

# Supplementary Agenda

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## City Executive Board

Date: **Thursday 9 July 2015**

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Time: **5.00 pm**

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Place: **St Aldate's Room, Town Hall**

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For any further information please contact:

**Catherine Phythian, Committee and Member Services Officer**

Telephone: 01865 252402

Email: [executiveboard@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:executiveboard@oxford.gov.uk)

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### **AGENDA ITEM 4: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The following scrutiny committee reports have been submitted to this meeting:-

4a **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY INEQUALITY PANEL -  
COMBATting INEQUALITY: IS OXFORD CITY COUNCIL  
DOING ALL IT CAN TO MAKE OXFORD A FAIRER, MORE  
EQUAL PLACE?**

11 - 82

The Inequality Panel of the Scrutiny Committee has submitted a report which considers issues of inequality in the city.

Councillor Van Coulter, Chair of the Inequality Panel, will present the report.

**Scrutiny Inequality Panel's recommendations to the City Executive Board:**

**Recommendation 1** - We recommend that the City Council leads on the development of a long-term multi-agency inequality strategy for Oxford. This should be informed in part by the evidence gathered in this Inequality Review and enhanced when Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group produces its report on health inequalities. The Strategy should be supported by an Action Plan that includes any accepted Inequality Panel recommendations.

**Recommendation 2** – We recommend that the City Council ensures it has sufficient staffing resources in partnership posts to play a leading role in working with partners to deliver on a multi-agency inequality strategy for Oxford (see recommendation 1). We envisage that savings are achievable from overcoming silos and working in partnership to tackle long terms issues associated with inequality.

**Recommendation 3** - We recommend that the City Council commissions Professor Danny Dorling and the City Council's Social Research Officer to develop an Oxford City Inequality Index based on aspects of inequality that that the City Council can influence either directly, or indirectly to a significant extent. Council Performance should be assessed against the movement of this index.

**Recommendation 4** - We recommend that all strategy papers and major decisions should include an assessment of their short, medium and long term impacts on inequality. This assessment could be based on an Inequality Index (see recommendation 3), and guidance should be available to assessing officers.

**Recommendation 5** - We recommend that the City Council progresses all options for boosting the supply of affordable housing, including by:

- a) Continuing to push for a review of the Green Belt around Oxford as part of a wider county land review to identify sites for new

- housing,
- b) Enforcing the City Council's 50% affordable housing policy,
  - c) Considering greater use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to buy derelict land and properties that aren't coming forward for development,
  - d) Evaluating the potential local impacts of the new Government's housing policies, such as the extension of the Right to Buy scheme to housing association properties,
  - e) Encouraging ethical or institutional investors to rent good standard accommodation to people in housing need at affordable rates,
  - f) Aiming to make Oxford a centre of excellence in innovation for new social and affordable housing solutions, ensuring that its own policies (such as the Balance of Dwellings Policy) are compatible with this aim. Affordable Oxford could be asked to provide advice on what options would be viable in Oxford,
  - g) Considering whether there is scope for the City Council or the Universities to promote 'inter-generational shared living'.
  - h) Considering whether there is a way the City Council could assist groups of older people in downsizing collectively while staying together as a
  - i) community, perhaps by creating a group or register that people can join or sign up to.

**Recommendation 6** - We note the significant difficulties that schools, hospitals and universities (as well as businesses) face in attracting workers to settle in Oxford, and recommend that the City Council:

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- b) Seeks to extend its keyworker housing intervention to more teachers (this is currently offered to senior teaching staff),
- c) Considers whether there is scope to assist key workers (particularly teachers in priority schools) in accessing housing in the private rented sector, for example by encouraging registered landlords to offer 3 year tenancies and agreeing to raise rents by no more than the CPI measure of inflation.

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**Recommendation 8** - We recommend that the City Council:

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- b) Tasks the new Assistant Chief Executive with working closely with the University sector and encouraging a greater degree of input into city matters, including financial contributions where appropriate.

**Recommendation 9** – We recommend that the City Council builds on its commendable work on addressing fuel poverty by:

- a) Making a fuel poverty calculator available online that directs people in fuel poverty to contact the City Council for advice on what support they may be entitled to,
- b) Asking Trading Standards whether they would like the City Council to refer cases to them where an Energy Performance Certificate is required and whether they would be prepared to give the City Council any enforcement powers.

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- a) Supporting the delivery of more proactive health interventions in areas of multiple deprivations, such as contacting people who miss appointments,
- b) Working towards the concept of pooled budgeting in areas where evidence suggests that this approach can improve health outcomes.
- c) Utilising the City Council's assets (such as leisure centres) and the agencies we support to facilitate social prescribing, and encouraging more GPs to take up social prescribing,
- d) Working with partners to develop a single online point of access for multiple services in Oxford, including health, housing and social care.

**Recommendation 11** - We recommend that the City Council explores how factors around inequality and public health could be designed in to the planning and development of sites. These factors should include cycling and walking provision, the accessibility of parks, and the provision of a variety of housing within the street scene. Consideration should also be given to shaping new communities. For example, new communities should include a centre and shared open space.

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**Recommendation 14** – We recommend that the City Council:

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to Asylum Welcome. Consideration should be given to including their work within the remit of the Council's Community Grants commissioning programme, which awards funding for 3 years rather than annually. This will reduce Asylum Welcome's administrative workload and help to ensure that they remain viable over the medium term.

- b) Explores whether it could provide low cost accommodation to third sector organisations by utilising unused capacity in Council-owned assets such as Community Centres.

**Recommendation 15** - We strongly endorse the City Council's approach to combatting financial exclusion and recommend that the City Council:

- a) Ensures that the Welfare Reform Team are fully and best deployed in order to provide greater assistance and proactively reach more people, particularly those moving on to Universal Credit,
- b) Moves towards implementing a 'single view of debt' in order to identify multiple debts owed to the Council, and where possible, consolidate these,
- c) Gives a high priority to continuing to protect the current level of funding for the advice sector over the medium term,
- d) Explores longer term funding options for a housing needs money advice caseworker, and evaluates the impact of this provision over time,
- e) Continues to work closely with CAB and other agencies to encourage the take up of unclaimed benefits.
- f) Aims to make full use of its Discretionary Housing Payments budget.

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- a) Offering a new educational grant programme to which Head Teachers from schools serving deprived areas can apply. This programme would provide tangible output-based funding to reduce educational inequalities in city schools. The criteria for awards should be non-prescriptive but grants could be used to fund specific line items in School Improvement Plans focused on Pupil Premium and Special Educational Needs pupils, for example.
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- c) Working constructively with the Living Wage Foundation in promoting Living Wage Week and seeking to raise wages and improve working conditions in Oxford, particularly in low paid sectors such as hospitality, health and social care.

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- c) Better targeting of constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants,
- d) Interactive and accessible recruitment webpages with guidance for applicants,
- e) Uplifting the salaries of lower paid staff at a higher rate than those of higher paid staff to ensure that the pay gap between them doesn't increase over time.

4b **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - GRANT MONITORING INFORMATION 2014/15** 83 - 84

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which details comments from the Scrutiny Committee relating to the report on Grant Monitoring Information 2014/15.

**Scrutiny Committee recommendations to the City Executive Board:**

1. We recommend that the under-spend of £21,040 is rolled forwards and spent on grants to community and voluntary organisations in 2015/16.

4c **REPORT OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING 2015** 85 - 88

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which presents recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning 2015.

**Scrutiny Committee recommendations to the City Executive Board:**

1. We endorse the draft Statement of Community Involvement in Planning and recommend that this is amended to include references to the Planning Review Committee, Area Forums and external guidance on the use of visualisation tools.
2. We recommend that the City Council continues to explore new and improved ways of informing residents and community organisations of local planning issues, using both on-line and off-line communication methods. In particular, enhancements to ICT systems should be prioritised so that individuals and groups that have signed up can receive automatic notifications when specific planning applications are progressed or amended.
3. We recommend that the City Council explores whether there is a lower cost means of informing local residents of planning applications as an alternative to "neighbouring property notification letters". We suggest that proposals are brought forward in the next budget round.

4d **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY FINANCE PANEL - DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY** 89 - 92

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which details comments from the Scrutiny Finance Standing Panel relating to the Debt Management Policy.

**Scrutiny Finance Standing Panel recommendations to the City Executive Board:**

1. We recommend that the City Executive Board approves the Debt Management Policy subject to a minor amendment to the timescales for recovering Miscellaneous Debts set out in the table on page 9 of the policy.
2. We reaffirm recommendation 15d of the Inequality Panel about the Council moving towards having a single view of debt. It will still require considerable effort to make this a reality but we strongly endorse this direction of travel and the progress made to date, including the use of fraud detection software to identify individuals with multiple debts owed to the Council.
3. We recommend that consideration is given to restructuring relevant teams and resources around a single view of debt model as this initiative progresses.

4e **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY FINANCE PANEL -  
INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014/15 Q4**

93 - 96

The Scrutiny Officer has submitted a report which details comments from the Scrutiny Finance Standing Panel relating to the Integrated Performance Report 2014/15 Q4.

**Scrutiny Finance Standing Panel recommendations to the City Executive Board:**

1. Recommendation 1 - The General Fund outturn position for 2014-15 - a favourable variance of £1.808m which is mainly due to increased income - is a very good outcome and we recommend that officers are congratulated on overachieving against income targets.
2. We support the transfer of £1.4m to a Dry Recyclate Reserve and recommend that the City Council urgently assesses options for significantly mitigating this serious budget pressure, including exploring the possibility of building and operating a waste transfer station and changing the Council's waste collection system.
3. We note that there are 4 red performance indicators against Meeting Housing Needs but only 3 are explained in the Corporate Summary. We recommend that this is corrected and that fuller explanations are given for the amber risks relating to Environmental Development (section 4.3 in the Community Services Directorate).
4. We recommend that the City Executive Board considers:
  - a) Re-directing a relatively small portion of the under-spend towards addressing homelessness, where it could potentially



go a long way;

- b) Other potential uses for part of the under-spend in improving performance against corporate targets, including investing in an additional HMO licensing officer.

5. We recommend that the City Council continues to embed and improve the capital gateway process to further reduce capital slippage.

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# Combating inequality

*Is Oxford City Council doing all it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place?*

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Report of the Inequality Panel

Commissioned by Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee

July 2015

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## **Foreword by the Chair of the Inequality Panel**

These are difficult times. Reduced funding and increased poverty and social deprivation make it more and more difficult for councils to provide basic services needed by a growing number of vulnerable people in our communities.

Funding pressures are continuing. A seismic shift needs to happen. This requires ambition matched by innovation, led with political commitment to improve well-being, mental health and life-chances – directed at addressing the causes of poverty.

We know that there are large differences in life expectancy between the most privileged and the most disadvantaged social groups living in Oxford.

People with a good home, a good education, a good income and a strong network of family and friends have greater chances of being well and of leading fulfilling lives.

As a councillor for a ward in which one in four adults holds at least one degree, yet two out of every five adults are without any or hold very few qualifications, it is evident that educational outcomes impact upon life chances. A rise in the number of households without adequate or secure accommodation is placing further risk upon the educational opportunities of children from poorer families.

The better the social and economic standing of people, the better are the opportunities for children to flourish and overcome poverty.

Consequently, within our recommendations the Inequality Panel calls for:

- Increased provision of decent, truly affordable housing
- Improved provision of key worker housing
- Interventions to improve standards within the private rented sector
- Greater promotion and take-up of the Living Wage
- Extended use of social clauses within procurement contracts to assist people into good, sustainable jobs
- Improved partnerships for overcoming silos, through a multi-agency approach for addressing the causes of inequality
- Improved monitoring, measurement and reporting of the impacts of inequality

On behalf of the Inequality Panel, I express our sincere thanks for the input and evidence provided by individuals, community groups, single interest groups, academics, officers of Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. And, the panel is most grateful for the support of our Scrutiny Officer, Andrew Brown.

Van Coulter  
Chair for the Inequality Panel

## **Summary of recommendations**

**Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the City Council leads on the development of a long-term multi-agency inequality strategy for Oxford. This should be informed in part by the evidence gathered in this Inequality Review and enhanced when Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group produces its report on health inequalities. The Strategy should be supported by an Action Plan that includes any accepted Inequality Panel recommendations.**

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## **Appendices**

*Appendix 1 – Terms of reference*

*Appendix 2 – Acknowledgements*

*Appendix 3 – Background documents*

*Appendix 4 – Responses to call for evidence*

*Appendix 5 – Letter from Healthwatch Oxfordshire*

*Appendix 6 – Overview of the City Council's contribution to combatting inequality*

## **Introduction**

1. The Inequality Panel is a cross-party working group that was established by the City Council's Scrutiny Committee during the 2014/15 municipal year. Its membership comprises four City Councillors:
  - Councillor Van Coulter (Chair)
  - Councillor Andrew Gant
  - Councillor Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan
  - Councillor David Thomas

## **Background**

2. Inequality is found in almost every community and most obviously refers to the disparity between rich and poor caused by unequal distributions of pay, income and wealth. Inequality also has a social dimension whereby opportunities, rewards and social resources are distributed unequally within society. A person's 'social capital', which is their access to valuable support networks, is an important element of this. A number of personal characteristics are strongly related to inequality, including gender, ethnicity and disability. These are among the 9 protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
3. Oxford is a successful and vibrant city in many ways that benefits from having a resilient local economy and low levels of unemployment. Like any city, Oxford's dynamic urban environment presents challenges as well as opportunities. However, a number of factors are more specific to Oxford and contribute to inequality in the city. Foremost amongst these is the very high cost of housing. Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK in which to buy a house<sup>1</sup>, and the second least affordable city in the UK in which to rent a home<sup>2</sup>, partly due to Oxford's attractiveness to commuters working in London. This exacerbates the disparity between rich and poor and is having damaging effects on educational attainment and social mobility. As a result, many harder pressed residents are struggling to pay for essentials such as food and energy. Some are leaving the city altogether, or if asked cannot see how they will be able to afford to settle in Oxford in the long term.
4. Oxford City Council is a district council operating in a two tier local authority area. It is responsible for services such as housing, planning, leisure, environmental services, council tax and some benefits. A number of services that impact inequality, such as early years and childcare provision, education, social care and public health, are run by Oxfordshire County Council.
5. Oxford City Council's strapline is 'building a world class city for everyone'. The Council's Corporate Plan states that 'Oxford City Council does all it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place'. It also makes a policy commitment to 'narrow the gap between rich and poor'. A key ambition of Oxford City Council is to move beyond being a service delivery organisation to becoming a 'leader of place' through partnership working and collaboration. This means that the City Council

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<sup>1</sup> [Lloyds Bank Affordable Cities Review, Lloyds Banking Group, 27 March 2015](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Revealed Britain's most expensive places to rent a home, The Guardian, 1 May 2015](#)

wants to be recognised as being the leading authority and voice for the city of Oxford.

6. We believe that widening inequality presents problems for everyone, including top and middle earners, and that a continuous reduction in inequality should be one of the characteristics of a world class city for everyone.

### **Review scope**

7. The Inequality Panel was commissioned to undertake a time-limited review, drawing together a number of related topics that City Councillors wanted to explore, such as food poverty, child poverty and health inequalities. The Inequality Panel met on 13 October 2014 to agree a draft scope, before reporting back to the Scrutiny Committee for approval on 10 November 2014.
8. We agreed to review how the City Council contributes to combatting harmful social and economic inequality in Oxford, and whether there is more that could reasonably be done. By maintaining a focus on how the Council could improve outcomes for local residents, we felt that we could tackle this broad and wide-ranging scope in a manageable way. Our main aims were to:
  1. *Understand the scale, reasons and impact of inequality in Oxford.*
  2. *Identify specific areas where the City Council can make the most difference in combatting inequality.*
  3. *Make deliverable, evidence-based recommendations that are co-produced with local citizens or stakeholders where possible.*
9. The Panel recognised that the City Council was already doing a lot of good work to combat inequality. However, we wanted to test and challenge the claims in the City Council's Corporate Plan on behalf of all Councillors. We felt that a cross-cutting review of inequality would enable us to identify any gaps in provision or partnership working, and highlight areas of emerging need.
10. We were also mindful that, following a recent peer review exercise, the City Council received feedback as to how it could provide strong, effective and visible leadership in the city. We wanted to see whether and how this theme could be applied to the City Council's aim of making Oxford a fairer, more equal place.
11. Finally, our review was designed to complement, rather than duplicate, the work of local partners such as Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
12. The full terms of reference for this review that were agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 10 November are included as Appendix 1.

### **Methods of investigation**

13. Having agreed the scope of the review, the Panel issued a call for evidence. This was accompanied by a press release which received local media attention. A brief online survey was made available on the City Council's website for 2 months. It was also emailed directly to groups and individuals registered on the City Council's consultation system that had expressed an interest in consultations relating to equalities, housing, council tax and benefits, or community issues. 30 responses were received and these were all considered by the Panel. Representatives of several groups that responded were also invited to attend a meeting. The responses to our call for evidence are set out in full in Appendix 4.
14. The Inequality Panel held 5 public meetings between November 2014 and April 2015. These meetings were attended by representatives of Age UK, Asylum Welcome, Community Action Groups Oxfordshire, Cultivate Oxford, Healthwatch Oxfordshire, Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and Oxford and District Child Poverty Action Group. We also spoke to social geographer and author Professor Danny Dorling and a local social enterprise focused on overcoming issues of low self-esteem in vulnerable young women.
15. The Panel held discussions with a number of City Council officers, including the Chief Executive and senior officers responsible for Housing Needs, Policy and Partnerships, Welfare Reform, and Communities and Neighbourhoods Services. We are very grateful to all those who provided evidence and informed the outcomes of this review. A list of acknowledgements is provided as Appendix 2.
16. We also reviewed a wide range of research literature and policy documentation, and a list of background documents is included as Appendix 3.

