

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT - SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD - THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2015

4. Scrutiny Committee Reports

The following Scrutiny Committee / panel reports are submitted to this meeting. Recommendations are included in the reports.

- a) Report of the Scrutiny PSPO Panel on the City Centre PSPO (Pages 3 - 12)
- b) Report of the Scrutiny Committee on Community Centre Leases (Pages 13 - 16)
- c) Report of the Scrutiny Inequality Panel - Combatting inequality: Is Oxford City Council doing all it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place? (Pages 17 - 34)
- d) Report of the Scrutiny Committee on the Financial Inclusion Strategy (Pages 35 - 38)
- e) Report of the Scrutiny Housing Panel on HMO Licensing (Pages 39 - 42)
- f) Report of the Scrutiny Housing Panel on the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock (Pages 43 - 44)

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Dee Sinclair, Board Member for Crime, Community Safety and Licensing

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan 2015-19

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the five recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Notes of the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order Scrutiny Panel, Monday 5 October 2015.

Appendix 2 – Suggested CEB response provided by the Board Member for Crime, Community Safety and Licensing.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the original City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) decision in June 2015 before the City Executive Board (CEB) agreed to defer this decision.
2. The Scrutiny Committee then established a one-off cross-party panel to pre-scrutinise the revised City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order decision

before it went back to CEB. The PSPO Panel met in public on 5 October 2015 and the notes of this meeting are included as appendix 1.

3. The Scrutiny Committee considered the findings of the PSPO Panel at its meeting on 6 October 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Bob Price, Councillor Dee Sinclair, Jeremy Thomas and Richard Adams, plus the four members of the PSPO Panel; Councillors Andrew Gant (Chair), Mary Clarkson, Sian Taylor and David Thomas, for their time and contributions.

Summary of the discussion

4. The Board Member for Crime, Community Safety and Licensing and the Environmental Protection Manager presented the report on the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), explaining that the revised order had a stronger focus on specific behavioural issues. They explained that a separate code of conduct for busking was being developed and that the focus of the PSPO was on street entertainment that caused a nuisance or obstruction.
5. The Head of Law and Governance briefed the Committee on the substantive points of his teleconference with Liberty on 6 October 2015. He said that Liberty had welcomed the Council's reconsideration of the PSPO but had specific and overarching residual concerns which they were likely to set out in a letter. If received, this letter would be put before CEB for consideration. In response to comments raised in discussion the Head of Law and Governance assured the Committee that the current draft PSPO was a permissible exercise of discretion and that the CEB report did address the issue of the application of the European Convention on Human Rights. The remaining contentious issues reflected different philosophical approaches to enforcement.
6. The Chair of the City Centre PSPO Panel referred the Committee to the notes of the Panel meeting held on 5 October 2015 (see appendix 1) and summarised the main points of the discussion and the Panel's suggested recommendations.
7. The Committee questioned why the boundaries of the PSPO included university-owned land such as the University Parks and Christchurch Meadow, and why Council resources would be used to enforce in these areas.
8. The Committee voted on a proposal to exclude section 1a, dealing with the behaviour of aggressive begging, from the PSPO. This proposal was not agreed by a majority of the Committee. The minority who opposed the inclusion of aggressive begging in the PSPO felt that criminalisation of the activity (with the threat of fines that this included) was not the best, or a proportionate, means of tackling the problem.
9. The Committee voted on a proposal to exclude section 1e from the PSPO for one year pending implementation of the code of conduct for busking and a review of noise nuisance complaints. This proposal was not agreed by a majority of the Committee.

10. The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the following comments suggested by the PSPO Panel should be referred to the City Executive Board:
1. That the Scrutiny Committee and PSPO Panel welcomed the changes to the current City Centre PSPO documentation compared to that of June 2015 as being a considerable improvement and notes that groups such as Crisis have welcomed these changes;
 2. That the Scrutiny Committee and PSPO Panel supported the inclusion of the behaviours set out in sections 1 b, c, d, f, g and h, in the City Centre PSPO.
11. The Committee also noted the following suggestions:
- that Thames Valley Police could be asked to contribute to the training of OCC enforcement officers
 - that officers should monitor the situation in another local authority which had included within its PSPO the requirement for dog walkers to carry “poo bags”
12. The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the three recommendations suggested by the PSPO Panel should be referred to the City Executive Board as recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, with the addition of a further two recommendations relating to section 1a of the draft PSPO.

Recommendation 1 - That the design and placing of signage should be considered by a cross-party group of members and that every effort should be made to remove obsolete signage across the city.

Recommendation 2 - That full consideration should be given to any further views expressed by Liberty in relation to the revised draft PSPO.

Recommendation 3 - That the City Executive Board notes that there was no consensus in the Scrutiny Committee or PSPO Panel for the inclusion at this stage of the behaviours set out in sections 1a and 1e of the draft PSPO.

Recommendation 4 - That the word “reasonably” should be inserted before the word “perceived” in section 1a of the draft PSPO.

Recommendation 5 - That the City Executive Board should clarify and define the meaning of the word “near” in section 1a of the draft PSPO to protect and assist officers enforcing the order.

Further consideration

13. The Scrutiny Committee had previously agreed to monitor the impact of the PSPO, including early intervention and enforcement actions.

Executive response

See appendix 2.

