poverty

STAR survey results



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



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To: City Executive Board
Date: 29 January 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxfordshire Growth Board

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee following an update on the work of the Oxfordshire Growth Board

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price, Executive Member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning and Oxford City Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Growth Board

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Growth Board conveys the following suggestions to the Board and reports back to Scrutiny:

1. That the Growth Board takes a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that it is a key consideration in all planning and development activities.
2. That the Growth Board considers whether it can and should have a wider brief in order to achieve greater benefits from collective working. This could include having scope to promote innovative ways of delivering new affordable housing, and further joint lobbying to Government.
3. That all reports to the Growth Board are available in document form.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the agenda reports pack and minutes of the most recent meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, which was held on 20 November 2014. The Committee would like to thank Councillor

Bob Price and Paul Staines, Programme Manager, for attending the Committee meeting and supporting this discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Scrutiny Committee noted the need for a common approach to delivering growth, with high levels of co-operation between local partners and stakeholders. The Committee heard that there is a willingness on all sides to co-operate, as well as a duty to co-operate.
3. The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that developments take place in sustainable locations. New housing developments should be close to jobs and sustainable transport links. The Committee suggested that the Growth Board could take a more holistic approach to sustainability. For example, environmental impacts and mitigation should be forefront in proposals to increase road capacity. The Committee heard that the Growth Board was providing an accurate, comprehensive evidence base to inform new developments and that sustainability was an important part of this.

Recommendation 1 – That the Growth Board takes a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that it is a key consideration in all planning and development activities.

4. The Committee highlighted the urgent need to prioritise and incentivise new affordable housing, and noted that the borrowing limit on Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts is a significant barrier to financing more affordable housing.
5. The Committee questioned whether the Growth Board should have a broader remit, with scope to incentivise the provision of new affordable housing, and the use of empty rooms. The Committee heard that the Growth Board is not a planning authority and could not impinge on the sovereignty of Local Authorities.

Recommendation 2 – That the Growth Board considers whether it can and should have a wider brief in order to achieve greater benefits from collective working. This could include having scope to promote innovative ways of delivering new affordable housing, and further joint lobbying to Government.

6. The Committee noted that some verbal reports appeared on the last Growth Board agenda, and suggested that all reports to the Board should be available in document form.

Recommendation 3 – That all reports to the Growth Board are available in document form.

Further consideration

7. The Scrutiny Committee requested additional information about the County Council's vision for Park and Rides.
8. The Committee will continue to monitor the work of the Growth Board.

Director and Board Member Comments

The Committee's proposals are very much in line with Oxford City Council's strategic approach to the role of the Growth Board and I am happy to adopt them in the Board's future deliberations.

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List of background papers: None

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 29 January 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Educational Attainment

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the City Council's investments in Educational Attainment at Key Stage 1.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Pat Kennedy, Executive Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition.

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendation That the City Executive Board agree that any future City Council educational programmes are co-designed with schools and are cohesively focused on achieving long term improvements in educational attainment and reductions in inequalities.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from Dr Jonathan Solity and Helen Wall of KRM Psychological and Educational Research Consultants. KRM provided one strand of the City Council's Educational Attainment programme. The Committee would like to thank Jonathan and Helen, as well as Councillor Pat Kennedy and Tim Sadler, for their helpful contributions to this important discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Committee noted KRM's presentation and report, which provided their evaluation of the impact of the KRM programme in Oxford schools. The Committee welcomed the higher levels of progress achieved by KRM schools compared to the comparison groups, and noted that this had been

achieved within a relatively short period of time, proving that it is possible to improve attainment in schools.

3. The Committee questioned the level of statistical analysis provided by KRM, teacher buy-in to their programme, its impact on inequalities, and the consistency and cohesiveness of the City Council's wider programme of investments in educational attainment.
4. The Committee suggested that any future educational programmes should be designed with schools from the earliest stage, and noted the importance of programme fidelity and the need for consistency across different strands.
5. The Committee also noted that measuring the impacts of specific programmes is complicated because educational attainment is influenced by a number of different factors.