## **Inequality in Oxford**

### Context

17. Many cities think they have particular sets of issues and needs but Oxford is genuinely exceptional in terms of housing and education. Oxford-born Professor Danny Dorling advised us that if he was arranging a field trip to look at inequality in Western Europe, he would choose Oxford. Harmful inequality is evident at the lower end of the income spectrum, with more people experiencing homelessness, struggling to afford food and heating, seeing poorer educational outcomes for their children, and seeking advice for personal debt. However, the problems that inequality presents for top and middle earners – such as long term participation in the private rented sector - also need to be recognised and better understood.
18. Oxford benefits from having a strong local economy and low unemployment but the severe cost and limited supply of housing acts as a big social distorter and makes it extremely difficult for most people to make homes in the city. Nearly everyone we spoke to said that the lack of affordable housing is the major cause for concern in Oxford. High demand is exacerbated by limited land availability within the city and barriers to accessing this land. Last year the cost of an average house in Oxford rose by £30,000, yet a third of Oxford's working age

households were £1,594 worse off per year on average due to welfare reforms<sup>3</sup>. The cost of housing in Oxford is comparable to London but local employers do not pay London wages. Buying a home is now beyond the means of some 80 per cent of the local population.

19. More Oxford households now rent than own their own home, and of these, the majority live in the private rented sector<sup>4</sup>. The increase in the private rented sector has been the biggest change in Oxford's housing market in the last 10 years and puts a lot of newly forming households, young and vulnerable people outside of the home ownership market. Private rented housing is not only expensive due to undersupply driving up rental values, but much of it is of a poor standard and tenancies are often insecure. There are strong links between poor and insecure housing and poor physical and mental health. For many residents as well as students, sharing accommodation is the only affordable option. In more extreme cases, migrant workers and vulnerable young families have been found living in 'beds in sheds'. The welfare of people occupying these unsuitable and hazardous structures is a major concern.
20. The housing crisis in Oxford affects everybody. Many schools, hospitals and universities in the city are struggling to recruit a range of professionals and there is concern that if Oxford continues to become more unaffordable for the majority of people to live in, public bodies will only be able to employ people who are well off. In the meantime, many NHS staff and care workers are themselves living in poverty or struggling to get by. We also note that many businesses are also reporting similar issues in recruiting and retaining staff. These are acute problems in Oxford.

#### A life course of inequality

21. Inequality can be understood as a life course from early years through to old age. Some geographical areas of Oxford experience multiple levels of deprivation including low skills, low incomes, poor housing and poor health. Child poverty rates in the city are close to the UK average. However, poverty is dispersed very unequally across the city, with 72% of the 6,600 children living below the poverty line residing in 9 of the city's 24 wards, all of which are in the East and South East of the city. Health outcomes across the city differ widely too and there is a significant variance in average life expectancy across the city, particularly for men. This cycle of deprivation is very difficult to break.
22. Education could play a major role in improving social mobility and providing a route out of poverty. However, for some of the 75% of Oxford's young people who are not educated privately, their experience of education reinforces low aspirations and perpetuates inequality. The high cost of housing means that Oxford schools struggle to recruit and retain experienced higher and middle ranking teachers. Newly qualified teachers are easier to recruit but tend to rent for a while before leaving the city because they can't afford to settle here. The high turnover of teaching staff disrupts efforts to improve poor levels of educational attainment in a number of city schools. Professor Dorling advised us

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<sup>3</sup> [The impacts of welfare reform in Oxford, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, April 2014, p. 22](#)

<sup>4</sup> [More households now rent rather than own their home, Oxford City Council, April 2014](#)

that access to higher education amongst local students is higher in Blackpool than it is in Oxford.

### **Areas where Oxford City Council can make the most difference**

23. We have identified the City Council services and interventions that have the most impact on reducing inequality in Oxford and also sought to identify specific areas where there is scope for the City Council to reasonably do more, either within additional resources or with relatively modest additional spend. We sought to avoid focusing on areas where the City Council has no powers or little influence. Our overview of the City Council's contribution to combatting inequality is included as Appendix 6. This includes gaps and opportunities identified during this review by people who responded to our call for evidence, those who spoke to us in person, Council officers and scrutiny Councillors.
24. Due to the wide scope of this review, we were unable to look in detail at all aspects of the City Council's contribution and have highlighted some specific Council functions and services for further consideration at the end of this report. Having deliberated on all the evidence gathered we reached a number of specific recommendations. These are grouped into the following four themes and explained below:
- i. Taking a strategic approach to inequality
  - ii. Health & Housing
  - iii. Tackling social and financial exclusion
  - iv. Helping residents to fulfil their potential

### **Taking a strategic approach to inequality**

25. The City Council aspires to put inequality alleviation at the heart of everything it does. We endorse the laudable policy statement in the City Council's Corporate Plan and found that there is a lot of good work taking place across the authority to support this:

*Oxford City Council does all that it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place”  
– Oxford City Council Corporate Plan<sup>5</sup>*

26. The causes and drivers of inequality are complex, and there remains a risk that the long-term strategic direction of the council may inadvertently exacerbate rather than alleviate inequalities within the city. The recommendations of this report are in part an effort to mitigate this risk.

#### **A strategy for inequality**

27. We suggest that a multi-agency strategy for inequality should be developed to guide the priorities and work on this agenda. We think the City Council is well placed to lead on the development of this strategy, which should build on the findings of this Inequality Review and be further informed by Oxford Clinical

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<sup>5</sup> [Corporate Plan 2015-2019, Oxford City Council, February 2015](#)

Commissioning Group's study of health inequalities, as well as the input of all relevant agencies.

***Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the City Council leads on the development of a long-term multi-agency inequality strategy for Oxford. This should be informed in part by the evidence gathered in this Inequality Review and enhanced when Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group produces its report on health inequalities. The Strategy should be supported by an Action Plan that includes any accepted Inequality Panel recommendations.***

### **Partnership working**

28. The Council has strong links with a number of key partners, including the health sector and a range of voluntary and community groups. Given the extent of the problem of inequality in Oxford, there is a need for all agencies to work together and intervene effectively at all ages in order to make a lasting difference. This is the best way of tackling issues associated with inequality, and where effective, significant savings can be realised. The partner organisations we spoke to all recognised this need. We note that a management restructure is taking place and suggest that the City Council considers whether it has the resources it needs to play a leading role in working with partners to combat inequality in Oxford.

***Recommendation 2 – We recommend that the City Council ensures it has sufficient staffing resources in partnership posts to play a leading role in working with partners to deliver on a multi-agency inequality strategy for Oxford (see recommendation 1). We envisage that savings are achievable from overcoming silos and working in partnership to tackle long terms issues associated with inequality.***

### **Measuring and monitoring inequality**

29. The City Council's Social Research Officer produces a range of statistical information and analysis about Oxford and its population which provides some really valuable insights. We were also fortunate to speak with Professor Danny Dorling, a leading social geographer with extensive knowledge of issues of inequality in the city. We suggest that the City Council seeks to utilise this expertise by commissioning an inequality index for Oxford.
30. Council performance should be based in part on an assessment of how successfully it impacts the aspects of inequality over which it has direct influence, or significant indirect influence. We believe that a continuous reduction in Oxford's harmfully high levels of inequality should be one of the characteristics of a world class city for everyone.

***Recommendation 3 - We recommend that the City Council commissions Professor Danny Dorling and the City Council's Social Research Officer to develop an Oxford City Inequality Index based on aspects of inequality that that the City Council can influence either directly, or indirectly to a significant extent. Council Performance should be assessed against the movement of this index.***



### **Council decision making**

31. Inequality alleviation could be more embedded within the City Council and its decision making and we would like all major Council decisions and development projects to be assessed on their expected aggregate impacts on inequality. This could include factors such as the quality of any employment contracts created and, if the project is intended to generate economic growth, how equitably this growth is likely to be shared. This assessment could be based on an inequality index and guidance should be provided to assessing officers.

***Recommendation 4 - We recommend that all strategy papers and major decisions should include an assessment of their short, medium and long term impacts on inequality. This assessment could be based on an Inequality Index (see recommendation 3), and guidance should be made available to assessing officers.***

### **Health & Housing**

32. The City Council is the housing authority for Oxford and provides a wide range of services aimed at meeting housing needs in the city, from presenting options in cases of statutory homelessness to building new social housing. Housing can directly contribute to health outcomes and the City Council also has a wider role in public health.

#### **Affordable Housing**

33. The lack of affordable housing is a major factor behind inequality in Oxford and the City Council is already aiming to increase the supply of affordable housing in the city in a number of ways. We support these efforts and have suggested a number of additional options that could warrant further exploration.

#### **Green belt review**

34. Restrictions on developing the Oxford Green Belt are a major barrier to the provision of new affordable housing. An assessment of the housing market in Oxfordshire found that the city requires 24,000 to 32,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 in order to meet its housing needs<sup>6</sup>. However, an assessment of land availability found that the total capacity for new homes within the city over this time period is only 10,212 dwellings<sup>7</sup>.

35. Oxford's current and future housing needs could be met if a very small proportion of the green belt was developed. We believe that this would be preferable to, and more sustainable than focusing solely on expanding county towns, given that approximately half of Oxford's work force already commutes in to the city. We urge the City Council to continue to press for a comprehensive review of the Oxford Green Belt as part of a county-wide review of where new housing could go.

#### **50% affordable housing policy**

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<sup>6</sup> [Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Oxford City Council, March 2014](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Oxford's Housing Land Availability and Unmet Need Assessment, Oxford City Council, December 2014](#)

36. The City Council has a policy whereby planning permission will only be granted for residential developments of 10 or more units if a minimum of 50% of the new homes are provided as affordable housing, unless viability evidence demonstrates a need to reduce this. The City Council has been forced, through the changes to the Planning Practice Guidance, to only apply the 50% criteria to sites of 11 dwellings or greater. Developers of smaller sites are required to make a financial contribution to the provision of new off-site affordable housing. The 50% affordable housing policy is an important policy lever and we would like to see the City Council continuing to apply and enforce this policy where it can.

#### Compulsory Purchase Orders

37. We heard anecdotal evidence that some developers may be holding back sites for development in the expectation that the 50% policy will eventually be reduced or removed. If developers are holding on to derelict land or buildings then the Council has the option of using Compulsory Purchase Orders and there may be a case for pursuing this option more actively.

#### Right to Buy

38. The Council's spending plans assume that approximately 40 social housing units will be sold each year through the Right to Buy scheme and variations on this number represent a financial risk to the Council. It is difficult for the City Council to replace social housing stock lost to Right to Buy within the city limits. Housing need is high but just maintaining the current level of social housing provision is a significant challenge for the City Council. People with housing needs in Oxford are now as likely to be placed in the private rented sector as in the social rented sector but Right to Buy only benefits the latter group.

39. The new government is committed to extending the Right to Buy scheme to housing association properties and local authorities are being advised not to put their energies in seeking to avoid Right to Buy. The impact of the extension of Right to Buy is not yet known but is likely to represent a further challenge to the City Council. We suggest that the City Council evaluates the expected local impacts of government housing policy, including the extension of Right to Buy.

#### Institutional investors

40. Given the scale of the housing problem, the Porch charity which provides support to homeless and vulnerably housed adults suggest that the City Council should look at ways of encouraging institutional investors and ethical funds to invest in providing new good standard affordable accommodation in the city.

#### Innovative solutions

41. We suggest that the City Council should look at innovative ways of boosting the supply of affordable housing, through innovative funding, land access, delivery and ownership models. Based on the axiom 'necessity is the mother of invention', we would like to see the Council aim to make Oxford a centre of excellence in innovation for new affordable housing solutions. The City Council is already looking at investing in 'real lettings' and has invested a small sum in church groups to help them to make houses available on a small scale. We considered whether 'pod homes' and community land trusts could also form part of the solution.

### Pod homes

42. Pod homes could provide high density accommodation to potential first time buyers at affordable rates. We recognise that Pod homes would not solve the issue of land availability, and that significant developments of small units are not compatible with the City Council's balance of dwellings policy

### Balance of dwellings policy

43. The City Council's balance of dwellings policy dates from 2008 and requires that, in developments of more than 4 homes, a proportion of new units are larger units. It aims to shape the housing mix in the city in 2020 and deliver a balanced mix of housing to meet the projected future household need.
44. We received representations that the policy is unnecessary because Oxford already has a relatively high proportion of larger homes compared with other UK cities, and that people tend to make do with less space when prices are high. We heard that this policy is likely to be having some impact on house price inflation, which is having a corrosive effect on social inclusion and inequality. New larger properties completed since the policy was adopted represent 1.2% of the city's total housing stock, so any impact on house price inflation is likely to be fairly marginal. However, we came to the view that an evidence based review of this policy would be timely.

### Community Land Trusts

45. Community Land Trusts are independent, not-for-profit corporations that develop and run housing and other local assets on behalf of a community. This model has the benefits of providing genuinely affordable housing that will remain affordable in the long run and not be affected by rising land and rental values. Community Land Trusts may well provide one of the few robust ways the Council could protect new-build social housing from Right to Buy. We heard that the City Council hasn't explored this option but it is likely that the Council could provide the most units at the cheapest price itself.
46. We suggest that the City Council seeks independent advice on what types of affordable housing models would be viable in Oxford. A group such as Affordable Oxford could be asked to establish which innovative options could potentially form part of a wider, multi-faceted approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing.

### Intergenerational shared living

47. Age UK advised us that a number of older people are under-occupying large properties in Oxford and that home-share options have been under-exploited in the UK. Oxford has a large student population and 11% of all households in the city comprise of people aged 65+ living alone, some of whom are under-occupying and may be experiencing isolation and loneliness<sup>8</sup>. There is an opportunity for the City Council and the Universities to encourage a scheme that

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<sup>8</sup> [Needs Assessment for Older People in Oxford, Oxford City Council, October 2013](#)

matches students with under-occupying single over 65 households, in a way that has worked successfully in Lyon, France<sup>9</sup>.

#### Downsizing

48. Age UK advised us that there is a very narrow range of good and affordable housing options available to older people in Oxford. We note that the City Council is currently undertaking a review of older people's housing in the city. We have also been made aware of cases where groups of older people want to downsize and stay together as a community. We suggest that the City Council explores whether there is scope to provide a mechanism for enabling groups of older people to do this as it will make homes available while helping these people to retain their close social networks.

#### Housing out of area

49. Due to the scale of the housing crisis it seems likely that the City Council will be unable to meet Oxford's housing needs in the coming years, even with an extensive range of interventions. While it's not desirable, we recognise that it may be necessary for the City Council to look at options for delivering affordable housing to outside of Oxford.

***Recommendation 5 - We recommend that the City Council progresses all options for boosting the supply of affordable housing, including by:***

- a) Continuing to push for a review of the Green Belt around Oxford as part of a wider county land review to identify sites for new housing,***
- b) Enforcing the City Council's 50% affordable housing policy,***
- c) Considering greater use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to buy derelict land and properties that aren't coming forward for development,***
- d) Evaluating the potential local impacts of the new Government's housing policies, such as the extension of the Right to Buy scheme to housing association properties,***
- e) Encouraging ethical or institutional investors to rent good standard accommodation to people in housing need at affordable rates,***
- f) Aiming to make Oxford a centre of excellence in innovation for new social and affordable housing solutions, ensuring that its own policies (such as the Balance of Dwellings Policy) are compatible with this aim. Affordable Oxford could be asked to provide advice on what options would be viable in Oxford,***
- g) Considering whether there is scope for the City Council or the Universities to promote 'inter-generational shared living'.***
- h) Considering whether there is a way the City Council could assist groups of older people in downsizing collectively while staying together as a community, perhaps by creating a group or register that people can join or sign up to.***

#### **Key worker housing**

50. Key working housing is housing allocated specifically for people in key public sector jobs, such as clinical health workers and senior teaching staff. Additional

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<sup>9</sup> [Jacques is 86. His housemate is 18. BBC Radio 4, 19 May 2015](#)

key worker housing could help to alleviate the problems that schools and hospitals experience in recruiting and retaining staff.

#### Intermediate housing

51. Oxford City Council's 50% affordable housing policy stipulates that 20% of affordable housing should be provided as intermediate housing (affordable home ownership options). We would like to see this including more new accommodation made available exclusively to key workers. We suggest that the Council promptly gathers evidence on the types and affordability of key worker housing models, looking at how this has been delivered in Cambridge and elsewhere. As part of this exercise, the Council should also assess the impacts of losing other intermediate tenure models.

#### Shared equity loan scheme

52. The City Council has already made a significant investment in keyworker housing by offering a shared equity loan scheme to support recruitment to senior leadership posts in city schools, as part of its educational attainment programme. Given the very high turnover of teaching staff at all levels in certain schools, we suggest that the City Council looks at the case for extending this offer to more teachers.

#### Access to the private rented sector

53. The City Council should also explore the possible scope for working with accredited landlords to assist teachers and other key workers in accessing the private rental market, for example by offering longer, more secure tenures and capping rent increases.

***Recommendation 6 - We note the significant difficulties that schools, hospitals and universities (as well as businesses) face in attracting workers to settle in Oxford, and recommend that the City Council:***

- a) Gathers evidence as soon as possible to identify the best way of delivering new build keyworker housing within the 20% of affordable housing provided as intermediate housing,***
- b) Seeks to extend its keyworker housing intervention to more teachers (this is currently offered to senior teaching staff),***
- c) Considers whether there is scope to assist key workers (particularly teachers in priority schools) in accessing housing in the private rented sector, for example by encouraging registered landlords to offer 3 year tenancies and agreeing to raise rents by no more than the CPI measure of inflation.***

#### **Private rented sector housing**

54. The private rented sector is of particular concern in Oxford due to high costs, poor standards and some rogue landlords. There is a marked difference in the level of wrap-around services a tenant receives as a social housing tenant compared to a private sector tenant – the latter being at a significant disadvantage. The Citizens Advice Bureau advised us that people have greater regulatory protection when buying a toaster than when privately renting accommodation. Oxford Child Poverty Action Group said that expensive and insecure housing has an impact on educational attainment and is causing some

families to move away from the city, losing their support networks. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group advised us that many health issues are largely dependent on housing issues, including; over-crowding, damp, lack of effective heating and insulation, and psychological problems from moving. The City Council is actively raising standards in this sector through licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation, operating a Landlord Accreditation Scheme and tackling unlawful dwellings, of which approximately 270 are estimated to be occupied in Oxford<sup>10</sup>.

#### Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

55. One in five residents now live in a house in multiple occupation (HMO), including an increasing number of families with young children. Standards in this sector are a major concern because poor housing can contribute to poor health outcomes, and this sector includes much of the city's worst housing stock. 90% of the 3,440 licensed HMOs in Oxford did not initially meet the City Council's minimum standards and it is estimated that there is a similar number of unlicensed HMOs across the city<sup>11</sup>. The City Council has required every HMO to have a license and we would welcome efforts to strengthen compliance.

#### Landlord Accreditation Scheme

56. Letting agents and private residential landlords are encouraged to join a voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme which aims to improve the condition and management of the private rented sector. However, fewer than 100 landlords and agents have taken up accreditation, which is low compared to the total number operating in the city. The Council has no powers to force landlords to become accredited, as will be happening in Wales<sup>12</sup>, but we would like to see further efforts to promote the benefits of this scheme to encourage take up. This could help to address the unfairness of some landlords benefiting from high rents while doing very little to improve the substandard and insecure living conditions of their tenants. We are also concerned about some particularly poor practices and conditions in the student housing market.

***Recommendation 7 - We note that the City Council is developing a Private Rented Sector Strategy and recommend that this aims to extend the City Council's interventions in the private rented sector to address abuses in the student housing market and poor standards across the wider private rented sector. This should include the extension of discretionary licensing to cover more properties where possible, enhanced enforcement of the HMO licensing regime and further promotion of landlord accreditation to encourage take up.***

#### **University engagement**

57. The presence of two universities has a significant impact on housing in Oxford. They bring with them some 32,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, a significant proportion of whom live in the private rented sector<sup>13</sup>. The University of Oxford in particular is a major presence in the city in terms of its spending

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<sup>10</sup> [Unlawful Developments Progress Report, Oxford City Council, February 2015](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Houses in Multiple Occupation \(HMO\) Licensing Scheme, Oxford City Council, June 2015](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Landlord Accreditation Wales, 2015](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Student Numbers in Oxford, Oxford City Council, April 2012](#)

power, employment and the assets and property portfolio it holds. It is in the interests of the University that the city is successful and functioning well.

58. We note that the University of Oxford is looking to expand the post doctorate research sector and attract 1,100 senior academics to the city, which would put additional pressure on housing. We would like to see the universities actively housing more academics and students while providing new affordable housing (student accommodation does currently include a requirement for a financial contribution towards affordable housing). We note that some of the colleges hold low-grade agricultural land around Barton which is in the green belt but could potentially be developed as housing. The University of Cambridge recently built 3,000 homes, half of which have been allocated as key worker housing for University and College staff<sup>14</sup>. The new Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford should be encouraged to look at this example and provide a greater degree of input in housing matters in the city.
59. We understand that the City Council's new Assistant Chief Executive will be responsible for external affairs and hope that they will play a key role in engaging with organisations such as the University of Oxford, and where appropriate, urging them to make a greater contribution to the city. Oxford Brookes University already provides funding towards bus services and the University of Oxford should be urged to make similar contributions towards new schemes or services that are in its interests and have wider benefits to the city as a whole.

***Recommendation 8 - We recommend that the City Council:***

- a) Calls on the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford to provide reinvigorated engagement in Oxford's housing sector by learning from the Cambridge model and providing new accommodation to house academics.***
- b) Tasks the new Assistant Chief Executive with working closely with the University sector and encouraging a greater degree of input into city matters, including financial contributions where appropriate.***

**Fuel Poverty**

60. Fuel poverty in England is measured by a Low Income High Costs definition, which is driven by three components; poor energy efficiency, high energy costs, and low household income. We fully endorse the City Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy, which focuses on energy efficiency improvement work and complements the income maximisation activities detailed in the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy.
61. In the majority of cases fuel poverty affects people in private tenures living in properties built prior to 1974. It disproportionately impacts on vulnerable groups that tend to spend more time at home, such as the elderly, disabled, long-term sick and the very young. It can be difficult for people who may be in fuel poverty to know whether they are entitled to various forms of support. We suggest that the City Council should use a fuel poverty calculator, which should be made

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<sup>14</sup> [Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor break ground on £1bn North West Cambridge development, University of Cambridge, 20 June 2013](#)

available online for staff and the public to use, to determine who is eligible for support and to direct people in fuel poverty to contact the Council for advice.

#### Oxford City Council's Housing Stock

62. Lots of work has been undertaken within the Council's housing stock to improve energy efficiency and most of the quick wins, such as installing double glazing, gas condenser boilers and cavity wall insulation, have been completed. Further strategic investments in the Council's housing stock are on-going and the City Council is offering free energy audits to Council tenants.

#### Fuel Poverty in the private rented sector

63. The City Council has been working with landlords to prepare for national changes aimed at improving energy efficiency. From 2016, landlords can't refuse a tenant's reasonable request for energy efficiency improvements, and from 2018, only properties with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'E' or higher can be rented out. The City Council enforces where there is underperformance in the private rented sector and has been checking the EPC rating of 'F' & 'G' rated properties as well as those that have no EPC rating for excess cold. The County Council's Trading Standards service is responsible for enforcing where an EPC is required. Information sharing between the two authorities could potentially lead to better outcomes and we suggest that the City Council could also ask for powers to enforce where EPCs are required if this would reduce duplication or help to improve overall efficiency.

#### ***Recommendation 9 – We recommend that the City Council builds on its commendable work on addressing fuel poverty by:***

- a) Making a fuel poverty calculator available online that directs people in fuel poverty to contact the City Council for advice on what support they may be entitled to,***
- b) Asking Trading Standards whether they would like the City Council to refer cases to them where an Energy Performance Certificate is required and whether they would be prepared to give the City Council any enforcement powers.***

#### **Health**

64. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) advised us that they are commissioning a report into health inequalities. This will build up an evidence base and identify suitable measures and actions to address health inequalities because entrenched health inequalities aren't improving. Life expectancy is lower in the most deprived areas of the city and life expectancy gap is 8.8 years for men and 3.7 years for women<sup>15</sup>. Some families experience intergenerational poor health despite lots of effort from lots of people. Learning Disability and severe Mental Health are big issues in Oxford as outcomes are relatively poor. The worst health outcomes occur in the areas of deprivation, where take up of free health checks is low. OCCG work with the City Council to ensure that local health plans and community plans are joined up and to identify opportunities for potential joint project work, for example on self-harm.

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<sup>15</sup> [Oxford Health Profile 2015, Public Health England, June 2015](#)



#### Proactive health interventions

65. The high population turnover in the city means that many people slip through the net, so there is a need to set up more proactive health structures that can spot issues early on, such as people not taking their medication. At the moment the focus is on patients who do attend appointments but missed appointments cost the NHS some £9.5m a year in Oxfordshire<sup>16</sup>.

#### Pooled budgeting

66. A number of organisations impact on health outcomes and there is a need to ensure there is the same drive to reduce inequalities across all organisations, and to move towards pooling resources in areas such as planning, housing and transport. The culture of annual budget setting is a barrier to this aim.

#### Social prescribing

67. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group advised us that the concept of social prescribing is been trialled in Gloucestershire and that they are keeping a close watch on progress. Social prescribing is where GPs prescribe activities that people might benefit from to address various health issues, including mental health disorders. We support this concept where evidence suggests that it can make a difference and hope that GPs will be encouraged to engage in this agenda. We suggest that the City Council should be prepared to utilise its own assets, such as by allowing prescribed access to leisure centres and swimming pools, together with the agencies it supports, to facilitate social prescribing in Oxford.

#### Online access to services

68. In discussion with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, we identified that a single online point of access for multiple services in Oxford would be a welcome development. This could take the form of an 'assessment of needs' website that provides a way in to various services provided by a range of agencies, including; health, mental health, housing, social care etc.

***Recommendation 10 - We recommend that the City Council builds on its work with Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners by:***

- a) Supporting the delivery of more proactive health interventions in areas of multiple deprivations, such as contacting people who miss appointments,***
- b) Working towards the concept of pooled budgeting in areas where evidence suggests that this approach can improve health outcomes.***
- c) Utilising the City Council's assets (such as leisure centres) and the agencies we support to facilitate social prescribing, and encouraging more GPs to take up social prescribing,***
- d) Working with partners to develop a single online point of access for multiple services in Oxford, including health, housing and social care.***

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<sup>16</sup> [The real cost of missed appointments. Oxford University Hospitals NHT Trust, 11 June 2015](#)

### **Planning new developments**

69. As the planning authority, the City Council can consider how factors of inequality and public health are factored in to the planning system. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group advised us that open access, exercise, and cycling and walking should be built in to the planning and development of new sites. Consideration should also be given to the physical shape of these communities, to ensure that they are attractive places to live and have a sense of community, which can help to combat forms of social isolation. These are also some of the main messages in the Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire's Annual Report for 2015<sup>17</sup>.
70. Age UK advised us that there should be a greater variety of housing within the street scene in new developments so that older people may have the option of downsizing without having to leave their local area. The outside environment needs to be well lit, with good quality pavements and access to public toilets.

***Recommendation 11 - We recommend that the City Council explores how factors around inequality and public health could be designed in to the planning and development of sites. These factors should include cycling and walking provision, the accessibility of parks, and the provision of a variety of housing within the street scene. Consideration should also be given to shaping new communities. For example, new communities should include a centre and shared open space.***

### **Tackling social and financial exclusion**

71. Services and interventions that focus specifically on excluded groups can play a vital role in reducing inequalities. During our evidence gathering, we focused on a number of groups that are often 'below the radar', and identified some gaps in provision or areas where the City Council could play a greater role. The City Council also provides a range of services that focus on strengthening communities and promoting social inclusion, including community centres and grants to community and voluntary organisations. We suggest that the City Council's approach to community engagement and how it meets the needs of Oxford's diverse range of communities should be subject to a separate detailed review.

### **Homelessness**

72. Oxford has one of the highest rates of people experiencing homelessness per capita outside of London and homelessness is a big issue in the city. A number of homelessness services are located in Oxford including 3 large hostels; so many homeless people gravitate towards Oxford from the neighbouring districts. We are concerned that instances of rough sleeping seem to be on the increase. A street count conducted in November 2014 identified 26 rough sleepers, compared to 19 a year earlier. A more recent estimate, drawing on intelligence from local stakeholders, was 43<sup>18</sup>. The City Council spends £1.4m per year on a

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<sup>17</sup> [Director of Public Health Annual Report for Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council, June 2015, p. 6 & 15](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Non-statutory single homelessness, Oxford City Council, March 2015](#)

range of homelessness services, and has committed to protecting the element of this funding that isn't government grant money over the medium term. At the same time, the County Council funding is reducing from £3.8m to £2.3m. The number of bed spaces is being maintained but the quality of support available is likely to drop.

#### No Second Night Out

73. Healthwatch Oxfordshire raised a number of concerns with us about the Council's No Second Night Out (NSNO) policy, which targets interventions at new rough sleepers, and proposed 5 recommendations for the Panel to consider (see appendix 5). A representative of Healthwatch advised us that much of the NSNO work on the ground was very good but there were issues with the forceful evictions of rough sleepers despite a lack of available hostel beds, hospital discharge processes, a high turnover of staff, as well as a need to address multiple complex needs.
74. The City Council's Head of Housing Needs reassured us that the first 4 Healthwatch recommendations were adequately covered within current provision and that the County Council has recently consulted on the re-commissioning of homelessness services. However, he agreed with the need for a county wide discharge policy for people experiencing homelessness, as per best practice guidelines. The cost of an additional night in a specialist Mental Health unit can regularly cost as much as £500. There are separate programmes aimed at entrenched rough sleepers, who are not the focus of the NSNO policy.

#### Complex needs

75. We heard that new rough sleepers are likely to engage in substance abuse if they haven't already, and many rough sleepers also have mental health problems. Having multiple complex needs means that many are denied access to the services they need. For example, people with mental health issues are unable to access alcohol treatment services and vice versa. The City Council now funds a complex needs service in conjunction with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health. We strongly endorse this programme which focuses on those whose needs are not met by the Adult Homeless Pathway or the supported independent living pathway.

#### ***Recommendation 12 - We recommend that the City Council:***

- a) Assists in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that a county wide discharge policy for people experiencing homelessness can be adopted as per best practice guidelines,***
- b) Extends interventions aimed at supporting homeless people with complex needs (e.g. substance abuse and mental health issues), who are often excluded from accessing the services they need.***

#### **Food poverty**

*Food poverty can be defined as the inability to obtain healthy, affordable food: "worse diet, worse access, worse health, higher percentage of income on food"*

*and less choice from a restricted range of foods. Above all food poverty is about less or almost no consumption of fruit and vegetables” – Feeding the Gaps<sup>19</sup>*

76. Unequal access to nutritious food has a direct bearing on a person’s health and general wellbeing. We reviewed a report called Feeding the Gaps, which sets out the findings of a project researching food poverty in Oxford, and spoke to local experts on emergency food aid and surplus food redistribution. We heard that demand for emergency food aid was rising, although this local and national trend is difficult to quantify. The causes of food poverty in Oxford reflect the national picture, and include benefit sanctions and payment delays, low wages and the bedroom tax.
77. The Feeding the Gaps project identified and interviewed a diverse range of providers of food aid in the city, some of which cater for specific groups while others are open to all. The Oxford Food Bank employs an innovative and pioneering model of redistributing surplus food to 45 local food aid providers, 41 of which are based within Oxford. The use of surplus food is saving providers a lot of money and enabling them to provide genuinely healthy and nutritious meals. Currently, only a fraction of local surplus food is being used.
78. Most of these organisations have discarded the idea that providing emergency food aid fosters a dependency culture, instead many have reported that that seeking food aid generates embarrassment and stigma which can prevent people in need from accessing help. Some providers have overcome this problem by creating a strong cultural or community context in which meals are provided. There are lots of co-benefits to providing food aid. Some providers have found it possible to use meals as a way of hooking people into other services such as legal advice. It is also an effective way of providing people with skills and personal development, and for building communities.
79. Feeding the Gaps identifies a number of possible next steps aimed at building capacity in this sector and changing attitudes towards surplus food. We were pleased to learn that funding has been secured to progress some of this follow up work and address the five specific gaps in provision identified in the report:
- People in areas of deprivation, including Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill
  - Families with Children over 5, who are not eligible for support from Children’s Centres
  - People in low-paying jobs
  - People transitioning out of services
  - Asylum seekers and refugees
80. Emergency food aid is not an area that the City Council is directly involved in. However, having heard evidence from those with local knowledge and expertise in this area, we believe there is strong evidence that this should be an emerging area of policy development in the City Council’s efforts to address inequalities. We want to ensure that the local network is sustainable and can continue to address areas of unmet need. Since the restructuring of the Primary Care Trusts, there has been no network bringing together the local providers of

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<sup>19</sup> [D. Barling and T. Lang \(2009\) in Feeding the Gaps: Food poverty and food surplus redistribution on Oxford, Doireann Lalor, September 2014](#)

emergency food aid. Prior to this, the City Council was the lead agency. The City Council could again take the lead role in bringing together local food aid providers to better enable them to operate more efficiently as a network, share resources and best practice, and work towards filling the gaps in provision outlined above. The City Council has experience of capacity building in other sectors which it may be able to apply here. There may also be an opportunity to raise providers' awareness of services and support provided by the City Council. We note that Bristol has been cited as an example of best practice in terms of food policy.

***Recommendation 13 - Oxford City Council is leading the way in defining, measuring and tackling fuel poverty and we recommend that the same priority should be given to the issue of food poverty. A part-time role should be created to tackle food poverty, which should involve facilitating the work of the not-for-profit and voluntary sector to maximise their impact, and developing a food poverty strategy for Oxford. This strategy should aim to replicate best practice established by Bristol to reduce food bank demand and increase access to good and affordable food across the city.***

#### **Support for asylum seekers**

81. Asylum seekers are a specific group that are likely to be affected by issues of inequality. We spoke to Asylum Welcome, a group that supports refugees, asylum seekers and immigration detainees by providing advice, practical services, human-contact and food. Asylum Welcome receives annual grant funding from the City Council, as well as funding from donations, trusts and foundations. Oxford is not a designated dispersal city and has a relatively small number of asylum seekers. However, the Campsfield House immigration detention centre is nearby and some local people are very active, which means that Oxford is able to punch above its weight and influence the national debate.
82. Asylum seekers are unable to work while their claims are being processed. They are therefore more likely to be dependent on food aid and some are living destitute in Oxford. Of these, 3 or 4 have the status of having No Recourse to Public Funds which means that they have been through the asylum process as far as they can and are liable for detention and removal, even if they have children. This is a particularly vulnerable and hidden group that falls outside of the remit of Asylum Welcome. We heard that other asylum seekers often find they are turned away from services even when they do have certain entitlements. Many asylum seekers who do have accommodation have reported having tenancy issues.
83. Asylum seekers often need access to legal advice, for example when additional evidence becomes available to support their asylum claim, or when human rights claims are made, which are no longer covered by Legal Aid. Asylum Welcome advised us that there are now fewer lawyers operating in this field and that they have on occasion paid for lawyers.
84. The City Council has made a commitment to Oxford's mission to be a 'City of Sanctuary'. We asked what the Council could do to ensure that Asylum Welcome remains viable and continues to support asylum seekers in the city.

We heard that funding from the City Council is currently provided annually and that a longer-term funding settlement would provide more security and cut their administrative workload. Asylum Welcome are paying a commercial rent on their currently premises which is due to increase by over 10%.