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

NOTES OF THE CITY CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER SCRUTINY PANEL

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Monday 5 October 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Clarkson, Gant (Chair), Taylor and Thomas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Price and Sinclair.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Richard J Adams (Community Services) and Jeremy Thomas (Head of Law and Governance) and Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. CITY CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)

The Service Manager for Environmental Protection updated the Panel on changes to the proposed city centre PSPO and said that it now had a stronger focus on specific behavioural issues. The PSPO now covered aggressive begging rather than persistent begging. It also made no mention of codes of conduct for busking and street entertaining or peddling.

The Head of Law and Governance advised that the previous PSPO decision had been delayed due to the fact that detailed legal opinion had been received from Liberty which warranted consideration, rather than due to the content of that opinion. Liberty had been made aware that a new proposal was coming forward and officers would be holding a teleconference with Liberty the following day.

The Panel noted that the City Council should listen to respectable organisations such as Liberty and heard that there would be time for the Board to consider any further opinion from them, before any decision was taken.

In response to a question about the PSPO covering a large area and numerous behaviours, the Panel heard that it would be one of the larger PSPOs in the country and that most PSPOs cover a single issue. The evidence test was whether a PSPO would tackle existing or likely issues. The Panel heard that it was intended to be a preventative tool that set a standard of behaviour in the city centre.

The Panel noted that signage would be important and that some signs that were still in place in the city had been made obsolete legislative changes. The Panel also noted that signage should be sensitive to its surroundings, particularly in conservation areas. The Panel heard that signage needed to be proportionate and would be placed on the boundaries of the area covered by the PSPO, and at specific sites within this area. Existing signage that would be superseded by the PSPO would be taken down.

The Panel discussed the measures relating to aggressive begging, including; the rationale and evidence base for a PSPO, the use and effectiveness of existing powers, whether a PSPO would make a positive contribution to helping people who were begging, whether begging near a cash machine was always aggressive, the perceptions of vulnerable people and those with English as a second language, and how a PSPO would work in practice.

The Panel heard that begging was strongly connected to substance abuse and that a carrot and stick approach could help officers to challenge behaviours such as aggressive begging and nudge people into support services. The Panel questioned whether this was clear in the report.

The Panel discussed whether the PSPO should cover the behaviour of aggressive begging. One member was in favour of removing this behaviour from the PSPO altogether.

The Panel then considered whether the wording of section 1a of the Order should be amended. A number of alternatives were considered but none were agreed. One member was in favour of removing the reference to begging near a cash machine. Two members were in favour of including the word 'reasonably' before the word 'perceived' and one member was in favour of changing the wording to 'no person shall beg in a manner reasonably perceived to be aggressive. For example, begging near a cash machine'.

The Panel considered the measures relating to street entertainment that causes a nuisance and questioned whether busking should be considered an anti-social behaviour, noting that groups such as the Equity trade union were opposed to this. The Panel heard that a code of conduct for busking was being developed and would be consulted on. This code of conduct would be legally disassociated from the PSPO. The focus of the PSPO was on behaviours that cause a nuisance or obstruction.

The Panel questioned whether the use and effectiveness of existing powers. The Panel heard that the City Council did not use Community Protection Notices, which required a body of evidence that the conduct in question was of a persistent and continuing nature. There had been one 28 day seizure of property under the Environmental Protection Act.

The Panel questioned whether the evidence justified the need for additional powers and heard that 501 noise complaints had been received and investigated over the last 10 years. The Service Manager for Environmental Protection advised that the PSPO would provide a useful sanction and that he would be

satisfied if officers did not need to use it to fine people who, without reasonable excuse, failed to comply with the requirements of this order. Officers would be speaking with people in the city centre to raise awareness of the PSPO and were also developing a daily assessment that would provide a 'health-check' of the city centre.

The Panel considered a proposal that noise nuisance complaints should be closely monitored for one year before a decision was taken on whether to include section 1e in the PSPO. Two of the three members present for this proposal were in favour and one was against.

The Panel noted that the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to monitor the impact of the PSPO, including early intervention and enforcement actions.

The Panel considered the four recommendations agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on the previous PSPO report on 2 June 2015. The Panel noted that these recommendations had either been taken forward or were no longer relevant. A policy and procedure for officers dealing with anti-social behaviour was already in place.

The Panel agreed the following:

- To warmly welcome the changes to the PSPO documentation compared to June 2015 as being a considerable improvement and note that groups such as Crisis had welcomed these changes.
- To support the inclusion of behaviours set out in sections 1 b, c, d, f, g and h, in the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order.
- To propose that the following recommendations be put to the City Executive Board:
 1. That the design and placing of signage is considered by a cross-party group of members and that every effort is made to remove obsolete signage across the city;
 2. That full consideration is given to any further views expressed by Liberty in relation to the revised PSPO;
 3. That the City Executive Board notes that there was no consensus in the scrutiny panel for the inclusion at this stage of the behaviours set out in sections 1a and 1e of the PSPO.

Councillor Clarkson left the meeting shortly before 5pm to attend a licensing sub-committee meeting.