Recommendation – That any future City Council educational programmes are co-designed with schools and are cohesively focused on achieving long term improvements in educational attainment and reductions in inequalities

Further consideration

6. The Committee will offer Anna Wright, Educational Advisor, an opportunity to respond to the KRM report.

Director and Board Member Comments

I welcome the comments of the Scrutiny Committee and the acknowledgement that the City Council's Programme has raised achievement in schools.

I agree with the proposals that any future education attainment programme is planned jointly with schools. This is what we did in setting up the programme being scrutinised and its evaluation. An evaluation of the Leadership for Learning Programme is currently taking place with individual visits to every school in the programme. As part of this school leaders are being asked what support they feel would most help them to continue to raise attainment in future.

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board

Date: 29 January 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: New Council controls over anti-social behaviour

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on new Council controls over anti-social behaviour.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Dee Sinclair, Executive Member for Crime and Community Response

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Executive Board

1. Agree to a Scrutiny Councillor being included in the membership of the oversight group.
2. Agree to City Council officers engaging with Local Area Forums regarding the application of new anti-social behaviour powers.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered a report it had requested which set out new Council powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Committee would like to thank Simon Manton and Daryl Edwards for standing in at late notice to answer the Committee's questions, together with Councillor Dee Sinclair.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Committee noted the report and asked a number of questions, including around; how revenues from fines are used, implementation and appeals processes, how Community Protection Orders can be applied to fly tipping, oversight arrangements, information sharing with the police,

and whether Public Space Protection Orders could be applied to the whole of Oxford. The Committee also welcomed a project looking at restorative justice.

3. The Committee requested that information is regularly made available to elected members. The Committee heard that information is available via webpages and Twitter but that an easy guide could also be placed on the members' intranet page.
4. The Committee also suggested that member oversight could be strengthened, and that officers should regularly engage with Local Area Forums.

Recommendation 1 – That a Scrutiny Councillor is included in the membership of the oversight group.

Recommendation 2 – That City Council officers engage with Local Area Forums regarding the application of new anti-social behaviour powers.

Further consideration

5. The Committee requested an annual report on the City Council's usage of anti-social behaviour powers.

Director and Board Member Comments

Recommendations are fine. Happy to have one member from Scrutiny on the oversight group. Good idea on the LA Forum input.

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board

Date: 29 January 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Finance Panel

Title of Report: Capital Programme Management

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Finance Panel on the capital programme management.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons, Chair of the Finance Panel

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner, Executive Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health.

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Executive Board

1. Agrees to sustainability being formalised throughout the capital gateway process.
2. Continues to develop a more flexible approach to the delivery of its capital programme.

Introduction

1. The Finance Panel considered a report on capital programme management, which set out a number of new arrangements and initiatives to deliver improvements and compliance with best practice. The Panel would like to thank David Edwards, Stephen Clarke and Nigel Kennedy for supporting this discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Finance Panel noted that the City Council has a very ambitious and varied programme of capital projects, and the need to get very good at delivering these.

3. The Panel welcomed the transformational progress in improving the management of the capital programme and reducing slippage. The Panel also recognised that there is likely to be some upward pressure towards the end of the financial year.
4. The Committee noted that the City Council's Service Manager for Environmental Sustainability has an overview of the capital programme and suggested that sustainability should be formalised throughout the capital gateway process, similar to the Green Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work.

Recommendation 1 – That sustainability is formalised throughout the capital gateway process.

5. The Panel heard that a more flexible approach is now being taken that allows the movement of money between budget heads. The Panel welcomed this progress and would like to see this flexibility being developed further, including through more flexible contracts, so that resources can be shared more efficiently.

Recommendation 2 – That the City Executive Board continues to develop a more flexible approach to the delivery of its capital programme.

Further consideration

6. The Finance Panel will continue to monitor capital programme performance in quarterly performance and financial reports.

Director and Board Member Comments

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board
Date: 29 January 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Finance Panel
Title of Report: Bank tender process and award

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Finance Panel on the tendering process for a new banking services provider.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner, Executive Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health.

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations That the City Executive Board:

1. Monitors the added social value provided by its new bank.
2. Revisit the terms and conditions for all tenders to ensure that they fully reflect the Council's ethical policies.
3. Continues to monitor which banks other former Co-op customers are switching to, and whether 'challenger banks' begin taking on local authority customers.