**Recommendation 14 – We recommend that the City Council:**

- a) Identifies how it can provide a greater degree of funding security to Asylum Welcome. Consideration should be given to including their work within the remit of the Council's Community Grants commissioning programme, which awards funding for 3 years rather than annually. This will reduce Asylum Welcome's administrative workload and help to ensure that they remain viable over the medium term.**
- b) Explores whether it could provide low cost accommodation to third sector organisations by utilising unused capacity in Council-owned assets such as Community Centres.**

**Financial exclusion**

85. People who are financially excluded are often in poverty or experiencing disadvantage and as a result they may be unable to access affordable credit or bank accounts, struggle to manage money or pay bills, or are financially at risk. 11% of Oxford's population is indebted<sup>20</sup>. We strongly endorse the City Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan which aims to address issues of debt, income, housing and skills over the short and longer term. The City Council also offers a Council Tax Reduction scheme which people on low incomes may be entitled to and Discretionary Housing Payments. Many of these interventions are transformative and focused on changing lives rather than just income streams.

Welfare reform

86. Research commissioned by the City Council found that the majority of people affected by welfare reforms in Oxford were in work on low pay. Some 14,950 households were £31 per week worse off on average due to welfare reforms and 60% of these household have at least one person in work<sup>21</sup>. Two particular groups of concern were identified; disabled people and lone parents. We endorse the work of the Welfare Reform Team which has been involved in a national pilot project in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, actively helping people affected by welfare reform by providing personal budgeting support.

87. We note that Universal Credit is now being gradually phased in. A claimant's situation on the day of their assessment is what counts in calculating their entitlement, which will present difficulties for those in insecure employment or on zero hours contracts. We heard that this is hugely challenging but that the City Council is one of the best placed local authorities in the UK to support this transition. We urge the City Council to ensure that as many people as possible experiencing financial exclusion have the opportunity to benefit from the Welfare Reform Team's interventions.

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<sup>20</sup> [Financial Inclusion Strategy, Oxford City Council, 2014](#)

<sup>21</sup> [The impacts of welfare reform in Oxford, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, April 2014, p. 4](#)

### Single view of debt

88. We heard that a number of people in debt owe money to the City Council and often these include multiple debts (e.g. Council Tax, rent, charges). We support moves towards implementing a 'single view of debt' so that these multiple debts can be identified, and where possible consolidated into more manageable single payments.

### Independent advice

89. The Citizens Advice Bureau advised us that the four most common issues they deal with nationally relate to debt, benefits, housing and employment. The order and mix of these issues varies in different parts of the country and in Oxford the three main issues of particular concern are:
- i. Housing supply and the quality of the private rented sector,
  - ii. The benefits system letting down chronically disabled people causing stress and strain,
  - iii. Poor employment practices causing insecure employment. In particular, the employment rights of new arrivals are not respected and people do not know what they are entitled to.
90. We welcome the City Council's commitment to maintaining the level of funding the advice sector provides in recent budget rounds. To support this vital open-access provision, we would like to see the City Council making a commitment to protect funding for the advice sector over the medium term.

### Debt advice

91. We heard from the Citizens Advice Bureau that some debt advice is available but it's not enough. The provision of money management and debt advice in St. Aldate's Chambers increased from 4 days per week to 5 days per week in April 2015 but funding has only been allocated until March 2016. We suggest that longer term funding options are explored and also recognise the importance of monitoring the impacts of this provision over time.

### Unclaimed entitlements

92. We note that the City Council has provided funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau to help over 60s who don't meet the threshold for social care to claim benefits they were entitled to. This project brought an extra £1m into the local economy, with the average pensioner who benefited being £2-4k better off. We heard that CAB plan to continue this work.

### Discretionary Housing Payments

93. The Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme provides short term relief to applicants, for example those affected by welfare reforms, in order to prevent homelessness. The City Council administers this scheme in Oxford and focuses awards in ways that can reduce dependence and help people to find sustainable solutions to their financial situations.
94. The Council's funding allocation from central government has recently reduced significantly, perversely as a result of the unaffordability of private rented housing

in Oxford<sup>22</sup>, and there is also a high degree of funding uncertainty in future years. Previously, some unspent DHP funding has been returned to the government at year end. We note that the City Council has supplemented its DHP grant this year and urge the Council to make full use of its DHP budget allocation.

**Recommendation 15 - We strongly endorse the City Council's approach to combatting financial exclusion and recommend that the City Council:**

- a) Ensures that the Welfare Reform Team are fully and best deployed in order to provide greater assistance and proactively reach more people, particularly those moving on to Universal Credit,**
- b) Moves towards implementing a 'single view of debt' in order to identify multiple debts owed to the Council, and where possible, consolidate these,**
- c) Gives a high priority to continuing to protect the current level of funding for the advice sector over the medium term,**
- d) Explores longer term funding options for a housing needs money advice caseworker, and evaluates the impact of this provision over time,**
- e) Continues to work closely with CAB and other agencies to encourage the take up of unclaimed benefits.**
- f) Aims to make full use of its Discretionary Housing Payments budget.**

### **Support for charities**

95. We found that there is a wide range of charities operating in Oxford providing a various types of services and support. In many cases, they are unaware of what other charities and groups are doing and we heard from Community Action Groups Oxfordshire that there is no reliable local directory of charities. The Charity Commission website provides one option but is not always easy to use.

**Recommendation 16 – We recommend that the City Council establishes a reliable directory of charities for Oxford, setting out the aims, principle client groups and types of relief provided. This will help to ensure that local charities have a greater awareness of what other charities do.**

### **Helping residents to fulfil their potential**

96. City Council interventions can provide a key role in helping residents to fulfil their potential and participate fully in society. For example, the Council's Youth Ambition programme aims to help young people to broaden their perception of their own capabilities and stimulate ambition. The City Council has also invested significantly in improving educational attainment in struggling schools and is participating in the Business in the Community scheme where City Council employees provide mentoring to pupils at a city school. We would like the City Council to build on its role as a positive agent for change that can successfully transform residents' lives, particularly for those in areas of deprivation.

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<sup>22</sup> [Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, Oxford City Council, March 2015](#)



## **Education**

97. A number of people we spoke to including the Child Poverty Action Group, highlighted poor educational outcomes in some city schools as being a major cause for concern as it can perpetuate inequality and entrench intergenerational low aspirations. Education is a County Council function but the City Council has directed substantial resources at improving educational attainment in the city's poorest performing schools over recent years. These investments have been scrutinised elsewhere but we strongly encourage the City Council to remain involved in addressing poor attainment because well targeted intervention can have a real impact in reducing educational inequalities, particularly at Key Stage 1 and key Stage 2. Past difficulties in achieving effective interventions in educational outcomes should not be used as an excuse to disengage. The crucial role educational outcomes play in determining the life course of our children and their exposure to inequality are too great for this area to be overlooked.

### Educational grants

98. We suggest that the City Council prioritises offering a new non-prescriptive educational improvement grant programme which is accessible to schools in deprived areas. Head Teachers could for example apply for grant money to fund a specific line item in their School Improvement Plan focused on Pupil Premium or Special Educational Needs pupils. The funding should be output-based so that uses that demonstrate positive impacts are prioritised for further funding.

### Promoting take up of the pupil premium

99. We understand that since the introduction of universal free school meals for pupils in year 1 and 2, fewer parents of eligible pupils are registering their children for free school meals and schools are missing out on some of the Pupil Premium funding they are entitled to. The County Council is unable to access benefits data to determine which pupils qualify for Pupil Premium funding and we suggest that the City Council considers whether it has a role in solving this issue.

### ***Recommendation 17 - We recommend that the City Council continues to prioritise improving educational attainment in the city by:***

- a) Offering a new educational grant programme to which Head Teachers from schools serving deprived areas can apply. This programme would provide tangible output-based funding to reduce educational inequalities in city schools. The criteria for awards should be non-prescriptive but grants could be used to fund specific line items in School Improvement Plans focused on Pupil Premium and Special Educational Needs pupils, for example.***
- b) Engaging with partners and considering whether it has a role in ensuring that eligible year 1 and 2 pupils are registered for the Pupil Premium so that their schools receive the additional funding they are entitled to.***

### **Promoting opportunities**

100. The City Council can play an important role in promoting and maximising the opportunities available to residents in areas of deprivation.

### Careers Advice in Schools

101. We identified that careers advice in city schools is poor or lacking, particularly at years 7 and 8. While the City Council has no powers in this area, it could seek to exert some influence.

#### Social clauses

102. The City Council has been using social clauses to ensure that major development projects provide apprenticeship opportunities for young adults living in the more deprived parts of the city. We would like to see further use of social clauses to ensure that the benefits of development and growth are extended to all parts of the city. Assurance is also needed that developers contracted by the City Council deliver these commitments.

#### Discounts for tutors at community centres

103. We spoke with a social enterprise that was looking to provide an accredited course at Barton aimed at overcoming issues of low self-esteem in 12-15 year old girls and enabling them to build healthy relationships. We recognise that these types of issues require ground up solutions but feel there is a role for the City Council in providing facilitation that helps to make these types of solutions more viable. We note that Blackbird Leys Community Centre now offers substantial discounts to tutors hiring computers and providing educational opportunities, and that there are plans to offer these discounts at Rose Hill and Barton. We would like to see this offer extended to all Community Centres located in areas of deprivation.

#### Utilising partnerships

104. We suggest that the City Council should encourage more input from university students and sixth formers, including from private schools, in areas such as assisting younger children for whom English is not a first language, and in broadening access to resources such as arts provision.

***Recommendation 18 - We recommend that the City Council utilises skills within communities and works with partners to maximise every opportunity to provide employment and career paths for more residents living in areas of multiple deprivation, including by:***

- a) Seeking to influence and improve the provision of targeted careers advice in schools, extending this to younger pupils (years 7-8), as well as offering mentoring into adulthood,***
- b) Extending the use of social clauses to create more and better opportunities for young people. Clarity is required as to how the City Council will ensure that developers deliver social clauses,***
- c) Extending the offer of reduced fees for tutors to all Community Centres situated in areas of multiple deprivations. The City Council should also continue to make better use of Community Centres and promote them as vibrant local hubs.***
- d) Maximising links with universities, private schools, the student hub and businesses to get more volunteer help for appropriate programmes. These opportunities could include coaching and mentoring to help vulnerable people into work, assisting young people to whom English is not a first language, and broadening access to resources such as arts provision.***

## **Employment**

105. Oxford benefits from a buoyant economy and high employment but it also has a strong low wage economy, with a lot of low paying and insecure jobs. Poor employment practices in the city were highlighted by a number of people we spoke to including the Citizens Advice Bureau. These include employers paying less than the minimum wage, employing staff on zero hours contracts against their will, and some restaurants charging staff to wait tables. We were also appalled at reports that a number of people in Oxford were arrested on slavery charges in March 2015<sup>23</sup>. We suggest that the City Council seeks to utilise any influence it has in calling for an end to exploitative employment practices.

***Recommendation 19 - We recommend that the City Council calls on local employers to put an end to exploitative employment practices in the city. These practices include employers charging restaurant staff to wait tables, paying less than the minimum wage, and employing workers on zero hours contracts against their will.***

## **Oxford Living Wage**

106. The City Council is committed to promoting the Oxford Living Wage which is set at 95% of the London Living Wage and takes into account the high costs of housing and transport in the city. One of the biggest impacts that could be made on reducing inequality within Oxford is to lift the wages of as many people as possible to the Oxford Living Wage.

107. We spoke with the Living Wage Foundation about how they are developing the Living Wage. There are now 1,500 accredited Living Wage employers nationally. Future developments include an emerging consumer campaign, similar to the Fairtrade campaign, the introduction of Living Wage Hubs in university cities, and an interactive app.

108. We would like to see a Living Wage Hub in Oxford and a programme of events and activities, including visual branding for local employers to display, to promote the Oxford Living Wage. The Hub would ideally be managed by engaged citizens but we recognise that for this idea to get off the ground, the City Council may need to allocate officer time in the early stages. Once established, the Hub could look to expand on its remit by engaging in other employment issues, such as pay ratios and equal pay for men and women.

109. Consideration should be given to who would be the public face of the Oxford Living Wage, and we suggest that this could be a City Councillor.

110. The Living Wage Foundation has genuine appreciation for the work of the City Council in this area and wants to work constructively with us. However, there is a tension due to Oxford having its own Oxford Living Wage rate which is different from the national Living Wage rate. For them, this introduces complexity and can be confusing for employers. This runs contrary to what they are trying to do nationally. However, we believe that the very high cost of housing in Oxford

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<sup>23</sup> [Seven arrested after warrants carried out - Vale of White Horse and Oxford, Thames Valley Police, March 2015](#)

necessitates a higher living wage rate than other areas of the country with the exception of London.

**Recommendation 20 – We recommend that the City Council continues to look to raise wages by:**

- a) Creating a Living Wage Hub in Oxford based around the Oxford Living Wage. This should involve a programme of activities to promote the Oxford Living Wage, and a distinct logo that Oxford Living Wage employers are encouraged to display. Ideally these activities should be led by engaged citizens but they may initially require some officer resource. The Hub could also look at other related employment issues such as pay ratios.**
- b) Identifying a public face of the Oxford Living Wage. This could be a member champion.**
- c) Working constructively with the Living Wage Foundation in promoting Living Wage Week and seeking to raise wages and improve working conditions in Oxford, particularly in low paid sectors such as hospitality, health and social care.**

#### **The City Council as an employer**

111. The City Council is itself a major employer in the city and can have some limited impact on reducing inequalities through its own employment practices. In discussion with officers we identified measures that could extend employment opportunities at the City Council to the more excluded groups and communities, enabling the Council to build a workforce that is more representative of the diverse communities it serves. These include more flexible recruitment, outreach to under-represented groups, better online accessibility and guidance for applicants, and more targeted feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

112. We also considered whether there is scope for looking at salaries and the way salary increases are applied. If all employees receive the same percentage pay increase each year then the pay gap between higher paid and lower paid staff increases in cash terms. We suggest that there is a case for looking at increasing salaries of lower paid staff at a higher rate, in order to maintain rather than widen this gap over time.

**Recommendation 21 - We recognise that Oxford City Council is a major employer in the city, and recommend that the City Council continues to develop its own employment practices through:**

- a) More flexible recruitment practices such as accepting CVs and more widespread use of assessment centres,**
- b) An annual managed calendar of interventions targeting black and minority ethnic communities and other underrepresented groups,**
- c) Better targeting of constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants,**
- d) Interactive and accessible recruitment webpages with guidance for applicants,**
- e) Uplifting the salaries of lower paid staff at a higher rate than those of higher paid staff to ensure that the pay gap between them doesn't increase over time.**

## **Conclusion**

113. Our cross-cutting review of inequality found that the City Council is doing a lot of very good work to combat persistent patterns of inequality in Oxford. These issues are complex and difficult to solve even with a strong partnership approach. Doing so is particularly challenging, but arguably as important as ever, at a time when public finances are constrained. We have recommended a wide range of actions that we think are feasible and affordable. Taken together, these would enable the City Council to maximise its impact and make a significant additional contribution to combatting inequality in Oxford.

## **Further consideration**

114. We recommend that the Scrutiny Committee should consider adding the following items to its work programme:
- a) The Youth Ambition Programme
  - b) How well the Community and Neighbourhoods Team is meeting the needs of marginalised groups and communities
  - c) Fuel Poverty – uptake and results of thermal ratings surveys
  - d) Housing delivery models
  - e) Public transport costs

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## **Appendix 1 - Inequality Panel terms of reference**

### **Background**

At its meeting on 6 October, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to a proposal to establish a panel to review issues around inequality in Oxford. This panel would draw together and prioritise a number of different but related suggestions put forward by Councillors. The review panel was asked to meet to refine its terms of reference and report back to the Scrutiny Committee for approval. The following terms of reference were drafted by the panel before being agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2014.

### **Context**

Oxford is a dynamic and successful city with relatively low long term employment. However, the cost of living is higher than almost anywhere else in the UK and this presents a number of challenges. Some areas of the City suffer multiple levels of deprivation, with low skills, low incomes and poor housing. The City also has significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. These challenges have been exacerbated by the effects of the economic downturn and by constrained public spending, and are expected to intensify in the years ahead.

### **Purpose of the Scrutiny Review**

To review how the City Council contributes to combatting harmful social and economic inequality in Oxford, and whether there is more that could reasonably be done.

### **The central aims of the review are**

- To understand the scale, reasons and impact of inequality in Oxford.
- To identify specific areas where the City Council can make the most difference in combatting inequality.
- To make deliverable, evidence-based recommendations that are co-produced with local citizens or stakeholders where possible.

### **Other aims include**

- Identifying other studies that are currently taking place.
- Understanding the public sector equality role, how this is applied in practice and whether more could be done.
- Drawing on the views and experience of local professionals and non-statutory organisations.
- Seeking external expert perspectives that may challenge conventional thinking.
- Identifying gaps in provision or in partnership working where there are opportunities for the City Council to take a leadership role.
- Testing the claim that Oxford City Council does all it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place.

### **Out of scope**

- Commissioning new academic or statistical research.
- Duplicating the work of other agencies such as Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxfordshire County Council.

- Focusing on areas where the City Council currently has little influence e.g. Children's Centres.

### **Methodology**

Evidence gathering methods include:

- Review of literature, policy documents and research data.
- Call for evidence.
- Evidence provided at public hearings and workshops.
- Undertaking site visits e.g. to a food bank, health centre etc.
- Considering what could be learnt from other local authorities.

### **Indicative timeline**

<b>October 2014</b>
Panel terms of reference considered by Scrutiny Committee on 6 October. Panel members meet to agree area of focus and next steps. Terms of reference updated. Evidence gathering is planned.
<b>November 2014</b>
Review terms of reference considered by Scrutiny Committee on 10 November. Evidence gathering begins.
<b>December 2014 - January 2015</b>
Evidence gathering continues but the Finance Panel's Budget Scrutiny review takes priority.
<b>February 2015</b>
Final evidence gathering takes place. Panel meets to review evidence and identify recommendation areas. Report drafted around recommendation areas.
<b>March 2015</b>
Panel finalise report and recommendations. Report to Scrutiny Committee meeting on 23 March. Recommendations to City Executive Board on 1 April.