The meeting started at 3.44 pm and ended at 5.30 pm

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Appendix 2

Suggested CEB response to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) provided by the Board Member for Crime, Community Safety and Licensing

Recommendation	Agreed? (Y / N / In part)	Comment
1. That the design and placing of signage is considered by a cross-party group of members and that every effort is made to remove obsolete signage across the city.	Y	I welcome this recommendation and will ask officers to convene a cross-party group of members to develop appropriate signage in suitable locations, and ensure obsolete signage is removed.
2. That full consideration is given to any further views expressed by Liberty in relation to the revised draft PSPO.	Y	A letter has been received from Liberty since the scrutiny meeting. The letter will be reported to the Board.
3. That the City Executive Board notes that there was no consensus in the Scrutiny Committee or PSPO Panel for the inclusion at this stage of the behaviours set out in sections 1a and 1e of the draft PSPO.	Y	Noted.
4. That the City Executive Board inserts the word "reasonably" before the word "perceived" in section 1a of the draft PSPO.	Y	Accepted.
5. That the City Executive Board should clarify and define the meaning of the word "near" in section 1a of the draft PSPO to protect and assist officers enforcing the order.	N	Not accepted. 'Near' is a word which is easily understood, which does not require further definition. It will be a matter of fact as to whether the prohibition is engaged.

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Proposed Lease and Monitoring Arrangements for Community Centres

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Proposed Lease and Monitoring Arrangements for Community Centres decision

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons

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

Policy Framework: Asset Management Plan; Stronger Communities

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the four recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Suggested CEB response provided by the Board Member for Culture and Communities

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Proposed Lease and Monitoring Arrangements for Community Centres decision at its public meeting on 6 October 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Christine Simm and Ian Brooke for presenting this item.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Board Member for Culture and Communities presented an updated report and explained that the revised version would be submitted to CEB on 15 October 2015. The Board Member outlined the main changes in the report and said that the revisions reflected recognition by the Board of the significance of concerns raised by Community Centre Associations.
3. The Committee questioned why the proposals for lease renewal and monitoring arrangements were being presented independently of the Community Centre Strategy. The Head of Community Services explained that it had been the original intention to present the two reports in parallel but that in view of the concerns expressed by the Community Centre Associations it was felt that delaying the lease proposal report would be unreasonable. He assured the Committee that, subject to the consultation results, there would be nothing in the draft Community Centre Strategy that conflicted with the lease proposals.

Recommendation 1 - That the City Executive Board should consider deferring the decision on this report and taking it alongside the Community Centre Strategy decision, which is expected in November.

4. The Committee requested more clarity about what expectations would be placed on Community Centres, for example the need for centres to be open and accessible to the whole community, and what mechanisms would be in place to ensure that such expectations would be met. The Committee suggested that guidance should be developed in the form of a code of conduct that sets out the expectations on Community Centre Associations and the types of support that Associations can expect from the City Council. This should form part of the lease and monitoring arrangements. The Committee noted that the guidance should not be too prescriptive because the individual organisations were very different.

Recommendation 2 - That the City Council should develop a “code of conduct” that sets out the expectations on Community Centre Associations and the types of support Associations can expect from the City Council. This code of conduct should be linked to the lease and monitoring arrangements for community centres.

5. The Committee questioned the conditions around the termination of leases if a Community Centre Associations defaulted or wanted to end their lease. The Committee heard that tenants would be required to provide 6 month’s notice in order to end their lease.

Recommendation 3 - That the report should provide more detail on the standard forfeiture (termination) provisions on tenant default or insolvency.

6. The Committee questioned whether independent advice would be made available to Community Centre Associations signing new lease arrangements.

Recommendation 4 - That City Executive Board should make arrangements for independent legal advice to be available to Community Centre Associations.

7. The Scrutiny Committee also agreed that the following comments should be referred to the City Executive Board:
 1. That the Scrutiny Committee regretted the late publication of the report but welcomed the revisions presented;
 2. That the Scrutiny Committee regretted the tone and language of the report and its reliance on legal arguments which gave no recognition to the important work of the Community Centre Associations and their volunteers. The Scrutiny Committee hoped that CEB would take the opportunity presented by this report to minute their thanks to volunteers who put time and effort into managing our community centres;

Further consideration

8. The Committee had previously agreed to pre-scrutinise the Community Centre Strategy before it goes to CEB for decision.

Executive response

See appendix 1.

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List of background papers: None
Version number: 1

Appendix 1 - Suggested CEB response provided by the Board Member for Culture and Communities

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed? (Y / N / In part)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. That the City Executive Board should consider deferring the decision on this report and taking it alongside the Community Centre Strategy decision, which is expected in November.	<i>N</i>	The report reflects the contents of the strategy report which will be brought in November. There is nothing within the leases report that is inconsistent with, or at odds with, the strategy report.
2. That the City Council should develop a “code of conduct” that sets out the expectations on Community Centre Associations and the types of support Associations can expect from the City Council. This code of conduct should be linked to the lease and monitoring arrangements for community centres.	<i>In part</i>	Many community associations will have their own Code of Conduct; this suggestion can be explored with community associations, either individually or through the Federation.
3. That the report should provide more detail on the standard forfeiture (termination) provisions on tenant default or insolvency.	<i>Agreed</i>	Agreed, we will seek further clarification from Legal.
4. That City Executive Board should make arrangements for independent legal advice to be available to Community Centre Associations.	<i>Agreed</i>	For those CAs moving from a licence to a lease, we will consider this during the period of discussion and negotiation. As there are areas of commonality in this process we can consider who would be the best source of advice of the CAs, for example, Community Matters. Associations with expired leases are being offered financial assistance towards seeking legal advice.

