

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD - THURSDAY 12 MARCH 2015

4. Scrutiny Committee Reports

The following Scrutiny Committee reports will be submitted to this meeting as a supplement:-

Discretionary Housing Payment Policy
The Culture Strategy 2015-18
Living Wage

a) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY (PAGES 3 - 4)

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which presents comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Scrutiny Committee Recommendation to the City Executive Board:

We recommend that the City Executive Board approve the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

b) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT CULTURE STRATEGY 2015-18 (PAGES 5 - 6)

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which presents comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the Culture Strategy 2015-2018

Scrutiny Committee Recommendations to the City Executive Board:

1. We recommend that there is an objective to extend cultural

opportunities to excluded communities under priority for culture 2.

2. We recommend that the City Council asks Experience Oxfordshire to convene a seminar with elected members.

c) **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT OXFORD LIVING WAGE
(PAGES 7 - 10)**

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which presents comments from the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Committee Recommendations to the City Executive Board

1. We recommend that the City Council surveys all suppliers to measure compliance with paying the Oxford Living Wage.

2. We recommend that the City Council reviews whether the Oxford Living Wage should continue to be set at 95% of the London Living Wage.

3. We recommend that the City Council seeks to increase apprentice pay in the next budget round.

4. We recommend that the City Council actively explores the merits of incentivising businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage through offering business rate discounts.

5. We recommend that the City Council seeks to be more pro-active in engaging with employers and encouraging them to pay the Oxford Living Wage. This could also involve raising the profile of the Oxford Living Wage on the City Council website and listing employers that have committed to paying it.

To: City Executive Board
Date: 12 March 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Susan Brown, Executive Member for Customer Services and Social Inclusion

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

We recommend that the City Executive Board approve the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy on 2 March 2015, and would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown and Paul Wilding for assisting its deliberations.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Committee regret that the unaffordability of private rented housing in Oxford has perversely resulted in a lower DHP funding allocation for the City Council, as explained in paragraph 4 of the report of the Head of Customer Services. The Committee also noted that there is a high degree of funding uncertainty in future years.
3. The Committee considered the policy change set out in paragraph 14 of the report and section 2.3 of the policy (first bullet point). The

majority view of the Committee was to support this revised policy. However, a minority of the Committee did not support this change.

4. The Committee also considered the level DHP funding. A minority view was that additional funding should be made available now by allocating a further £80k to the DHP budget from the homelessness reserve. This would increase DHP funding to a level previously assumed before the current funding allocation was confirmed. However, the majority view was to maintain the existing budget allocation.
5. The committee agreed to closely monitor DHP spend, noting that there is some flexibility to make adjustments later in the year.

Recommendation – We recommend that the City Executive Board approve the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board
Date: 12 March 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Culture Strategy 2015-2018

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the Culture Strategy 2015-2018

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Simmons

Executive lead member: Councillor Christine Simm, Executive Member for Culture and Communities

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2015-2019: Strong Active Communities and Vibrant, Sustainable Economy.

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

1. We recommend that there is an objective to extend cultural opportunities to excluded communities under priority for culture 2.
2. We recommend that the City Council asks Experience Oxfordshire to convene a seminar with elected members.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the Culture Strategy on 2 March. The Committee would like to thank Peter McQuitty for attending this discussion. The Committee had previously considered the Draft Strategy in October 2014, prior to consultation, making 4 recommendations.

Summary and recommendations

2. The Committee regret that its previous recommendation about seeking to improve the length of visitor stays is not seen as being a primary purpose of the Culture Strategy. However, the Committee heard that

the Local Enterprise Partnership recognises the economics of Oxford's cultural offering. The Committee welcomed the incorporation of its other recommendations into the Culture Strategy.

3. The Committee welcome key priority 2, which is to improve opportunities for Oxford's diverse range of communities to actively engage with and be inspired by culture. The Committee note the objectives under this priority but would like to see an increased emphasis on actively ensuring that excluded communities are better engaged with and represented.

Recommendation 1 – We recommend that there is an objective to extend cultural opportunities to excluded communities under priority for culture 2.

4. In light of the recent appointment of Hayley Beer as Experience Oxfordshire's new Chief Executive, the Committee suggests that a seminar for elected members is held with Experience Oxfordshire.

Recommendation 2 – We recommend that the City Council asks Experience Oxfordshire to convene a seminar with elected members.