## Appendix 2 - Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the inquiry by taking the time to respond to our call for evidence and share their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

We would also like to give special thanks to the following people who attended public meetings to provide evidence in person:

- From Age UK: Paul Cann
- From Asylum Welcome: Kate Smart and Bob Wilkes.
- From Community Action Groups – Oxfordshire: Peter Lefort.
- From Healthwatch Oxfordshire: Peter Lohman.
- From the Living Wage Foundation: Emma Kosmin
- From Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau: Gill Tishler.
- From Oxford & District Child Poverty Action Group: Larry Sanders and Sue Tanner.
- From Oxford City Council: Jarlath Brine, Councillor Susan Brown, Angela Cristofoli, Mark Fransham, Debbie Haynes, Laura Higgins, Val Johnson, Luke Nipen, Adrian Roche, Dave Scholes, Peter Sloman, Paul Wilding and Ian Wright.
- From Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group: Sharon Barrington, Maggie Dent and Dr. Joe McManners.
- From Oxfordshire County Council: Eira Hale
- Doireann Lalor, Co-ordinator of Feeding the Gaps.
- Professor Danny Dorling, social geographer and author.
- Several members of the public who addressed the Panel.

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### Appendix 3 – background documents

The Panel has reviewed or had sight of the following public documents, in addition to various briefing notes and presentations provided by City Council officers and external witnesses:

- [999 FOOD – Emergency Food Aid in the Thames Valley – A Snapshot, Diocese of Oxford](#)
- [A tale of two counties, Age UK](#)
- [Bridging the Social Divide, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2014-2018, Oxford City Council](#)
- [Child Poverty Needs Assessment, Oxfordshire Children & Young People’s Trust](#)
- [Equality Act 2010, The National Archives](#)
- [Fair Society Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review](#)
- [Feeding the Gaps: Food Poverty and food surplus redistribution in Oxford](#)
- [Financial Inclusion Strategy, Oxford City Council](#)
- [Impact of Welfare Reform in Oxford, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion](#)
- [Improving Hospital Admission and Discharge for People who are Homeless, Homeless Link and St. Mungo's](#)
- [The Indices of Deprivation 2010, Oxford City Council](#)
- [Living a life in social housing: a report from the Real London Lives project, Centre for Housing Policy](#)
- [Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support, The Children’s Society](#)
- [Our Changing City – Social Trends in Oxford, Oxford Strategic Partnership](#)
- [Oxford District Health Profile 2015, Public Health England](#)
- [Oxford Profile 2015, Oxford Strategic Partnership](#)
- [Oxfordshire Insight Newsletter November 2014, Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- [Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Health and Wellbeing Board](#)
- [Poverty and deprivation statistics, Oxford City Council](#)
- [Poverty and the Cost of Living: An Evidence Review, Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [Service and Community Impact Assessments \(SCIA's\) 2014/14, Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- [Standards for Commissioners and Service Providers, The Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health](#)
- [State of the Nation 2014: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain](#)
- [Why Ethnicity Matters for Local Authority Action on Poverty, Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

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## Appendix 4 - Responses to call for evidence

Responses from organisations				
Organisation	Question: 1 What local factors contribute to social and economic inequality in Oxford? (max 2000 characters)	Question: 2 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Oxford City Council works well with partners to combat inequality.	Question: 3 Thinking about inequality in Oxford, are there current or emerging areas of unmet need or gaps...	Question: 4 What more could the City Council reasonably do to combat inequality? (max 2000 characters)
53	<p>Oxford and district Child Poverty Action Group</p> <p>We focus here on local evidence on child poverty. We see local factors as including housing, transport, planning, employment and education. The price of housing - recently reported to exceed London - is a significant contributor to local inequalities and divisions. It is also difficult for residents in the outer estates of the city to integrate with the rest of the community and have equal access to central facilities, given the price of transport. Planning policies are clearly critically important in the creation and maintenance of mixed communities, which in turn influence the quality of local facilities.</p> <p>In Oxford, 1 in 4 children live in poverty. There is a stark contrast between the north and the SE parts of the city, reflecting the socio-spatial distribution of housing: in 4 areas of SE Oxford, more than 30% do so, compared with 7% in North Oxford. More disadvantaged areas of the city also have poorer health and learning outcomes. Barton and Blackbird Leys have high rates of low birth-weight babies - significantly above the national average, with parts of North Oxford significantly below. Barton and Northfield Brook are in the 5% most deprived areas nationally on the Child Wellbeing Index.</p>	<p>We realise that the city council only has direct powers over only certain services and provision. However, these are important areas where it can act; and it can also be a leader in the local area in its efforts to combat poverty and inequality in partnership with other strategic organisations.</p> <p>It is already doing so in a range of ways we commend. Its pay policy aims to ensure that low-paid workers employed by the council itself and by grant-funded organisations receive a decent wage.</p> <p>The council's continuing support for advice centres also contributes greatly to addressing inequality. In the last full year these centres saw 13,913 clients and helped clients to gain an additional £2.7m. Advice workers helped at least 217 client households to avoid threatened homelessness.</p> <p>The council's policies as a landlord and as a creditor are key in terms of the impact of the authority on some of its poorest residents, and these should all</p>	<p>The withdrawal of legal aid, in particular for family law and welfare benefits, has resulted in the reduction of assistance for many in the most hard-pressed groups. We would urge the city council to provide increased support for advice centres. In addition, certain areas of the city have no local provision: for example, Cutteslowe, Wood Farm, parts of East Oxford. People living in poverty in these areas have to travel to the CAB or elsewhere for help and many find the bus fares prohibitive.</p> <p>There is virtually no advice help available to those in full-time employment. Oxford CAB runs a Saturday morning session but evening and weekend advice sessions elsewhere do not exist.</p> <p>Many people living in poverty cannot read or write English. There is a need for much more provision of interpretation/translation facilities in advice centres and other organisations serving the public.</p>	<p>The city council can tackle child poverty and inequality directly and also tackle their consequences. It should strive to increase the supply of social housing. It should continue to protect families from the impact of national housing policies restricting access and/or income (e.g. the 'bedroom tax').</p> <p>The council should continue to pay the 'living wage' and protect full council tax support. It should encourage schools to ensure families eligible for free school meals register their children, and support holiday meals initiatives.</p> <p>Council funds for education/educational groups/activities should continue and be targeted at schools in the most disadvantaged areas. It should encourage schools to use the pupil premium to benefit the most disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>The council should have a local food policy to address the needs of the poorest households, particularly with children - including helping sustain local food retailing capacity near where they live, so food good for health can be bought at affordable prices without having to pay for transport to the centre or outlying superstores.</p> <p>The council could encourage employers to advertise all local job opportunities as open to part-time and flexible working in the absence of convincing reasons against. Parents (especially mothers) would more</p>

	<p>In 2011, 17% of Oxford's households with children had no adult in employment - compared with 11% in the SE region and 14% nationally. Blackbird Leys, Churchill, Northfield Brook and Barton and Sandhills all had rates of over 25%. Barton, Greater Leys and parts of Cowley have high rates of children with below average levels of learning development at age 5. Young people aged 16-24 not in education/employment/training (NEETS) tend to be concentrated in Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill and Greater Leys. Oxford is the lowest performing part of the county for all the main end of key stage attainment measures at primary and secondary schools. 12 primary schools in the city (out of 30) have overall absence rates amongst the highest 20% nationally.</p>	<p>be designed and implemented with combating poverty and inequality as a top priority. The decision to retain full council tax benefit for claimant households has been particularly helpful in preventing some of the dire consequences faced by claimants in other local authority areas (as well as avoiding expensive legal proceedings). We would urge the council to ensure that it does not lower its own threshold for debt recovery activity.</p> <p>The Local Strategic Partnership can be a vehicle for devising and championing innovate schemes to combat child poverty and inequality locally. It should ensure that these areas are sustained as high priorities for action.</p>	<p>The credit unions (Blackbird Leys and Oxford) could be supported strategically to have a wider and more effective reach. This will be particularly important with the advent of universal credit, which will put enormous strain on families' budgeting.</p>	<p>easily find employment meeting their needs, which would reduce child poverty. The council must also support child care for working parents.</p> <p>Local employers could be encouraged to take on local workers where possible, and create the maximum number of apprenticeships, particularly for young people from disadvantaged areas.</p> <p>The council could use the principle throughout its strategy to combat inequality of conducting itself as though the socio-economic duty on public bodies had been included in the Equality Act 2010 as originally planned.</p>
<p>5 Oxford CAB</p>	<p>1.1 Housing. Pressure on housing stock keeps rents at unaffordable levels for many, especially when combined with local housing allowance levels based on a broader market reference area. Private landlords have little incentive to maintain properties well or manage tenancies properly. If tenants fall behind on rent it can be more beneficial to a landlord to evict the existing tenant, retain their deposit and then bring in a new tenant than to agree a long repayment plan. The City Council is working hard to increase the stock of social housing. Council tax banding could be re-visited. Retaliatory evictions in private rented accommodation is an issue. We recently advised a tenant who used her rent to pay for the elimination of vermin in her privately rented flat when</p>	<p>Oxford City Council has worked well with partners to help combat inequality through:</p> <p>Creation of welfare reform team Funding of front line advice services Creation of financial inclusion strategy</p> <p>Targeted funding for regeneration areas</p> <p>Funding based on both geography and community of interest eg older people facing income poverty Keeping the Council Tax Reduction scheme has helped a great many people and we would strongly recommend its continuation Commitment to</p>	<p>Current or emerging needs: Ongoing information and advice services for people facing multiple changes</p> <p>Ongoing support for financial capability, as an integral part of debt processes, as a stand alone input when appropriate, and as part of encouraging unbanked residents to take advantage of more appropriate fee free bank accounts as these become available.</p> <p>In common with CABs across the country Oxford CAB has seen a big increase in the number of clients with Council Tax arrears. I in 5 clients owing money on Council Tax</p>	<p>4.1 Use any purchasing power with utility companies to press for more transparent pricing</p> <p>4.2 continue to fund agencies that help individuals to get the most out of their energy supplier eg Oxford CAB's work to get a better deal for those on pre-payment meters and the awareness raising sessions run on energy efficiency and ways to tackle fuel poverty</p> <p>4.3 ensure that suppliers to the Council have good employment practices – eg are not using zero hours contracts</p> <p>4.4 Encourage suppliers and other local businesses to adopt the living wage.</p> <p>4.5 For many clients their first knowledge of action being taken against them is when the</p>

	<p>the landlord failed to act and then was evicted for non payment of rent.</p> <p>1.2. Welfare reform Council has put a lot of effort into supporting residents through benefit cap and under occupancy charges. In many cases however it is the cumulative effect of other changes that are driving inequality:delays between claim and payment date;sanctions; changes in relation to EU claimants; changing the uprating measure.</p> <p>1.3 Health inequality The number of claimants on Employment and Support Allowance has remained stubbornly consistent in recent years. The benefit regime contributes to widening economic inequality linked to poor health because of: delays in assessment; poor quality assessments which are overturned when challenged; drop in income while awaiting reconsideration of decisions; low level of support from current welfare to work programmes.</p> <p>1.4 Pressure on employment The detrimental impact of zero hours contracts. CAB advises an increasing number of clients on minimum wage and not paid their essential travel costs, thus bringing their take home pay to a very low level. Many are care workers making a vital contribution to reducing health inequality and need to be properly rewarded for such.</p>	<p>early adoption of eg direct payments of housing benefit in order to get ahead of some of the major changes</p>	<p>also owes money on a credit, store or charge card.</p> <p>Gaps in service provision: Advice areas previously covered by legal aid so: benefits, debt, housing and employment plus large areas of family law</p>	<p>bailiffs arrive at their door. In most of these cases this is because they have moved and mail has not been forwarded onto them. We would suggest DIS and Aof E checks are carried out to ensure that wherever possible cases do not need to be passed to bailiffs. Avoiding bailiff action can help prevent debt problems from escalating and ensure action is not disproportionate to the level of liability.</p> <p>4.6 Could the City Council consider introducing a health impact assessment process to ensure that all relevant council policies, decisions and resource investments contribute to health improvements.</p> <p>4.7 Could the Council take a more rigorous approach to the adoption of measures to disincentivise the number of properties that are being bought for investment purposes only and left empty.</p>
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Oxford City council (Board Member)	poverty, low educational aspirations, low educational attainment in some of the city schools, hard to attract good staff in public sector as house prices very high, too many employers paying minimum wage, possibly discrimination in employment, NHS surgeries should do more outreach work to spot health problems early.	Difficult as a district council but more work needed to combat health and educational inequalities. More needed to help NEETS in the city as many need mentors job clubs and support of another adult to access opportunities. job club needed at Bullingdon /peat Moors as there are 160 NEETS in Lye Valley according to Oxon CC	The football field at Peat Moors will not be marked out by the City Council as there is a pitch at Cowley Marsh. This centralisation of facilities is a severe discouragement to the socially disadvantaged in Wood Farm Churchill ward and lye valley. The community centre at peat moors is small although the population is increasing. The other part of my ward Horspath lacks a community centre and the opportunity for exercise and social interaction that go with that.	Fund the marking out of the football pitch at Bullingdon /peat moors to encourage exercise and reduce health inequalities. Work with bus companies to improve access to new BBL pool from Hollow way area. Continue work to improve educational attainment as well as the youth ambition scheme. Try to work more closely with Pakistani origin community to encourage them into sport and community participation. Introduce language classes for those who wish to improve language skills
The Porch  56	a sever lack of affordable housing, an extremely expensive private rented sector and further cuts on the way.  The Private rented sector being dominated by wealthy tenants therefore excluding the less well off.	Our experience of working with the city council has always been a very positive one. At The Porch we seek to support those who are homeless into accommodation and The council has always supported us in our efforts.	HOUSING  I think that the council should turn to its colleagues and partners to help lift the burden. There is only so much a council can do, if there is still a need then others should share the responsibility	Offer incentives to big institutions who choose to let property at the Market rate. Maybe a tax, a tax concession something like that. There is only so much that the council can provide and so in times like this they should be looking to distribute the burden.
HealthWatch Oxfordshire	<i>See separate letter. The following documents were also included:</i> <a href="#">Improving Hospital Admission and Discharge for People who are Homeless Standards for Commissioners and Service Providers</a>			
My Life My Choice	The submission comes in the form of a short film featuring people with learning disabilities highlighting the stigma and disadvantage they sometimes face. Here is a link to view the film <a href="https://vimeo.com/112900434">https://vimeo.com/112900434</a>			
Oxfordshire County Council	Oxfordshire County Council work really hard, together with the City Council, in partnership, to combat inequality in the city. We put a lot of effort into making sure that our work is evidence based and focused on need. To this end we use the <a href="#">JSNA</a> as a basis for our decision making. The JSNA data set is refreshed, on an on-going basis, and the annual report will be presented to the March meeting of the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. In the meanwhile you can see the most up to date version here. In addition you can find the equalities briefing, prepared to assist managers in considering equalities issues when redesigning services, <a href="#">here</a> . You can also access our Service and Community Impact Assessments ( <a href="#">SCIA's</a> ) covering our main budget proposals.			



**Responses not from organisations**

Question: 1 What local factors contribute to social and economic inequality in Oxford? (max 2000 characters)	Question: 2 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Oxford City Council works well with partners to combat inequality.	Question: 3 Thinking about inequality in Oxford, are there current or emerging areas of unmet need or gaps...	Question: 4 What more could the City Council reasonably do to combat inequality? (max 2000 characters)
<p>Poverty, lack of housing, extreme differences in educational attainment.....</p> <p align="center">57</p>	<p>We don't work well enough with the County Council, especially on schools.</p> <p>We need to exercise even more influence over the NHS.</p>	<p>Great differences in life expectancy.</p> <p>Educational attainment</p> <p>Housing.</p>	<p>Build more homes and get others to do so, e.g. enforce 50% affordable housing from developers.</p> <p>Work better with the County and the NHS/OCCG.</p> <p>Do much more effective signposting, e.g. ALL our staff need to know how to direct residents to services and how to alert services to people in need.</p> <p>Improve the operation of our CaN Dept.</p> <p>Our tenancy support officers should actually SUPPORT and not just concentrate on reducing rent defaulting.</p> <p>Campaign for a change in the council tax bands -- and against welfare benefits delays and over-harsh sanctions etc.</p>
<p>Exorbitant prices, rents and travel costs, and many people earn a wage that is well below a locally specific living wage. Oxford is my home and I feel that I'm being pushed out because of rent and house prices, in addition to poor quality properties. Budget squeezing and tightening belts due to the national governments austerity programme obviously exacerbate the widening chasm between the two poles of the socio-economic spectrum.</p>	<p>But I feel that the local council don't have enough resources to act on inequality even if it wanted to</p>		<p>commit to a regional living wage, restrain increasing rent prices and build more social housing. Lobby west minister against austerity, which makes no logical sense in periods of recession and small growth. AND SCRAP THE BEDROOM TAX!!!</p>
<p>A major factor would be the housing market, both the high price and poor quality are issues. I know many people who grew up in Oxford and feel priced out of their hometown, these are often people with degrees and decent jobs. I feel the city is in danger of becoming a mini London in this</p>		<p>The city suffers from the large scale cuts to public services caused by the governments free market centric economic agenda.</p>	<p>Act to regulate the housing market and build more good quality social housing rather than paying housing benefit directly to private landlords.</p>

regard as more areas become gentrified pushing ordinary working people to the outskirts.			
Lack of interim opportunities for recovery from illness/ ESA/ start work.		There are very few day services for chronically mentally ill people. We just want a place to get together for a cuppa and a bite of lunch. People make friends for life, build independent support networks, just get through a difficult day. Surprisingly cheap, so effective. It helps people create social solutions that endure beyond statutory service provision.	Restore some of the middle ground that has been destroyed through funding cuts, in particular childcare services and learning opportunities.
Unaffordable housing			Increase availability of affordable housing. Not only for those on the lowest incomes, but also those on middle incomes, as they too cannot afford to live in the city.
If you are poor you do not need to be deprived by the action of the Council taking your easily accessible leisure centre away. This applies to Rose Hill  58	The amazing increase in population in the Cowley area and I suspect elsewhere, will have produced increased overcrowding. These are the very people who need to have easy access to leisure facilities yet the Council has decided to take the existing facilities away! Certainly this will increase inequality.	Over crowding increasing	Not sure - but it would help to keep Temple Cowley Pools and Gym
Unemployment, low wages, poor housing conditions in some area		More teaching assistants in schools, more social housing, encourage businesses to offer more apprenticeships	Block unnecessary redevelopment, especially where it forces the elderly to move.
Unemployment, homelessness. low wages			
	The University has some of the country's most notable thinkers in the sphere of inequality. Most of these academics live within the city (Danny Dorling is in Marston for heaven's sake!), making them relatively easy to engage with and liable to want to engage in efforts to improve their locality. Moreover, academics are always looking for ways to apply their theories	Housing. Improve the availability of affordable housing. Come up with innovative ways to restrain the increase in house prices. Rethink the punitive policies toward people who live on the city's waterways.  Education. I don't have kids and don't have experience of studying in Oxford, so can't comment on these. But, what does the council have against users of the city's public library? No toilets?	Much more public engagement. Please recognise that even phrases like 'inequalities' exclude people from the discussion because while these terms are familiar to Guardian readers and may convey a meaning to people already engaged in issues related to 'inequalities', they are far from vernacular. Try expressing what you mean, and try to make this comprehensible and inclusive to everyone. It might clear up some of your own thinking around these issues too, since it seems to me that what the city council could and should be interested in is not 'inequality' (partly because