To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Van Coulter

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

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan 2015-19

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board notes the comments of the Scrutiny Committee set out in this report and states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations of the Inequality Panel.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Suggested CEB response to the Inequality recommendations provided by the Leader of the Council.

Introduction

1. The Inequality Panel was established by the Scrutiny Committee during the 2014/15 municipal year and reported to the City Executive Board in July 2015. CEB agreed to respond in writing to the Inequality Panel's 21 recommendations at its meeting on 6 October 2015.
2. The draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel was considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 6 October 2015 (see appendix 1). The Panel would like to thank Val Johnson for attending this discussion.

Summary of the discussion

3. The Chair of the Inequality Panel welcomed the positive response to the majority of the Panel's recommendations, noting that of the 29 draft responses to recommendations or sub-recommendations, 17 were agreed, 3 were agreed in part and 6 were not agreed. Comments had been received for the remaining 3 (14a, 18a and 18b) but it had not been clearly stated whether these were agreed or not agreed.
4. The Committee restated their support for all the recommendations and made the following comments on the draft responses to specific recommendations:
 - Recommendation 3 – A robust metric or series of objective measurements was necessary to ensure that proactive policies could be developed, better focused and more effectively scrutinised;
 - Recommendation 10d – Working with OCCG to simplify access to services would be mutually beneficial. In testing social prescribing, GPs were utilising an on-line tool to identify agencies to which patients could be referred to resolve the need, pressure and worry that caused illness; aspects of which include health, physical activity, housing and social care. Scrutiny would prefer that residents could access such a tool before becoming ill and requiring medical intervention;
 - Recommendation 13 – Approval had recently been given for a £10m bid to government to reduce food waste. If successful, this recommendation for greater collaboration and strategic leadership to address food poverty could potentially be achieved. There was a need for food poverty initiatives to be effective in all parts of the city with pressing need.
 - Recommendation 14a – Asylum Welcome had precarious funding. Without committing to increase the value of the support given, a commitment to provide support for three, rather than one year, would provide reassurance to this charity at a time when the need for the charity's services was clearly increasing;
 - Recommendation 16a – Although OCVA was charged with providing a directory, current practice illustrated that charities were unable to work with efficiency. For example, inappropriate applications were received by some charities that could have succeeded if made to the appropriate charity. A simple task of highlighting the aims, objectives and qualifying criteria for each charitable fund would save time and effort for the applicant, charity and sector advice agencies, with the outcome that appropriate aid would be provided timeously for those in need;
 - Recommendation 17a – The County Council grants were focused quite differently to the recommendation made by Scrutiny;
 - Recommendation 17b – This suggestion had no additional cost. Measures were required to identify families with children with underlying qualification for the pupil premium (a measure currently practiced by other district authorities);
 - Recommendation 19 – Poor and bad employment practices did exist in Oxford and could be illustrated by those establishments that assumed tips and reduced the wages of staff solely based on the assumption that

tips were received. Such malpractices needed to be addressed and the City Council had a role in upholding and promoting best practice;

- Recommendation 20 – When providing his evidence, Professor Dorling underlined that the most effective way to address current levels of inequality in Oxford was to actively promote a proper Living Wage appropriate to Oxford's very high living costs.

Further consideration

5. The Scrutiny Committee will monitor progress against agreed recommendations after 6 months.

Executive response

See appendix 1.

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1.0

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Appendix 1 - Suggested CEB response to the inequality recommendations provided by the Leader of the Council

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#	Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1	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.	In part	The Oxford Strategic Partnership has been leading a multi-agency programme entitled 'Tackling the Cycle of Deprivation' for a number of years and the CCG review will build on the OSP's work. Many of the recommendations from the Panel are being addressed through existing strategies and action plans, and we would propose to return to the question of whether an overall strategy document and plan when the outcome of the CCG work is published.
2	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.	Agreed	<p>Agreed in principle, but the current pressures on local authority and NHS budgets make it difficult to guarantee that the desired staffing resources can be made available from year to year. Our approach to the influencing and development of strategies and policies is based on a matrix approach and includes influencing strategies and policies for the key strategic Oxfordshire Partnerships, the Oxford Strategic Partnership and ensuring consistency and alignment, where appropriate, to Oxford City Council policies and plans. The new Assistant Chief Executive role will provide additional capacity in this area.</p> <p>Policy Officers Group, with representation from all service areas, is used to cascade and share information and best practice in developing our policies internally.</p> <p>Annex 1 attached provides further information.</p>
3	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	Not agreed	<p>The Council uses ONS data and small area statistics and publishes these in an accessible form (see the Council monthly charts and other useful information available on the Oxford City Web site:</p> <p>http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Statistics_about_Oxf</p>

	directly, or indirectly to a significant extent. Council Performance should be assessed against the movement of this index.		ord_occw.htm It is not clear what a specific City Index would add to what is already available and as a stand- alone index it would lack credibility with central government or the EU, who have their own definitions of deprivation and inequality for benchmarking and resource allocation.
4	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.	Agreed	The Council's existing equality impact assessment process requires officers and Members to consider the impact of decisions and actions on groups with protected characteristics. Currently these do not include socio economic inequalities and including them as a required part of the process will involve careful definition and extensive training. The Corporate Lead (HR / OD) will review the current process in line with best practice during the autumn.
5	That the City Council progresses all options for boosting the supply of affordable housing, including by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	Agreed	Agreed, with some reservations about the practicality of 5h. Recommendation 5 a) to f) are already part of the Council's normal business. Recommendation 5g) is being taken forward by the Council's Ageing Successfully Group that is working with Age UK Oxfordshire on a Home Share Programme in Oxford that has been funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund . On 5h) the Council's allocations policies aim to assist 'downsizing' where residents wish but organising transfers on a collective basis would be extremely difficult and unlikely to accommodate many community groups who are characterised by different current housing tenures.