Introduction

1. The Finance Panel received a report that provided an update on the bank tender process and award. This discussion was held in a closed session. The Panel would like to thank Nigel Kennedy and Anna Winship for introducing this item and answering the Panel's questions.

Summary and recommendations

2. The Panel asked questions around the total value of any savings, the costs of change, whether banks ethical policies are consistent with City Council policy, and which providers other former Co-op customers are

switching to. The Panel welcomed the savings that will be made over the course of the new contract.

3. Following its discussion, the Panel agreed to make the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1 –Monitors the added social value provided by its new bank.

Recommendation 2 – That the terms and conditions for all tenders are revisited to ensure that they fully reflect the Council’s ethical policies.

Recommendation 3 – Continues to monitor which banks other former Co-op customers are switching to, and whether ‘challenger banks’ begin taking on local authority customers.

Director and Board Member Comments

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board

Date: 29 January 2015

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Fuel Poverty

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the City Council's approach to Fuel Poverty.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Sam Hollick, Chair of the Housing Panel

Executive lead members: Councillor Ed Turner, Executive Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health, and Councillor Scott Seamons, Executive Member Housing and Estate Regeneration

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Executive Board:

1. Encourage tenant-facing staff in Direct Services to offer appropriate advice on the use of free electricity.
2. Explores the possibility of buying energy in bulk.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel received a report and presentation to brief them on the City Council's approach to combatting fuel poverty. The Panel would like to thank Debbie Haynes for providing this briefing and answering questions.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Panel noted that the definition of fuel poverty has changed and that fewer people meet the newer definition. The Panel heard that modelling the 'fuel poverty gap' could help the City Council to target the worst affected residents, and that officers are looking at how this approach could be applied in Oxford.

3. The Panel also noted that energy efficiency is the main component of fuel poverty that the City Council can really affect.
4. The Panel questioned to roll out of solar PVs and suggested that tenant-facing staff in Direct Services could play a role in keeping an eye on installations and advising tenants on the use of free electricity.

Recommendation 1 – That tenant-facing staff in Direct Services are encouraged to offer appropriate advice on the use of free electricity.

5. The Panel questioned whether the City Council has looked at purchasing energy in bulk, citing the example of Tower Hamlets Borough Council, and whether this is within the scope of the new Energy Strategy. The Panel heard that this is something that officers are aware of but that it would be quite complicated to do and would require some additional expertise.

Recommendation 2 – That the City Executive Board explores the possibility of buying energy in bulk.

Further consideration

6. The Panel requested further information about the availability of emergency support, and energy tariffs for vulnerable persons.
7. The Panel also asked to review the latest excess winter deaths figures for Oxford.

Director and Board Member Comments

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board

Date: 29 January 2015

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: STAR Survey 2014

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the STAR Survey 2014.

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Sam Hollick, Chair of the Housing Panel

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons, Executive Member Housing and Estate Regeneration

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Executive Board:

1. Reviews the methodology used to measure tenant satisfaction, and aims to make personal contact with tenants in future.
2. Sets out its response to the STAR Survey 2014 results, including any improvement measures taken or planned.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel reviewed the STAR Survey results 2014 at its meeting on 22 January 2015. The Panel would like to thank Nicola Griffiths for introducing this item and answering the Panel's questions.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Housing Panel noted the tenant satisfaction results were down across the board compared to last year. However, the City Council is awaiting data from other local authorities which should indicate whether this is a national trend.

3. The Panel noted that more tenants had been contacted in 2014 than in 2013 but returns were down. The Panel questioned why the sample size was small and suggested that door-knocking would be more effective than sending letters. The Panel heard that the STAR Survey is conducted by a consultation service but that there will be an opportunity to review this arrangement following the 2015 survey.

Recommendation 1 – That the City Executive Board reviews the methodology used to measure tenant satisfaction, and aims to make personal contact with tenants in future.

4. The Panel questioned how the results would be used and whether any improvements are planned in response.

Recommendation 2 – That the City Executive Board sets out its response to the STAR Survey 2014 results, including any improvement measures taken or planned.

Director and Board Member Comments

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List of background papers: None