59	to the 'real world'. Has the city council made any effort to work with academics whose area of interest is inequality?	<p>REALLY? Spare me the excuses, find a solution, it's not that difficult. Public libraries still represent a gift to our future – help people use it by giving them some basic facilities.</p> <p>Transport. Rethink. Make things better for people who don't own cars. Improve the facilities for cyclists.</p> <p>Social exclusion. People with disabilities still have a hard time in Oxford – try taking a wheelchair into Christ Church meadow, or along the towpath on the opposite side of the river. Also, Oxford has a huge problem with homelessness and I'm not at all convinced that recent posters telling people not to give money to people on the streets did anything to improve this issue, or to improve people's understanding of it.</p> <p>Health. The work has not even begun in Oxford.</p>	<p>much of the determinants of this are utterly beyond the council's control, also because I doubt very much that you will be considering doing anything so bold as to challenge those people who enjoy the benefits of being at the upper end of the inequality), but rather something more like 'how to improve the experience of living in Oxford for people on lower incomes'. Once you have the subject for consideration clear you could try taking it out into forums where you might be able to discuss it with some of the people whom (I assume) you are hoping to benefit. I am fairly confident that these forums will not include the consultation pages of the Oxford City Council website.</p>
High rents and house prices; low income; inadequate access to health and fitness facilities; limited education and job opportunities		Temple Cowley - now deprived of swimming and fitness facilities with the closure of Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre. The new Leys pool is less accessible for all residents of Cowley, Lye Valley, Cowley Marsh and similar areas.	Re-open Temple Cowley Pools to allow residents of all ages and abilities to resume swimming to improve their health and fitness.
Lack of powers or will (?) to introduce more progressive council tax to redistribute wealth in Oxford (massive wealth in the city); lack of council owned affordable housing; growth policy driven by profit motive of big organisations rather than social need (unemployment in Oxford is low and high tech jobs don't necessarily benefit local people) which draw in more people from outside resulting in increasing pressure on house prices so local people are pushed further and further out ; greed driven developments which fail to provide	I think OCC tries hard in many ways eg service delivery, living wage, partnership work at local level - but is constrained by outdated approach to growth, lack of local powers to make changes, structural problems and national policy	Affordable housing is the major need. Building council housing that is not sold to private individuals would be a much more efficient way of meeting housing need then endless housing developments of luxury properties to serve the needs of rich knowledge elite with minor provision for affordable housing.	To answer that question I would need to know what powers OCC has that it could use. A consultation like this should provide relevant information, as well, so we can provide a properly informed response What i can say that inequality is a major issue in Oxford and is recognised widely (including by the IMF) as a constraint on growth

<p>adequate social housing and attract more people making it more and more unaffordable for local people; divided social networks; major institutions employees do not reflect social and ethnic mix of city</p>			
<p>1.Oxford's geographical situation:  a. proximity to London, which results in large numbers of commuters many of whom have high (London) incomes, which pushes up house prices and creates exclusive social ghettos (North Oxford, Jericho, Boar's Hill).  b. position on a flood plain, which restricts available residential land (the problem is becoming worse with man-made climate change leading to increased flood events).  2. A strong low-wage economy in the city centre because of the Oxford colleges.  3. Related to 2, a lack of other unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in Oxford, esp. in the relatively limited presence of traditional industry.  4. Related to 1a, highly variable quality in primary and secondary provision.  Personally, having recently visited five primary schools in East and South Oxford, I was angered and depressed by how very poor Rose Hill primary was by comparison with the others.</p>	<p>I'm not qualified to comment on this.</p>	<p>Given how much service provision must have changed in the last year or so, with all the funding cuts, I don't feel qualified to comment on this. I'm glad we have good Children's Centres around the city; I think that more can always be done in early years provision and intervention, in order to prevent the problems we know result in later life if children's welfare and education is not addressed. Given governmental attacks on the poor and the disabled, there are bound to be problems of unmet need and gaps in provision for these groups, to which a holistic approach should be taken.</p>	<p>As above, work on ante-natal and early years guidance and support is surely essential.</p>
<p>Landlords privately renting to University students are an absolute abomination to the community. Let these students be housed in university accommodation and allow locals decent affordable rentals and the ability to get on the housing ladder. It is also shaming to Oxford, of all places, that the state school system is so poor. Bring back grammar schools, bring back decent standards of education and schools' ability to adequately and daringly discipline students and parents who bring down the standards for all students. Poor education contributes enormously to inequality.</p>	<p>I have little evidence to support my view burt suspect, as in most things, large amounts of money are wasted on publicity, management - and not spent at the grass roots level where it is most needed.</p>	<p>Yes. Health, Education, Housing - it's an embarrassment to Oxford that our standards compare so poorly to elsewhere.</p>	<p>Stop allowing landlords to take up the vast majority of available housing and allowing these people to become rich by downgrading the areas their houses are in. The housing is usually scruffy, locals have to put up with noisy, irresponsible students and it is impossible for young working people to get on the housing ladder. Also, Stop overloading the Council's employment sector with overpaid and inefficient managers</p>

<p>Limited job opportunities which pay a living wage. The high cost and low availability of housing. The punitive effect of national government budget restrictions on local councils.</p>		<p>Affordable housing.</p>	<p>Take all possible steps to maintain public provision of youth services, libraries, pools and sports centres. Defend the public realm from mall developments which offer excessive space to income generating commercial activity.</p>
<p>Access to decent affordable housing and good schools.</p>	<p>Oxford City Council appears to be more motivated by profit than by protecting the interests of residents. The universities are allowed to buy up and build accomodation. They have access to a variety of sports and leisure centres while some of ours are being closed.</p>	<p>Public transport is extremely expensive in Oxford, this restricts the movement of those that cannot afford a car although driving in Oxford is such a nightmare these days. Focusing on efficient and effective local transport would really open up possibilities esp in satelite areas such as Barton and Greater Leys. Connections to local towns such as Abingdon should be improved.</p>	<p>Primarily by building affordable housing, introducing fair rents policy and penalising those who buy properties and can afford to leave them empty.</p>
<p>Inadequate, affordable housing. High student population contributing to affordable housing shortage. High cost of living - comparable to London. Too many zero-hours and short-term contracts. Failure of employers to implement a Living Wage. Sub-contracting by organisations, including the local hospitals, to agencies, that pay low hourly rates, and sack people without the right of appeal. Insufficient resources allocated to people with mental health problems. Poor health outcomes for families on low incomes. Closure of family centres. Lack of investment in community centres.</p>	<p>Where would evidence of this collaboration be found?</p>	<p>See above</p>	<p>Moratorium on new student accommodation. Limit HMOs. Invest in more affordable housing. Offer incentives to employers to pay Living Wage. Restore area parliaments to allow greater local involvement. Encourage more employers to recruit people with mental health problems and disabilities. Refuse to comply with Austerity agenda of present government!</p>
<p>Poor housing - mostly in the PRS, with high rents and some appallingly low standards.  Low education attainment, with the added disadvantage of poor careers advice for young people, meaning school leavers often do not have the skills businesses look for.  Low esteem - particularly where the levels</p>	<p>The scale of Inequality is not fully identified. More information needs to be sifted through a literature review.</p>	<p>Asylum seekers is an area of unmet need - as there is a prohibition on public funding of needs.</p>	<p>Overcome silos and joined up thinking is where I'd like to start. But listening to service users is vital in identifying gaps.</p>

<p>of multiple deprivations grind down confidence through the despondency rejection causes.</p> <p>Fragmented communities and social isolation, with low or poorly established soft networks.</p>			
<p>Extremely rich people are starting to buy houses in Oxford that they may regard largely as investments. Even if they are seldom here, their large houses remind people of them. The social cohesion that used to exist because almost everyone attended their local church has largely been lost and there is no adequate substitute [I am not a regular church-goer myself]. People do not know many of their neighbours.</p>		<p>I am not well enough informed to give a useful answer.</p>	<p>I am not convinced that it is the City Council's job to combat inequality. It should ensure that the same services are available to all who need them and not go beyond that.</p>
<p>Affordability of housing, both rented and bought. Educational inequality, in particular of outcomes. Skill/employability factors.</p> <p>62</p>		<p>Service provision does not seem an adequate response - inequality in Oxford is growing deeper than ever. A range of fundamental issues are unlikely to be handled in the short term, but drastic increases in the number of houses would be a start, as would policies that would cut the costs of that housing, whether it is rent or mortgages. Wealth taxes and land value taxes are probably beyond the immediate scope of the City Council, but would help. Addressing the range of educational outcomes across the city's state and private schools should be a priority; they are an obscenity.</p>	
<p>The cost of belonging to a sports centre, parking in Oxford, bus fares.</p>		<p>Disabled access to some shops and restaurants</p>	<p>I don't know</p>

<p>Income, where you live (for example North Oxford vs. Wood Farm, where I live), what local schools are available (state and private), state of employment or unemployment, colour of skin/race and ethnic background, whether or not you have a disability etc. ( Having said that, the council should be commended for maintaining the green spaces in Wood Farm -- they do an excellent job in cutting grass, trimming hedges, etc. -- and this contributes to the sense of pride of the people who live here).</p>	<p>I think given its limited resources, OCC works reasonably well, but it could do more.</p>	<p>Perhaps more support for women and children from other countries, for whom English is not a first language. More awareness of the needs of disabled people. Is there a Council subcommittee on which disabled people sit and can represent the views of that very diverse community?</p>	<p>I'm afraid I don't have any concrete ideas, but I would like to see children whose first language is not English receive more personal tuition in schools, more programmes aimed at teenagers who at present are at risk of getting into trouble because they just hang around with no purpose.</p>
<p>Government austerity cuts to services. Also concerned at inability of young people to stay in education - both further and higher.</p>	<p>City council tries its best in difficult circumstances and has the right priorities in focusing on the poorest areas.</p>	<p>Concerned about elderly isolation, given the paucity of free centres for the elderly to attend.</p>	<p>This is difficult. We need more revenue to develop projects for young people and also the elderly. Concerned what 5 more years of austerity would do.</p>
<p>Oxford had the worst performing Keystage 1 schools in the country, and has already taken action - see below.</p>	<p>Local schools are key to combatting inequality, and the city has made a good start that must be built on.</p>	<p>A massive, current unmet need for increasing literacy hours for Keystage 1 pupils up to 20 hours weekly for those that need it, which I got in 1958.</p>	<p>Read and understand the following and act accordingly. Oxford City Council recently took action to improve literacy in Oxfor's infant schools, even though schools are a County responsibility. This action can be improved enormously if the reasons for failure are properly understood.</p> <p>The reasons for literacy failure are the loss of teaching time due to the introduction of 'small set' or 'ability set' teaching methods that divide classes, but more importantly divide and lose teaching time actually received by pupils.</p> <p>If this situation is confronted directly and successfully, not only will inequality be dealt with at source in the City, but can also be used to inform the rest of the country and the world - Oxford has hosted several Global Literacy Summits in recent years to address the recognised global literacy crisis. If the hours are returned then those who have no home education ethos can also be taught very well - as I was.</p> <p>Teaching by multiple sets in a single classroom</p>

plainly reduces teaching vastly, compared to whole class teaching. In private schools they maintain the hours to make sets work. The state system has never done that.

PARAMETERS, VARIABLES AND COMPARATORS. THE PARAMETERS. (THE VARIABLES ARE MISSING, AND CAN BE SUPPLIED BY INFANT SCHOOLS).

1. Teaching week hours = around 21.
2. Weekly time allotted for literacy = ?
3. Sets per LITERACY class = ? (my son had 5 in 1994, thus losing 80 percent minimum teaching time compared to me in 1958).
4. Pupil literacy teaching hours received = literacy time divided by sets. ? Obtaining the above from schools will give the following info  
—
5. Time wasted per pupil due to number of sets = THIS IS THE PROBLEM.

The point is that from 80 to 95 percent of infant literacy teaching has been lost to pupils since so called 'Ability Sets' or small group teaching was introduced in the 1960's.

The 'time wasted' was once learning time until classes were divided into small sets.

THREE COMPARATORS.

1. My infant school in 1958-59 gave 20 hours weekly for literacy. Giving approx 1,500 between ages 5 and 7, in whole class teaching.
2. Statutory Law for Infant Literacy Hours. The bare minimum used to be 5 hours weekly, which obviously would be for the top achievers. Lower achievers would get more and lowest 20 hours, what I got. Statutory Law was removed by New



Labour in 2009.

3. The 'Oxford Experiment' which shows how efficiently I and millions were taught in the 1950's - the 'Oxford experiment' method does not waste time teaching sets independently of each other if they can benefit by being included. Being 'included' can increase teaching time by 500 to 600 percent without increasing the school day.

link -

[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10768444.Kick\\_starting\\_children\\_s\\_enthusiasm\\_for\\_learning/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10768444.Kick_starting_children_s_enthusiasm_for_learning/)

DO THE EXERCISE.

Whatever variables are supplied from infant schools, it will be very easy to see that 'time received for literacy' by pupils aged 5 to 7 will fall far far short of the time indicated in the 'comparators'.

Note - Statutory Law 5 hours weekly and 'Oxford Experiment' 45 minutes daily are both inadequate amounts of time for most pupils.

If anything is unclear or you need more information please contact me. The Oxford Mail has printed several of my letters concerning literacy, search for S.NICHOLSON OXFORD LITERACY within Oxford Mail website. Please publish as wide as possible. Thank you.

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Oxford City Council Inequality Scrutiny Panel  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldate's  
Oxford  
OX1 1BX

30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Oxford City Council Inequality Scrutiny Panel,

This submission to your current consultation is from the board of Healthwatch Oxfordshire, one of over 140 local Healthwatch organisations across the country. Whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow, Healthwatch Oxfordshire is all about local voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local health and social care services. One of our board directors, Richard Lohman, has brought this matter to our attention and on behalf of the board I am pleased to forward his recommendations to you. I would be most grateful if the Inequality Scrutiny Panel would review this submission and assist local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers with considering the implementation of its five recommendations. This submission feels particularly timely due to the recent county council budget cuts agreed for homeless services.

I note from the record of your December meeting that the current commissioning model and consequent delivery of the 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) service prioritises the visibility of homeless people over their needs and we are concerned that this might be having a negative impact on the appropriate discharge of people experiencing homelessness from hospital. The board is aware of the excellent work carried out by the NSNO staff on the ground in the city however there is concern that they could be constrained in their efforts by the priority dictated by the current policy, as could many dedicated local hospital NHS staff. There is concern that maintaining this priority of visibility over need together with the current model of 'strict verification' is causing both inappropriate discharge and delays in discharge as well as unnecessary re-admission to hospital of people experiencing homelessness. We understand that the 'best practice' that No Second Night Out is quoted as stemming from is not compatible with Oxford or the rest of the county. This is because it stems from a pilot in London which has significant differences between its health, housing and social care systems and those of Oxford and Oxfordshire.

**Recommendation one:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that the current NSNO policy priority is changed to one of need over visibility and the verification process is amended

to enable speedier hospital discharge and ease of hostel access for the most needy homeless cases.

**Recommendation two:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that a number of bed spaces within each of the city's hostels is allocated for the specific discharge from hospital of the most needy people experiencing homelessness.

Both these recommendations will require further co-operative work with the Oxford University Hospitals Trust as they will need to update their electronic admissions process so that more information is gathered than at present. We understand that the electronic admissions system currently only registers homeless people as being NFA, rather than as recommended within current good practice guidelines i.e. if sofa surfing then at which address and if rough sleeping then in which location. These guidelines are attached and have previously been provided to each of the OUHT, OCCG, the County Council Health and Wellbeing Board and to Stuart Bell, the chief executive of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

The board is also concerned that the current commissioning model and delivery of the 'No Second Night Out' service appears to create inequality of access to Local Authority assessment of people presenting as homeless. The consequence of this appears to be that people experiencing homelessness are being hindered in their right to a written decision from the local authority on their application as a person experiencing homelessness.

**Recommendation three:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel bring this matter to the attention of the local authority so that they may undertake a review and seek the views of homelessness stakeholders to enable a more rights based approach to be adopted.

It has also come to the board's attention that despite the severe lack of hostel bed space availability people sleeping rough are being forcefully evicted from their camps.

**Recommendation four:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel consider strongly suggesting that this practice is stopped until bed spaces are available within the current hostel stock.

**Recommendation five:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that a county wide discharge policy for people experiencing homelessness can be adopted as per best practice guidelines.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire looks forward to the Inequality Scrutiny Panel's review of this submission and if the Panel requires any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact its office at the address above.