	<p>accommodation to people in housing need at affordable rates,</p> <p>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,</p> <p>g) Considering whether there is scope for the City Council or the Universities to promote 'inter-generational shared living'.</p> <p>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.</p>		
6	<p>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:</p> <p>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,</p> <p>b) Seeks to extend its keyworker housing intervention to more teachers (this is currently offered to senior teaching staff),</p> <p>c) Considers whether there is scope to assist key workers (particularly teachers in priority</p>	Agreed	<p>Recommendation 6a) is in hand and will form part of a wider review of affordable housing and planning policies. Recommendation 6b) has been implemented with the scheme open to all teachers from the beginning of July, following consultation with schools. Recommendation 6c) will be difficult to achieve as the Council has no means of practically influencing private sector rents and landlords' letting policies but the proposals could be put forward to key landlords and agents.</p>

	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.		
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.	Agreed	We agree to take this recommendation into account in developing the strategy. Work is underway on identifying the most appropriate extension of discretionary licensing following the introduction of legislative restrictions by the government. The HMO Licensing Scheme is currently being consulted upon and if renewed, the approach to improving compliance with licence conditions in licensed properties will be strengthened and stronger penalties imposed upon the landlords of unlicensed properties. Encouraging Landlord accreditation and improving the rewards available for good landlords will complement this tougher enforcement stance. It would be useful to understand the particular concerns about student housing if this refers to purpose built accommodation rather than general needs housing which just happens to be occupied by students.
8	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.	Agreed	This work is already in progress. The new assistant Chief Executive will help take this forward.
9	That the City Council builds on its commendable work on addressing fuel poverty by:	In part	Partially agreed. The Council has developed a fuel poverty model to identify areas of the City which are at greater risk of fuel poverty. This model can be used to target resources and grants to

	<p>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,</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>people in fuel poverty. We will increase our advertisement of the help that can be provided to reduce energy costs through the advice centres and the Council.</p> <p>The Council is due to begin taking enforcement against private landlords with EPC ratings of F and G, and this action is included in the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy and we will undertake this work directly..</p>
10a	<p>That the City Council builds on its work with Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners by:</p> <p>a) Supporting the delivery of more proactive health interventions in areas of multiple deprivations, such as contacting people who miss appointments,</p>	Agreed	<p>The City Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health, have been working toward this in a number of ways:</p> <p>Some GP Practices use text messages to remind patients of upcoming appointments, where they have patients' mobile phone numbers. They also post messages in Practice waiting rooms to inform patients of the impact of missed appointments.</p> <p>In terms of health interventions, where there has been low uptake of NHS initiatives, such as screening programmes and health checks, some focussed work has been conducted by the CCG'S Equality and Access Team. This has included working with patients in some GP Practices to enable them to be booked into appointments.</p> <p>The CCG alongside Public Health and the City Council, has established multi-agency Community Partnership Health Groups, based in the city's key areas of deprivation. These help to support health promotion campaigns and activities at a local level. They have also drawn up Health Plans for each area, based on health indicator data, to identify the key issues and provide appropriate interventions and initiatives to tackle them.</p>

			The development and delivery of the Community Health Plans are supported by the CAN Breaking the Cycle of health Deprivation Working Group (including the CCG, Public Health and CAN staff).
10b	That the City Council builds on its work with Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners by: b) Working towards the concept of pooled budgeting in areas where evidence suggests that this approach can improve health outcomes.	Agreed	Pooling of budgets is not specifically a City Council issue. However, the Executive Director for Communities and the Executive Board Member, Corporate Assets and Public Health are actively offering to provide City Council premises and other assets to promote better health outcomes. An example of the possibilities in this domain is the proposed use of the health space at the new Rose Hill Community Centre.
10c	That the City Council builds on its work with Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners by: 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.	Agreed	Agree, as above. In addition; the Head of Community Services is represented on the Oxfordshire University Hospital Trust, Public Health Steering Committee and on the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning NHS Health Inequalities Commission Steering Group. This is to ensure that Oxford City Council is well placed to identify opportunities for working with other agencies to deliver health promotion services. With reference to Social Prescribing: One Practice, which serves two regeneration areas in the city, has recently initiated a Social Prescribing project. The CCG's Equality and Access Manager has undertaken some research of models across the country. The findings will be presented to GP Leads and a decision will be made as to the potential of a county-wide Social Prescribing Project. This will also be considered for application at the new Rose Hill CC.
10d	That the City Council builds on its work with Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners by: d) Working with partners to develop a single online point of access for multiple services in Oxford, including health, housing and social care.	Not agreed	There are a range of points where people can and should access information. It is important however to play our part in ensuring that all the agencies continue to work to improve information sharing and referral processes and to ensure that service signposting is appropriate. The voluntary and community sector have an important role to play in this and the City Council provides funding through its grant