Executive response

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed? (Y / N / In part)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Board Member / Lead Officer</i>
1. We recommend that there is an objective to extend cultural opportunities to excluded communities under priority for culture 2.	<i>TBC</i>	<i>To follow</i>	Christine Simm / Peter McQuitty
2. We recommend that the City Council asks Experience Oxfordshire to convene a seminar with elected members.	<i>TBC</i>	<i>To follow</i>	Christine Simm / Peter McQuitty

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List of background papers: None

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12 March 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Oxford Living Wage

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments from the Scrutiny Committee

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

1. We recommend that the City Council surveys all suppliers to measure compliance with paying the Oxford Living Wage.
2. We recommend that the City Council reviews whether the Oxford Living Wage should continue to be set at 95% of the London Living Wage.
3. We recommend that the City Council seeks to increase apprentice pay in the next budget round.
4. We recommend that the City Council actively explores the merits of incentivising businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage through offering business rate discounts.
5. We recommend that the City Council seeks to be more pro-active in engaging with employers and encouraging them to pay the Oxford Living Wage. This could also involve raising the profile of the Oxford Living Wage on the City Council website and listing employers that have committed to paying it.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee requested a report to update members on the implementation of the Council's commitment to paying the Oxford Living Wage internally and across the supply chain. The Committee would like to thank Jarlath Brine and Jane Lubbock for preparing this report and answering questions.

Summary and recommendations

2. The Committee asked how the City Council monitors the compliance of suppliers on an on-going basis. Information is available from employment agencies and construction firms but other contracts aren't currently monitored in this way.

Recommendation 1 – We recommend that the City Council surveys all suppliers to measure compliance with paying the Oxford Living Wage.

3. The Committee questioned the rationale for setting the Oxford Living Wage at 95% of the London Living Wage and suggest that this approach is revisited.

Recommendation 2 – We recommend that the City Council reviews whether the Oxford Living Wage should continue to be set at 95% of the London Living Wage.

4. The Committee noted that the City Council's apprentices are paid less than the Oxford Living Wage and heard that apprentices are paid at least £4.50 per hour. This is higher than the national minimum level of £2.73 for 16-18 year olds and those over 18 in their first year of an apprenticeship. It would not be possible to increase apprenticeship pay within the current budget allocation.

Recommendation 3 – We recommend that the City Council seeks to increase apprentice pay in the next budget round.

5. The Committee noted Brent's Living Wage offer to businesses for discounts of up to £5k off their rates if they pay all staff a living wage, and suggest that the City Council considers offering similar incentives.

Recommendation 4 – We recommend that the City Council actively explores the merits of incentivising businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage through offering business rate discounts.

6. The Committee also considered how the City Council can promote the benefits of paying the Oxford Living Wage more widely, and whether there is scope to do more.

Recommendation 5 – We recommend that the City Council seeks to be more pro-active in engaging with employers and encouraging them to pay the Oxford Living Wage. This could also involve raising the profile of the Oxford Living Wage on the City Council website and listing employers that have committed to paying it.

Executive response

Recommendation	Agreed? (Y / N / In part)	Comment	Board Member / Lead Officer
1. We recommend that the City Council surveys all suppliers to measure compliance with paying the Oxford Living Wage.	yes	We should make every effort to ensure that our contractors are paying the Living Wage, but it may be difficult to achieve a full coverage of the very large number of suppliers, some of which provide very small volumes.	Cllr Bob Price / Simon Howick & Jane Lubbock
2. We recommend that the City Council reviews whether the Oxford Living Wage should continue to be set at 95% of the London Living Wage.	yes	The original figure was determined on the basis of a comparison of housing and transport costs in Oxford and London. It should be possible to repeat that exercise.	Cllr Bob Price / Simon Howick & Jane Lubbock
3. We recommend that the City Council seeks to increase apprentice pay in the next budget round.	no	This issue was considered carefully at the time of the decision on apprentice pay. The current apprenticeship rates are well above the national rates, but a move to the OLW would result in a reduction in the number of apprenticeships.	Cllr Bob Price / Simon Howick & Jane Lubbock
4. We recommend that the City Council actively explores the merits of incentivising businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage through offering business rate discounts.	yes	We should consider this, but there are difficult issues of practical implementation as well as a potentially significant cost to the Council's budget.	Cllr Bob Price / Simon Howick & Jane Lubbock
5. We recommend that the City Council seeks to be more pro-active in engaging with employers and encouraging them to pay the Oxford Living Wage. This	yes	As the portfolio holder, I have written to all the major employers to encourage them to pay the Living Wage and have engaged with many of them in the course of my	Cllr Bob Price / Simon Howick & Jane Lubbock

could also involve raising the profile of the Oxford Living Wage on the City Council website and listing employers that have committed to paying it.		visits to them over the past two and a half years. The suggestions about the website and employer listings are very good ones and will be adopted.	
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List of background papers: None