Yours faithfully

Jean Nunn-Price



Chair  
Healthwatch Oxfordshire Board of Directors

## Appendix 6 - Overview of Oxford City Council's contribution to combatting inequality

Work Area & Lead Service (Officer)	Description	Identified gaps / opportunities <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
<b>Meeting Housing Needs</b>		
<p><b>Increasing the supply of affordable housing</b></p> <p>Housing and Property (Dave Scholes)</p> <p>69</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of new social housing at Barton and elsewhere.</li> <li>• Policy of 50% affordable housing in new developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting ethical or institutional investors into the city to rent quality accommodation at affordable rates.</li> <li>• Explore different models of housing that are more versatile and affordable.</li> <li>• Further consideration of factors around inequality and public health in the planning and development of sites.</li> <li>• Increasing the variety of housing within new street scenes.</li> <li>• Review balance of dwellings policy.</li> <li>• Push for a review of the Green Belt surrounding Oxford.</li> <li>• Understand the implications of the new governments housing policies such as the extension of Right to Buy to housing association properties.</li> <li>• Push for new build key worker housing.</li> <li>• Ask the University of Oxford to provide housing for more academics.</li> <li>• <i>Explore how the City Council can become a more agile operator in the housing market to ensure it secures best value for new property acquisitions (agreed in part).</i></li> <li>• <i>Pursue 'real asset lettings' at a pace.</i></li> <li>• <i>Enforce 50% affordable housing from developers.</i></li> <li>• <i>Offer incentives to big institutions that choose to let property at affordable prices.</i></li> <li>• <i>House students in student accommodation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Moratorium on new student accommodation.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Increasing occupancy</b></p> <p>Housing and Property (Bill Graves)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives offered to tenants to 'downsize' (Removal and Expenses Scheme).</li> <li>• Mutual exchange scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better exploit the benefits of Homeshare schemes.</li> <li>• Assist groups of older people in downsizing collectively.</li> <li>• <i>Research to understand the future requirements of people at the younger end of the 'Older Persons' category, so that the City Council can plan to best meet their future needs.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> (Call for evidence responses are shaded)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prioritising the creation of new social housing for single older people if the review provides evidence that this could reduce under-occupancy or meet the current or future requirements of older tenants.</i></li> <li>• <i>Promote the National Home Swap scheme.</i></li> <li>• Penalise those who buy properties and can afford to leave them empty.</li> </ul>
<b>Homelessness interventions</b>  Housing and Property (Dave Scholes)  70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting options in cases of statutory homelessness. Around half of the new requests received come from new or emerging households. Increasingly, people have to be placed outside of Oxfordshire.</li> <li>• Tenancy sustainment activities, working with more difficult groups such as vulnerable people and those with anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Funding to agencies that support rough sleepers. This includes working to improve people’s soft skills and CV writing, prior to volunteering and eventually paid work.</li> <li>• Part-funding the provision of debt solutions.</li> <li>• Homelessness Strategy: No second night out (NSNO), accommodation procurement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring County Council cuts to the Adult Homelessness Pathway and intervening to get the best results from any changes.</li> <li>• Strengthen support for entrenched rough sleepers.</li> <li>• Building better links with universities and business to get more volunteer help with programmes such as coaching and mentoring to help vulnerable people into work.</li> <li>• Additional complex needs support.</li> <li>• Assist in changing the current NSNO policy priority to one of need over visibility and the verification process to enable speedier hospital discharge and ease of hostel access.</li> <li>• Assist in ensuring that a number of hostel bed spaces are allocated for the specific discharge from hospital of the most needy people experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Review NSNO and seek the views of homeless stakeholders to enable a more rights based approach to be adopted.</li> <li>• The practice of forcefully evicting camps of rough sleepers is stopped until hostel bed spaces are available.</li> <li>• Assist in bringing about a county wide discharge policy for people experiencing homelessness as per best practice guidelines.</li> </ul>
<b>Landlord Services</b>  Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property adaptations</li> <li>• Garden Scheme</li> <li>• Concessions for blue badge holders on garage rental</li> <li>• Major projects such as Tower Blocks</li> </ul>	

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> (Call for evidence responses are shaded)
<b>Housing standards (Council housing stock)</b>  Housing and Property (Martin Shaw)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising the standards of our housing stock with the adoption and delivery of an Oxford Standard which is higher than the Decent Homes standard.</li> </ul>	
<b>Housing standards (private rented sector)</b>  Environmental Development (Ian Wright)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HMO licencing (non-mandatory).</li> <li>The development of a Private Rented Sector Strategy to improve standards in this sector.</li> <li>Project tackling unlawful dwellings (Beds in Sheds).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider viability of rent controls.</li> <li>Enhanced enforcement of HMO scheme to single household properties.</li> <li>Extend discretionary licensing where possible.</li> <li>Promote accreditation of PRS landlords.</li> <li><i>Extend funding for Beds in Sheds beyond September 2015 (agreed).</i></li> <li>Limit the number of HMOs.</li> </ul>
<b>Estates regeneration</b>  City Development (Fiona Piercy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great Estates Programme</li> <li>Blackbird Leys regeneration programme</li> <li>Tower Block Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Block unnecessarily developments that force the elderly to move.</li> </ul>
<b>Work on reducing Fuel Poverty</b>  Environmental Development (Joe Carr/ Debbie Haynes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed to post for energy/fuel poverty strategy.</li> <li>Establishing energy targets for property on carbon reduction, energy efficiency.</li> <li>Investing to improve thermal efficiency in the Council's housing stock.</li> <li>Free energy audit for every tenant.</li> <li>Development of an Energy and Water Strategy.</li> <li>Funding the Affordable Warmth Network free helpline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closer working with County Trading Standards. We could refer cases to them or ask if they'll give us powers to enforce.</li> <li>Having a Fuel Poverty calculator on our website for the public to use – if they are in fuel poverty they can contact us.</li> <li><i>Tenant-facing Direct Services staff encouraged to offer appropriate advice on the use of free electricity (agreed).</i></li> </ul>
<b>Planning new developments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Barton Park development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design in factors of inequality and public health into new developments.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating Opportunities</b>		
<b>Youth Ambition Strategy</b>	The strategy focuses on 15-21 year olds, and our approach is to engage young people in positive activities and by doing so help them to broaden their perception of their own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the feasibility of recruiting a women and girls participation officer to increase female</li> </ul>





Work Area & Lead Service (Officer)	Description	Identified gaps / opportunities <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
	<p>develop their skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Voice – developing Area Youth Action Teams in our regeneration areas supporting young people to identify projects they want to carry out to improve their community and more actively engage with Council processes, supporting us to develop services that genuinely meet their needs. Young people from vulnerable groups now sit on the Youth Ambition Grant Panel, the Positive Futures Holiday Fund and the Youth Partnership Board and are actively engaged in the development, delivery and review of projects and services.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Educational Attainment</b> Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KRM Programme of work to raise attainment in primary schools in Oxford City</li> <li>Leadership Programme for schools.</li> <li>Pilot co-production project with two secondary schools in East Oxford around parental engagement and homework.</li> <li>Shared equity loan scheme for head teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend shared equity loan scheme to more teachers.</li> <li>A new grant programme to which head teachers can apply to for funding for schemes to boost attainment.</li> <li>Support for teachers in accessing private rented accommodation.</li> <li>Promote free school meals registration for year 1 and 2 pupils to ensure schools receive the Pupil Premium funding they are entitled to.</li> <li><i>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 (agreed).</i></li> <li>Encourage schools to ensure families eligible for free school meals register their children, and support holiday meal initiatives.</li> <li>Funds for education should continue and be targeted at the most disadvantaged areas.</li> <li>Encourage schools to use the Pupil Premium.</li> <li>More teaching assistants in schools.</li> <li>Improve facilities at public libraries (e.g. toilets).</li> <li>Bring back grammar schools, decent standards and schools ability to discipline children and parents who bring</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> (Call for evidence responses are shaded)
		<p>down that standards for all students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase literacy hours for Keystage 1 pupils up to 20 hours weekly for those that need it.</li> <li>• Abolish 'ability sets' / small group teaching.</li> <li>• Children whose first language is not English should receive more personal tuition in schools.</li> <li>• More programmes aimed at teenagers who at present are at risk of getting into trouble.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business in the Community</b></p> <p>Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing Education/Business Links to schools, including mentoring, placements and other support. Over 30 City Council staff volunteered as mentors.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Employment and Skills</b></p> <p>Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson, Neil)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to Employment &amp; Skills Board, City Deal and European Structural Investment Funding.</li> <li>• Programme of work to increase skills and employability opportunities for less advantaged individuals.</li> <li>• Particular focus on large developments including Barton, Westgate and Northern Gateway.</li> <li>• Development of Employment and Skills plans with key stakeholders including developers to drive agenda forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to improve and influence the provision of targeted careers advice in schools and intervene earlier (years 7-8). No replacement for the Connexions service.</li> <li>• Scale up interventions that extend the benefits and opportunities of development to the whole city (see apprenticeships).</li> <li>• Further use of social clauses to create more and better opportunities for young people living in areas of deprivation. Clarity required as to how the Council will ensure that developers deliver social clauses.</li> <li>• Funding to extend Employment and Skills Programme beyond May 2015.</li> <li>• Encourage academies to remove barriers at age 16.</li> <li>• Call on employers to end exploitative employment practices.</li> <li>• Encourage employers to advertise all local job opportunities as open to part time and flexible working in the absence of convincing reasons against.</li> <li>• Lack of interim opportunities for recovery from illness/ESA/start work.</li> <li>• A lack of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in Oxford.</li> <li>• Encourage more employers to recruit people with mental</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> (Call for evidence responses are shaded)
		health problems and disabilities.
<b>Apprenticeships</b>  Human resources (Jarlath Brine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted recruitment of apprentice cohorts to OX1-OX4 postcodes and underrepresented groups.</li> <li>Equalities/ Apprentices Officer member of Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Group.</li> <li>25 Apprentices employed directly by the City Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the creation of sustainable OX1-OX4 apprenticeships is built into all major procurement contracts (e.g. Barton/ Westgate/ Northern Gateway)</li> <li>Apprentice webpage.</li> <li><i>Reinstate £50k from 2015/16 or a sufficient amount to fund no fewer than 25 apprentices in future cohorts (not agreed).</i></li> <li><i>We recommend that the City Council seeks to increase apprentice pay in the next budget round (not agreed).</i></li> </ul>
<b>Job clubs</b>  Neighbourhood Services (Angela Cristofoli)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grants provided to job clubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to identify a sustainable funding stream. Currently proposals are being developed for an ESF bid but the future is uncertain.</li> <li>More interventions to help NEETS as many need mentors and job clubs (esp. in Lye Valley where there are 160 NEETS).</li> </ul>
<b>City Council Employment practices</b>  Human resources (Jarlath Brine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Ticks accreditation &amp; annual audits; facilitate reasonable adjustments for job applicants declaring a disability.</li> <li>Stonewall Diversity Champion.</li> <li>Diversity awareness workshops &amp; EqIAs for CEB reports.</li> <li>Contribution of equalities analysis for annual and small grants application process analysis recommendations.</li> <li>Lead on Youth Careers Fest for the Council and other support for Job Fairs, e.g. assisted Crisis with an employment event.</li> <li>Supported Community Association volunteers with HR advice.</li> <li>Champion a diverse workforce and lead on the Equalities Action Plan (contained within the Annual Workplace Equalities Report).</li> <li>Co-ordinate work experience &amp; undergraduate placements across services with a focus on students living/ studying in Oxford.</li> <li>Promote equality, diversity &amp; inclusion internally for staff through training support around the behavioural framework, career development/ interview coaching, and a suite of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants could be better targeted.</li> <li>Genuinely interactive and easy to access recruitment webpages with simple but impactful guidance, e.g. this is what a great application looks like.</li> <li>Flexible/ progressive recruitment, e.g. accepting CVs, more widespread use of assessment centres/ stakeholder panels/ team involvement rather than the historic one interview approach before appointment.</li> <li>Targeted at BME and other underrepresented groups, an annual managed calendar of generic mock interview/ CV writing/ job application advice workshops &amp; drop in surgeries linked with other Council services.</li> <li>Raise salaries of the lowest paid employees at a higher rate than high paid employers to maintain the gap in cash terms.</li> <li>Consider health impact assessments.</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal development workshops.</li> <li>Support employee volunteering.</li> </ul>	
<b>Digital Inclusion</b>  Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out of wifi in public places.</li> <li>A project with the Internet Institute to enable access for young people in secondary Schools to the internet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider extending free broadband to all City Council tenants (in receipt of full benefits).</li> <li>Improve City Council website to make it more intuitive.</li> </ul>
<b>ESOL</b>  Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Externally funded programme of activities including; the development of specialist ESOL Classes, classes for those volunteering to teach/support do ESOL classes, and classes aimed at women and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An evaluation report is currently in draft form. This will propose the way forward to improve the coordination and access to ESOL classes and support for ESOL.</li> <li>Additional engagements from university and private schools in supporting students whose first language is not English.</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>  Culture Team (Ceri Gorton) 76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free cultural activities and events</li> <li>Free Heritage offer at the Museum</li> <li>Dancin' Oxford produces a range of high quality free outdoor professional dance performances in public spaces annually. Stagecoach Oxford has given the festival free bus tickets for the Barton / BBL bus routes to enable residents to access the city centre events free of charge.</li> <li>Free Baby Boogie events at Leys Family Centre, Roundabout (Barton), Northway and Donnington Doorstep.</li> <li>18 free dance workshop events in Barton, Donnington and BBL (led by professional artists from visting national dance companies to Oxford).</li> <li>Oxford City Council's Dance Development Programme includes a heavily subsidised programme entitled "Dance for Parkinson's"- run in partnership with English National Ballet. The programme also includes 3 theatre trips per year to London to see an ENB performance – this is heavily subsidised to make it affordable and accessible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Add an objective to extend cultural opportunities to excluded communities (agreed in part).</i></li> </ul>
<b>Maximising household income</b>		
<b>Council Tax Reduction scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention of a Council Tax Reduction scheme for residents on a low income.</li> </ul>	
<b>Oxford Living Wage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate and implement the Oxford Living Wage for all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve promotion of Living Wage Week.</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
Human resources (Simon Howick)  77	Council Employees & as an exemplar for other local employers to follow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look to develop an Oxford Living Wage brand/model, similar to Fair Trade or Organic.</li> <li>• Creating of a Living Wage Hub in Oxford.</li> <li>• Contact the CEO of the Living Wage Foundation to discuss opportunities to work together promoting the Oxford Living Wage.</li> <li>• Appoint a member champion for the Oxford Living Wage.</li> <li>• <i>Survey all suppliers to measure compliance with paying the Oxford Living Wage (agreed).</i></li> <li>• <i>Actively explores the merits of incentivising businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage through offering business rate discounts (agreed).</i></li> <li>• <i>Seek 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 (agreed).</i></li> <li>• <b>Commit to a regional Living Wage.</b></li> </ul>
Welfare team response to government <b>welfare changes</b>  Customer Services (Helen Bishop, Paul Wilding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to people affected by the impacts of welfare reforms, people in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payments and those in rent arrears. Many of these interventions are transformative and focused on changing lives rather than just income streams. In some instances interventions last for over 12 months. The team has successfully moved around one third of the people they work with into sustainable jobs. These include people with multiple complex needs, those who face tough barriers such as the long term unemployed, and people wouldn't be expected to find a job in a government scheme such as parents with over four children who are affected by the bedroom tax. Restore have trained staff to recognise mental health issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop a strong partnership approach so that interventions that change lives not just income streams are prioritised wherever possible.</li> <li>• Ensure all available DHP funding is used.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Inclusion</b>  Customer Services (Helen Bishop, Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Inclusion Strategy. This has been described as the process which ensures a person's incoming money is maximised, their out-goings are controlled and they can exercise informed choices through access to basic financial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Financial Inclusion work is prioritised and funded over the medium term.</li> <li>• Move towards implementing a single view of debts owed to the Council.</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> (Call for evidence responses are shaded)
Wilding)	services. The strategy sets out current and future actions divided into four categories: debt, income, housing, and skills, with both short and long term outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Credit Unions to have a wider and more effective reach.</li> <li>Ensure that address checks are carried out to ensure that wherever possible, cases do not need to be passed to bailiffs.</li> <li>Lobby for more progressive Council Tax.</li> </ul>
<b>Advice services</b> for residents facing social and financial problems  Customer Services (Helen Bishop, Paul Wilding)  78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grants provided to advice agencies for 3 years.</li> <li>One-off isolation funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau in 2014/15 generated over £1m of additional income for clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some advice agencies appear to be operating beyond their capacity.</li> <li>Strengthen advice offering for Older People, better promotion of Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit.</li> <li>CAB do not routinely record all 'secondary issues'.</li> <li>Longer term funding for debt advice in St. Aldate's Chambers and ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness.</li> <li>Continue to encourage take up of unclaimed benefits.</li> <li>Establish a directory of charities.</li> <li>The withdrawal of legal aid in particular for family law, debt, housing, employment, and welfare benefits. Increase support for advice centres.</li> <li>Certain areas of the city have no local provision.</li> <li>Increase provision of interpretation/translation services at advice centres.</li> </ul>
<b>Social inclusion / support to vulnerable groups</b>		
<b>Social Inclusion</b>  Communities and Neighbourhoods Service (Luke Nipen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Social Inclusion Fund (£60k) supports community projects that help people of all ages feel more included in their community, builds their skills and increases their sense of achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Reinstate £60k of funding beyond April 2015.</i></li> <li>Rethink punitive policies towards those who live on the city's waterways.</li> </ul>
<b>Grants to voluntary bodies</b>  Community and Neighbourhood Services (Angela Cristofoli/ Julia Tomkins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Grants are aimed at projects that do one or more of the following (£95k awarded in 2013-14):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote community activities and cohesion</li> <li>Get more people involved with the arts</li> <li>Tackle anti-social behaviour and improves community safety</li> <li>Promote and protects the natural environment and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide longer term funding to Asylum Welcome.</li> <li>Offer low cost accommodation to third sector organisations, utilising unused capacity in Community Centres.</li> <li><i>Work with OCVA to improve outreach and engagement activities with diverse community and voluntary groups, with a focus on building capacities and supporting bid-</i></li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ biodiversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tackle social inequality</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>writing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Provide a greater separation between grants allocated to smaller, localised community groups and those that seek to achieve wider community benefits (agreed in part).</i></li> </ul>
<p>The work of <b>neighbourhoods team</b></p> <p>Communities and Neighbourhoods Service (Angela Cristofoli)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community development. Engaging with diverse groups including BME and older people to help them to develop their priorities and engage in their geographical community. This involves trying to overcome negative perceptions of the City Council, which are poor in some cases. 18 month project funding provided to CAB to provide capacity for home visits to reduce unclaimed benefits.</li> <li>● Activities for older people aimed at reducing isolation e.g. Go Active programme.</li> <li>● Working with health partners in regeneration areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased presence of City Council services at Community Group meetings.</li> <li>● Promote the City Council as an employer by advertising in community papers.</li> <li>● <i>A high level review to flag up any issues of non-compliance with the Equalities Act.</i></li> <li>● Much more public engagement.</li> <li>● Restore area parliaments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community centres</b> in priority neighbourhoods</p> <p>Communities and Neighbourhoods Service (Mark Spriggs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are 19 operational community centres in Oxford, many of which are owned by Oxford City Council. The centres are managed by Community Associations made up of local workers and volunteers.</li> <li>● Delivery of new Rose Hill Community Centre</li> <li>● Reduced fees for tutors using Blackbird Leys Community Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider better utilisation of Community Centres to support the City Council's objectives.</li> <li>● Extend discounts for tutors to more community centres.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leisure</b></p> <p>Leisure, Parks &amp; Communities (Lucy Cherry)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Active women campaign</li> <li>● Free swimming for under 17s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fund marking of football pitch at Peat Moors.</li> <li>● Work with bus companies to improve access to the new BBL pool from Hollow Way.</li> <li>● Keep Temple Cowley Pools open.</li> <li>● Try to work more closely with the Pakistani community to encourage them into sport and community participation.</li> <li>● Maintain provision of youth services, libraries, pools and sports centres.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neighbourhood Management</b></p> <p>Corporate Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pilot focusing on 3 areas: Rose Hill, The Leys and Barton. Working with local members and community organisations to develop action plans to address local needs, grow community capacity and improve public services.</li> </ul>	
<p>Work on reducing <b>Food</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food Poverty Conference with Housing Associations planned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take the lead role in facilitating the network of emergency</li> </ul>