			programme to a number of agencies providing advice, support, signposting and referral to health, housing and social care services.
11	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.	Agreed	<p>This is already in hand. For example, the Barton development is considered to be an example of best practice in this regard. Public Health have also been asked to comment on planning applications with strategic implications for building sustainable communities that support health and help to promote exercise, such as the Northern Gateway master plan.</p> <p>A member of the City Council Planning Policy Team recently attended a Public Health England workshop aimed at improving collaboration between planning and health improvement professionals. Some of the issues raised at this workshop have fed into on-going scoping work that Public Health are undertaking to ensure that health considerations receive more prominence when planning decisions are made across all Oxfordshire authorities.</p>
12a	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	Agreed	There is an operational hospital discharge procedure in place, which provides client names and 48 hour notice of discharge to Housing Services. However, this procedure could be strengthened with a more strategic hospital discharge protocol agreed on a countywide basis with all key stakeholders. This would relate to care packages including a broader range of services, for example Hospital Trusts (specialist physical and mental health services) and adult social care. The City Council will try to facilitate the development of this further.
12b	That the City Council: 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.	Agreed	Officers are already working with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health and providers to develop a suitable service for single homeless customers with complex needs, including when substance misuse limits effective treatment options for mental health. The Council is also part of a Complex Needs network which seeks to improve the access that

			people with complex needs have to current services. This aims to build on outcomes for people with the most complex needs through intensive support and a flexible systemic approach.
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.	Not agreed	<p>The OSP Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation Group has been working with Good Food Oxford to see how this work can be taken forward.</p> <p>The Breaking the Cycle Group (including representatives from the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health) funded Good Food Oxford to carry out community activities on Blackbird Leys, to introduce food poverty and healthy eating elements to the work that food oriented Community Action Groups already do within their local communities. This has proved to be extremely effective. The aim is to continue to work with Good Food Oxford and other partnerships to build the capacity of local communities.</p>
14a	<p>That the City Council:</p> <p>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.</p>	Not stated	Noted. This recommendation will be considered as part of the annual review of the Council's grants programme in the budget round. We are in active discussions with Asylum Welcome and other charities in this area with regard to the refugee crisis and how we can assist them in making a fully effective response.
14b	<p>That the City Council:</p> <p>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.</p>	Agreed	<p>The Council supports and funds a number of voluntary and community groups, some of which have accommodation in City Council premises and some in the private rented sector. All registered charities are eligible for rate relief</p> <p>Reduced hire rates for the Town Hall are also available to</p>

			voluntary and community sector organisations.
15	<p>We strongly endorse the City Council's approach to combatting financial exclusion and recommend that the City Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Agreed	The Financial Inclusion Strategy supports this work.
16	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.	Not agreed	The OCVA have a register of Charities and are funded by the City Council, but if there are weaknesses in this register we will seek to rectify them with OCVA colleagues.
17	We recommend that the City Council continues to prioritise improving educational attainment in the city by:	Not agreed	The Council is currently working through the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) to see if a stronger partnership approach to raising education attainment can improve attainment levels in the

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>city. An OSP Sub Group has been established to develop a set of actions for educational attainment improvement in the city. There have also been meetings with the head teachers of schools in the south of the City and discussions on how the regeneration of Blackbird Leys might contribute to the raising of attainment levels.</p> <p>The County Council has now established a Strategic Schools Partnership Education Commissioning Shadow Board. This Board is in the process of establishing the grant criteria for support. The City Council has representation on this Board. The aim is to ensure any activities funded/provided by the City Council which contributes towards education attainment is additional and complementary to the County Council Commissioning Strategy and Plan.</p> <p>The Council's financial and human resources are constrained and these recommendations are ones which would be difficult to fund within the known future budget envelope.</p>
18a	<p>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:</p> <p>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</p>	Not stated	<p>Skills, employment and career paths are not the statutory responsibility of the City Council. However, through the Leader, officers are working with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Oxfordshire Skills Board to improve services within the city.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council has established a service bringing together schools and businesses called O2i. This includes career advice, work placements and promoting apprenticeships. This work is overseen and monitored by the Oxfordshire Skills Board and information is circulated by the Policy and Partnerships Team Leader to the City Council Employment and Skills Group</p> <p>There is a cross City Council Employment and Skills Group, which meets to share information and to ensure services are coordinated. This group includes officers from the Economic</p>

			<p>Development, Communities and Neighbourhoods, Policy and Partnership, Welfare Reform Team and Human Resources.</p> <p>The City Council has undertaken a robust needs analysis of skills and employment issues. This is available in the link below.</p> <p>http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Statistics/EmploymentAndSkillsSupplementaryPaperAug2014.pdf</p> <p>A review of services was undertaken and an action plan was developed to fill the gaps. This is set out in the Employment and Skills report August 2014. City Council activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Business in Community to provide business links with secondary schools, mentoring and work placement opportunities. Currently the City Council is linked with Cherwell School. • The Youth Ambition Programme which aims to build the confidence and skills of young people and ease the transition between school and work. • The development of Employment and Skills Plans for key physical regeneration schemes, • Apprenticeships within city council services • Support to Job Clubs on estates • Influencing and supporting the delivery of European Structural Funding Programmes.
18b	<p>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:</p> <p>b) Extending the use of social clauses to create more and better opportunities for</p>	Not stated	<p>The City Council Skills and Employment Group ensure that the Employment and Skills Plans are linked into the Job Clubs that are based on estates. A recent Job Fair, arranged with Job Centre Plus, in Barton attracted over 400 potential job applicants and 20 businesses (mainly in the retail and construction sectors). Similar events will be rolled out to Rose Hill and Blackbird Leys. The Council's procurement policies are geared specifically to encouraging suppliers to offer training, apprenticeships and</p>

	young people. Clarity is required as to how the City Council will ensure that developers deliver social clauses.		guidance to young people.
18c	<p>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:</p> <p>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.</p>	Agreed	Agreed for consideration as a part of the development of the Community Centre Strategy.
18d	<p>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:</p> <p>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.</p>	Agreed	<p>Agreed. City Council Officers have been represented on the European Structural Investment Steering group and helped shape the European Social Fund Strategy and proposals. This included funding for two NEET programmes (to support those who are NEET and those at risk of becoming NEET) and Building Better Futures Funding aimed at long term unemployed. The City Council has submitted an application to deliver the Building better Futures Programme.</p> <p>City Council Officers have been working with the County Council, Employment and Economy Team and Job Centre Plus to look at how teaching language services can be improved. The Oxford Community and Voluntary Alliance was commissioned to undertake a review, which identified that there is a range of good work being undertaken but that the sector needs improved coordination. Officers are currently in discussion with one of the colleges to see if they can take on this role, which has become even more important given the recently announced cuts in in this service.</p>

19	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.	Not agreed	If the Scrutiny Committee can provide evidence on the extent and distribution of such practices we will identify methods of securing improvements. More generally, the Council will continue to lead by example by offering good terms and conditions of employment to all staff including agency workers. Our contractors are required to commit to paying the Oxford Living Wage and we have encouraged employers across the city to adopt the Oxford Living Wage with some success. We will continue to lead by example and try and influence other employers in good employment practice through normal channels.
20	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.	In part	Partially agreed. The Council has already undertaken a number of initiatives including achieving Living Wage accreditation, campaigning in the city for other employers to adopt the Living Wage and speaking in support of the benefits of the OLW in various forums. We will continue to make use of the benefits of being a nationally accredited Living Wage Employer through Living Wage research, campaigns (such as Living Wage Week), etc. We will review the resource implications of the more extensive approach recommended in 20 a) and b).
21	That Oxford City Council is a major employer in the city, and recommend that the City Council continues to develop its own employment	Agreed	The Council is already progressing an action plan to improve its recruitment practices. This includes giving more attention to job descriptions, person specifications, selection testing which tests

	<p>practices through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>criteria more effectively than interviews alone, inviting CVs as part of the application process, etc. It is increasingly rare for a selection process to comprise only of an interview. We have also run initiatives such as targeting unsuccessful BME candidates to review their experience of the recruitment process, consider the shortlisting decisions, ensure they receive feedback, etc. We have an electronic recruitment system and a series of pages which include assistance for candidates in the application process and presenting the benefits of working for the Council. We have previously addressed the issue of low pay by introducing the Oxford Living Wage and deleting the lowest pay grades. Further consideration of low pay will feature in consultation and negotiation for a new pay deal to run after the current one expires (March 2018). Although recommendation 21 e) has generally been the case in recent years, no long term commitment can be made to it as our wage bargaining structures are not necessarily always going to be under our direct control.</p>
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To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Financial Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan Update

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Financial Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan Update

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons

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

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan 2015-19

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Financial Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan Update decision at its public meeting on 6 October 2015. The Committee would like to thank Paul Wilding for presenting this item.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Committee noted that the work detailed in the Action Plan was taking place against a prevailing headwind and questioned whether potential cuts to Children’s Centres had been factored in. The Committee heard that these were key partners so cuts could have significant impacts. The Committee also requested that the directory of affordable childcare is shared with Councillors.

Recommendation 1 – That the Action Plan should be kept under review so that the Council can be responsive to significant changes in

circumstances (e.g. further welfare reforms, reduced children's centre provision).

Recommendation 2 – That the directory of affordable childcare should be shared with Councillors.

3. The Committee questioned whether the action plan should include a stronger emphasis on more joined up partnership working, for example around social prescribing. The Committee heard that this was an area that the City Council was very keen to be more involved in and that Council activities such as supporting people into work had already been delivering savings for the NHS.

Recommendation 3 – That the Action Plan should contain a stronger emphasis on more joined up partnership working, for example with the health sector to support social prescribing.

4. The Committee questioned why Contact Centre staff would no longer be receiving training to identify key risk factors and noted concern that this was due to resourcing constraints. The Committee heard other frontline staff who were more likely to be in contact with people at risk of financial exclusion would receive training instead. This was seen as being a more practical approach.

Recommendation 4 – That all frontline staff should receive training on recognising the indicators of financial exclusion.