<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
<b>Poverty</b>  Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)	for May/June 2014	<p>food aid providers. Network meetings would enable providers to work more effectively and share resources and best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building – explore how the City Council could apply its experiences of capacity building in other sectors to build partnerships and remove admin from voluntary organisations providing emergency food aid.</li> <li>• Better signposting to emergency food aid providers.</li> <li>• Explore other models of addressing the issues raised by food banks, for example the community shop model, and how this works in the UK and other European countries.</li> <li>• The Council should have a food policy to address the needs of the poorest households, helping to sustain local food capacity near to where they live.</li> <li>• Activities to change attitudes towards surplus food.</li> </ul>
<b>Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults</b>  Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.</li> <li>• To promote the wellbeing of children and young people and vulnerable adults.</li> <li>• Safeguarding Section 11 Self- assessment and Action Plan.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Scrutiny Committee reviewed in April 2015:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Strengthens engagement and protocols with Housing Associations in relation to vulnerable groups that they house</i></li> <li>2. <i>Prioritises the following in the next budget round:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>Continuing to fund the Safeguarding Coordinator post,</i></li> <li>b) <i>Supporting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. <i>Ensures that feedback from frontline staff is sought more widely when monitoring the effectiveness of training and policy.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Monitors feedback from children to test the effectiveness of Safeguarding policies and plans on the ground and to identify any blockages.</i></li> <li>5. <i>Ensures that training for City Councillors includes a focus on their role as being the eyes and ears of their communities.</i></li> <li>6. <i>Raises the following with the County Council:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>The need for schools to be issued with guidance on</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>



<b>Work Area &amp; Lead Service (Officer)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified gaps / opportunities</b> <i>(Previous Scrutiny recommendations in italics)</i> <i>(Call for evidence responses are shaded)</i>
		<i>safeguarding policies, including the role of elected Councillors in safeguarding,</i> <i>b) Concern that some School Counsellors have been cut and that some pupils have to wait a long time to be able to access this provision.</i>
<b>Partnerships supporting vulnerable groups</b> and action plans  Policy and Partnerships Team (Val Johnson)  81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing Successfully Partnership</li> <li>• Stronger Communities Group</li> <li>• Vulnerable Adult Action Plan in process of development.</li> <li>• Breaking the Cycle Plan on going review of activities in place, including health inequalities, children and young people, training and employment and community engagement.</li> <li>• City Council Health and Housing Working Together Action Plan in place and reviewed 6 monthly.</li> <li>• City Council Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan</li> <li>• City Council Children and Young People Plan</li> <li>• Improving GPs' understanding of the City Council's role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No overriding strategy for inequality.</li> <li>• Major decisions/strategies assessed against impact on inequality.</li> <li>• Commission an inequality index for Oxford.</li> <li>• Ensure sufficient resourcing in partnership roles.</li> <li>• Link with OCCG review of Health Inequalities in Oxford.</li> <li>• Single point of access in the form of an assessment of needs website.</li> <li>• Support and encourage social prescribing, including by utilising the Council's own assets.</li> <li>• Work towards pooled budgeting.</li> <li>• Work with health providers to implement more pro-active health interventions in areas of deprivation.</li> <li>• There are very few day centres for chronically mentally ill people.</li> <li>• Exercise more influence over the NHS, OCCG etc.</li> <li>• Encourage better disabled access to shops/restaurants.</li> </ul>

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**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 9 July 2015**

**Report of: The Scrutiny Committee**

**Title of Report: Grant Monitoring Information for 2014/15**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on Grant Monitoring Information for 2014/15

**Key decision?** No

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Simmons

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Rowley, Executive Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

**Policy Framework:** Oxford City Council Corporate Plan primarily Strong & Active Communities

**Recommendation** of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

**We recommend that the under-spend of £21,040 is rolled forwards and spent on grants to community and voluntary organisations in 2015/16.**

## **Introduction**

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Grant Monitoring Information for 2014/15 at its public meeting on 30 June 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Mike Rowley, Ian Brooke and Julia Tomkins for presenting this report and answering questions.

## **Summary of the discussion**

2. The Committee questioned why there was an under-spend on the small grants programme and the Social Inclusion Fund amounting to £21,040, and what happens to this money. The Committee heard that

this is absorbed into a corporate pot and noted that there had been unmet demand in other parts of the Council's Community and Voluntary Organisations (CVO's) grant programme.

***Recommendation - We recommend that the under-spend of £21,040 is rolled forwards and spent on grants to community and voluntary organisations in 2015/16.***

3. Members also commented on particular line items listed in the appendices and questioned whether attendees were confident that some of these were delivering best outcomes for the money. For example, members questioned the cost of around £5,000 per homeless person assisted and whether more could be helped with a different mix of service provision. On the other hand, Members noted that some grant spending delivered exceptionally good value - for example, money spent on benefits advice delivered approximately 8x the value in additional benefits. Members heard that the project descriptions should be viewed in their full context of providing wider community benefits and officers offered to provide more information on particular projects if required.

**Executive response – to follow**

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee  
Scrutiny Officer  
Law and Governance  
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**  
**Version number: 1**

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 9 July 2015**

**Report of: The Scrutiny Committee**

**Title of Report: Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (2015)**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (2015)

**Key decision?** No

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Simmons

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Hollingsworth, Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services

**Policy Framework:** Statements of Community Involvement are part of the legislative framework within which local plan documents are prepared. In addition, the aims and commitments in the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning are consistent with the Council's recently-updated Public Engagement Policy Statement.

**Recommendations** of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

**1. We endorse the draft Statement of Community Involvement in Planning and recommend that this is amended to include references to the Planning Review Committee, Area Forums and external guidance on the use of visualisation tools.**

**2. We recommend that the City Council continues to explore new and improved ways of informing residents and community organisations of local planning issues, using both on-line and off-line communication methods. In particular, enhancements to ICT systems should be prioritised so that individuals and groups that have signed up can receive automatic notifications when specific planning applications are progressed or amended.**

**3. We recommend that the City Council explores whether there is a lower cost means of informing local residents of planning applications as an alternative to “neighbouring property notification letters”. We suggest that proposals are brought forward in the next budget round.**

## **Introduction**

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (2015) at its public meeting on 30 June 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Lyndsey Beveridge and Adrian Roche for presenting this report and answering questions.
2. The Committee had previously considered the Draft Statement of Community Involvement at its meeting in November 2014. Officers were thanked for taking the Committee’s previous comments and recommendation on board.

## **Summary of the discussion**

3. The Committee supported the Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (2015) and commended officers on the Statements tone and the way it was written.
4. The Committee noted the statutory nature of the document and the need to refrain from designing a planning toolkit whilst considering it.
5. Members noted that the Planning Review Committee and Area Forums were not mentioned in the Statement.
6. The Committee supported developers using visualisation tools to make planning applications more visual, and suggested that this should be made more explicit in the Statement, with a link to the help-sheet added. The Committee heard that this was not been covered in more detail in the main document because it was an evolving area but officers looked to keep up with best practice.

***Recommendation 1 - We endorse the draft Statement of Community Involvement in Planning and recommend that this is amended to include references to the Planning Review Committee, Area Forums and external guidance on the use of visualisation tools.***

7. The Committee asked whether resident groups were able to register an area of interest and receive auto-notifications. The Committee heard that the Council’s IT systems did not currently enable this but that it

was not technically difficult to do. Officers were looking to achieve wider involvement through methods such as the Council's app, and are exploring whether local groups could play a role in making planning documents available in paper form.

***Recommendation 2 - We recommend that the City Council continues to explore new and improved ways of informing residents and community organisations of local planning issues, using both on-line and off-line communication methods. In particular, enhancements to ICT systems should be prioritised so that individuals and groups that have signed up can receive automatic notifications when specific planning applications are progressed or amended.***

8. The Committee discussed whether, in addition to site notices, printed letters should be sent to neighbours to inform them of planning applications. Members noted that the cost of issuing notification letters for the 2,000 planning applications processed each year was 45k and that this cost had not been budgeted for. Not all the committee agreed on the need to reinstate planning notification letters but as there was considerable interest in this, lower cost approaches should be explored (for example, simply putting copies of planning notices through nearby letterboxes at the same time as they are publicly posted), and costings for this brought forward as an option for the next budget round.

***Recommendation 3 - We recommend that the City Council explores whether there is a lower cost means of informing local residents of planning applications as an alternative to "neighbouring property notification letters". We suggest that proposals are brought forward in the next budget round.***

**Executive response – to follow**

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee  
Scrutiny Officer  
Law and Governance  
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**  
**Version number: 1**

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**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 9 July 2015**

**Report of: The Finance Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)**

**Title of Report: Debt Management Policy**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Debt Management Policy

**Key decision?** No

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Simmons

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Turner

**Policy Framework:** Efficient and Effective Council

**Recommendations** of the Finance Panel to the City Executive Board:

- 1. We recommend that the City Executive Board approves the Debt Management Policy subject to a minor amendment to the timescales for recovering Miscellaneous Debts set out in the table on page 9 of the policy.**
- 2. We reaffirm recommendation 15d of the Inequality Panel about the Council moving towards having a single view of debt. It will still require considerable effort to make this a reality but we strongly endorse this direction of travel and the progress made to date, including the use of fraud detection software to identify individuals with multiple debts owed to the Council.**
- 3. We recommend that consideration is given to restructuring relevant teams and resources around a single view of debt model as this initiative progresses.**

**Introduction**

1. The Finance Panel pre-scrutinised the Debt Management Policy at its public meeting on 2 July 2015. The Committee would like to thank Nigel Kennedy and Anna Winship for presenting this item and advising the Panel.

### **Summary of the discussion**

2. The Panel endorsed the Debt Management Policy and noted that a correction is required within the 'Debt Recovery Process by Debt Type' table on page 9, where 7 days should be substituted for 10 days against Miscellaneous Debts.

***Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the City Executive Board approves the Debt Management Policy subject to a minor amendment to the timescales for recovering Miscellaneous Debts set out in the table on page 9 of the policy.***

3. The Panel heard that, on the back of fraud investigation work, the Council has invested in software that enables officers to check whether debtors owe multiple debts to the Council. The Panel strongly endorsed these moves, and noted that the Inequality Panel was also submitting a recommendation to the City Executive Board about the Council moving towards having a single view of debt. This will require further efforts in terms of people resources and possibly further investment in software, as the primary driver is still fraud prevention.

***Recommendation 2 - We reaffirm recommendation 15d of the Inequality Panel about the Council moving towards having a single view of debt. It will still require considerable effort to make this a reality but we strongly endorse this direction of travel and the progress made to date, including the use of fraud detection software to identify individuals with multiple debts owed to the Council.***

4. The Panel recognised that, as the Council's single view of debt initiative progresses, there may be a case for structuring and focusing officer resources around this model.

***Recommendation 3 - We recommend that consideration is given to restructuring relevant teams and resources around a single view of debt model as this initiative progresses.***

### **Further consideration**

5. Officers were asked to report back to the Panel with information about the numbers of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> reminder letters issued in the debt recovery process and the estimated cost of these.

6. Officers were also asked to provide more information on the levels of fees paid to the debt collection agencies contracted by the Council to recover debts on a no win no fee basis.

**Executive response – to follow**

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee  
Scrutiny Officer  
Law and Governance  
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**

**Version number: 1**

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**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 9 July 2015**

**Report of: The Finance Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)**

**Title of Report: Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 4 2014/15**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present recommendations from the Finance Panel on the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 4 2014/15

**Key decision?** No

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Simmons

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Turner

**Policy Framework:** Corporate Plan Priority – Improving value for money and service performance

**Recommendation** of the Finance Panel to the City Executive Board:

**1. Recommendation 1 - The General Fund outturn position for 2014-15 - a favourable variance of £1.808m which is mainly due to increased income - is a very good outcome and we recommend that officers are congratulated on overachieving against income targets.**

**2. We support the transfer of £1.4m to a Dry Recyclate Reserve and recommend that the City Council urgently assesses options for significantly mitigating this serious budget pressure, including exploring the possibility of building and operating a waste transfer station and changing the Council's waste collection system.**

**3. We note that there are 4 red performance indicators against Meeting Housing Needs but only 3 are explained in the Corporate Summary. We recommend that this is corrected and that fuller explanations are given for the amber risks relating to Environmental Development (section 4.3 in the Community Services Directorate).**

**4. We recommend that the City Executive Board considers:**

- a) Re-directing a relatively small portion of the under-spend towards addressing homelessness, where it could potentially go a long way;
- b) Other potential uses for part of the under-spend in improving performance against corporate targets, including investing in an additional HMO licensing officer.

**5. We recommend that the City Council continues to embed and improve the capital gateway process to further reduce capital slippage.**

## **Introduction**

1. The Finance Panel pre-scrutinised the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 4 2014/15 in order to monitor the Councils' budgetary performance, at its public meeting on 2 July 2015. The Panel would like to thank Nigel Kennedy and Anna Winship for introducing this item and providing advice.

## **Summary of the discussion**

2. The Panel noted that the favourable outturn of 1.808m was primarily a result of additional income generation and agreed that officers should be congratulated on overachieving against income targets.

***Recommendation 1 - The General Fund outturn position for 2014-15 - a favourable variance of £1.808m which is mainly due to increased income - is a very good outcome and we recommend that officers are congratulated on overachieving against income targets.***

3. The Panel noted that there is a major and pressing budget pressure due to a significant drop-off in the market value of dry recyclates. The Panel heard that the City Council moved quickly to hire a consultant once this pressure became apparent during the renegotiation of a contract that is due to end in October.
4. The Panel support using a major portion of the under-spend on relieving this budget pressure and suggest that solutions should urgently be explored, including the option of the Council building and operating its own waste transfer station. The Panel also expect that the Council's waste collection system will need to be looked at.

***Recommendation 2 - We support the transfer of £1.4m to a Dry Recyclate Reserve and recommend that the City Council urgently assesses options for significantly mitigating this serious budget pressure, including exploring the possibility of building and operating a waste transfer station and changing the Council's waste collection system.***

5. The Panel request a couple of minor improvements to the report, noting that one of the red performance indicators for Meeting Housing Need did not appear to be explained and that some explanations, particularly of the seven amber risks relating to Environmental Development, did not provide sufficient detail.

***Recommendation 3 - We note that there are 4 red performance indicators against Meeting Housing Need but only 3 are explained in the Corporate Summary. We recommend that this is corrected and that fuller explanations are given for the amber risks relating to Environmental Development (section 4.3 in the Community Services Directorate).***

6. The Panel considered other uses for the remainder of the under-spend, which has been allocated to the Oxfutures Reserve (300k) and capital financing (108k). The Panel suggest that some of this money could be redirected towards areas where it could be used to improve the Council's performance against corporate targets, including the rough sleeper count and the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) subject to agreed licensing provisions.

***Recommendation 4 - We recommend that the City Executive Board considers:***

- a) ***Re-directing a relatively small portion of the under-spend towards addressing homelessness, where it could potentially go a long way;***
  - b) ***Other potential uses for part of the under-spend in improving performance against corporate targets, including investing in an additional HMO licensing officer.***
7. The Panel noted that there was significant slippage in the Council's ambitious Capital Programme, including in the affordable homes for rent programme where it directly resulted in the Council missing a corporate performance target. The Panel heard that slippage was caused by several different factors and recognised that the rate of slippage in 2014/15 was lower than in the previous year. The Panel would like to see the further embedding of the capital gateway process to address the causes of capital slippage.

***Recommendation 5 – We recommend that the City Council continues to embed and improve the capital gateway process to further reduce capital slippage.***

#### **Further consideration**

8. The Panel suggest that the Council's Carbon and Natural Resources Management Board should look in more detail at the amber risks relating to Environmental Development.

9. The Finance Panel will monitor the Council budgetary performance for 2015-16 when it next meets on 29 October 2015.

**Executive response – to follow**

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Officer

Law and Governance

Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**

**Version number: 1**