5. The Committee noted that some landlords were evicting tenants who had lost their jobs as they did not want to accept claimants of Housing Benefit. The Committee heard that unaffordability was a huge issue in Oxford and that some private sector landlords were charging 3 month's rent as a deposit. The Lord Mayor's deposit scheme was still in place and was being used.
6. The Committee questioned whether the targeting of people in the private rented sector at risk of fuel poverty was capturing all those at risk, and what enforcement action was being taken against landlords of rented properties with Energy Performance Certificate ratings of F & G (action 20). The Panel heard that this was a new activity for the City Council, which had previously focused on educating landlords supported this new approach.

Recommendation 5 – That the City Council should monitor the accessibility of the private rented sector to people who are out of work and the use of the Lord Mayor's Deposit Scheme.

7. The Committee suggested that any plans to help households find the best energy tariffs (action 14) should be brought forward to enable them to take advantage of higher rates for feed in tariffs where possible, before these rates decrease significantly in January 2016.

Recommendation 6 – That the City Council should bring forward any plans that would assist households in taking advantage of higher feed in tariff rates.

Executive response

To be tabled at the City Executive Board meeting on 15 October 2015.

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List of background papers: None
Version number: 1

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

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

Title of Report: Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs decision

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Linda Smith

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

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Needs and Efficient, Effective Council

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the two recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs decision at its public meeting on 8 October 2015. The Panel would like to thank Adrian Chowns and Ian Wright for presenting this report and supporting a detailed and wide ranging discussion.
2. The Panel previously looked at the Review of Houses in Multiple Occupations decision in June 2016 and supported the extension of the scheme for a further 5 years, making two recommendations to the City Executive Board that were both agreed.

Summary of the discussion

3. The HMO Enforcement Team Leader introduced the report and summarised the findings of the consultation. He advised that the

proposed changes to the additional licensing scheme for HMOs included the introduction of 5 year licenses for accredited landlords, and changes in fees that would reduce costs for compliant landlords and increase costs for non-compliant landlords. The scheme had been making a difference to the standards of HMOs in the city but there was more to do to improve conditions in this sector.

4. The Panel asked a number of other questions, including about; the impacts and fairness of the scheme on families that wanted to take in more than two lodgers and on weekday lodgers who worked in the city, the problem of bidding wars created by agents, whether longer licenses could lead to a drop in standards, what happens if landlords breach their license, whether the finances of the scheme were sustainable, whether there was a public register of HMOs, the validity of various points raised by the Residential Landlords Association, and the types of landlords operating in the city.
5. The Panel questioned whether there was an opportunity to build additional security for tenants into the scheme, such as longer tenures and rent level guarantees. The Panel suggested that longer tenancies could encourage tenants to take more care of HMO properties and could help to address other issues often associated with HMOs, such as unkempt gardens. The Panel heard that it was unlikely that these controls could be built into the licensing scheme for legal reasons. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity to influence the market by including these as discretionary criteria within the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Recommendation 1 – That the City Council should encourage landlords and agents offer longer term tenancies and rent level guarantees, and explore the option of including these as discretionary criteria within the Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

6. The Panel noted that each household was entitled to two free bulky waste collections per year but that many tenants of HMOs were unable to access these because the free collections were used by landlords, and were often required to pay for bulky waste collections. The Panel suggested that the City Council looks at ways of addressing this issue, possibly through changing waste collection policy in relation to HMOs or by encouraging landlords to pay for tenants' bulky waste collections.

Recommendation 2 – That the City Council should consider whether there is anything that can be done to address the inequity whereby many tenants living in HMOs are unable to access free bulky waste collections.

7. The Panel also agreed that the following comments should be referred to the City Executive Board:
 1. That the Housing Panel restated its support for the additional licensing scheme for HMOs;

2. That the Housing Panel welcomed the success of the consultation and that officers should be commended for the high level and quality of engagement achieved.

Executive response

To be tabled at the City Executive Board meeting on 15 October 2015.

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

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

Title of Report: Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock decision

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Linda Smith

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing

Policy Framework: Sustainability Strategy, Low Carbon Oxford, Housing Asset Management Strategy

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock decision at its public meeting on 8 October 2015. The Panel would like to thank Martin Shaw for presenting this report and answering questions.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Property Services Manager introduced the report which requests project approval to fit solar panels on some of the Council's housing stock. The Panel heard that feed in tariffs would reduce dramatically in the New Year but that the Low Carbon Hub was exploring ideas to make the best of the situation and find a viable model for proceeding with this scheme. The arrangements would need to be clear that any risk would be borne by the Hub. The Panel heard

that the proposals would not benefit the Council directly but would assist some Council tenants through reduced fuel bills and would contribute to the wider low carbon agenda.

3. The Panel noted regret that a previous scheme had been cancelled several years ago and that the current report set out a better approach to the fitting of solar panels on Council-owned housing stock. The Panel asked questions about timescales, tenants' consent, the financial model of the Hub and the Council's own financial investments in solar panels.
4. In response to a question, the Panel heard that some properties had been lined up and could potentially be fitted before the level of the feed in tariff was reduced.

Recommendation – That the City Council should make every effort to enter into a viable agreement with the Low Carbon Hub as soon as possible in order to maximise the available benefits of fitting solar panels on Council-owned housing stock.

Suggested CEB response provided by the Board Member for Housing

I agree with the recommendation and indeed officers are already looking at ways of working with the Low Carbon Hub to help install PV panels on Council homes.

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List of background papers: None
Version number: 1