

Scrutiny Committee reports (3) for City Executive Board - Thursday 14 April 2016

6. Scrutiny Committee Reports (Pages 3 - 6)

Suggested City Executive Board responses to scrutiny recommendations on the following items are included:

- Council Tax and Business Rates exemptions and discounts
- Low Carbon Hub

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Suggested City Executive Board response to the recommendations of the Finance Panel on Council Tax and Business Rates Exemptions and Discounts

Provided by the Board Members for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health and Customer and Corporate Services

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed? (Y / N / In part)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. That a cost benefit analysis takes place at an appropriate time to determine what level of Fraud Investigation resources would maximise Council revenues.	Y	The Investigations Team establishment consists of 6 staff (4.7 fte). The award of a grant from DCLG last year has allowed the employment of an additional 2 full time staff which are funded up to March 2017. As such this level of staffing is considered sufficient to provide resources for investigation work on council activities such as council tax and business rates collection as well as discounts and exemptions which the team will be undertaking this year. In addition the team undertake work for other local authorities' which provides additional contribution towards overheads. On the expiry of the grant monies a cost benefit analysis will be undertaken to determine the level of permanent resource required going forward on the basis of the return to the council.
2. That consideration is given to whether resources can be increased in the Revenues Team a temporary basis in order to manage peaks in workload such as during the annual student turnover.	In Part	The service currently has a Resilience contract with Capita in place which allows the team to pull on additional resource when needed throughout the year. This has been used in previous years to assist with the workload associated with the new student year and is felt to be adequate currently.

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Suggested City Executive Board response to the recommendations of the Finance Panel on the Low Carbon Hub

Provided by the Board Members for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health and Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed? (Y / N / In part)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. That the Council promotes the Low Carbon Hub's call for capital.	Y	The Council will assist with the promotion of Low Carbon Hubs call for capital where it can
2. That the Council considers making an investment in the Low Carbon Hub.	Y	An investment in the low carbon hub will count as an unspecified investment for the purposes of treasury management. Such investments are limited to 25% of the councils total investment portfolio since these types of investments are considered inherently more risky and are longer in duration. Additionally the Council will be undertaking prudential borrowing to fund its capital programme over the next few years which will reduce the availability of surplus funds for investment. The Council will however keep the issue under review.
3. That the Council lobbies Government to make installations of solar energy systems viable again following recent changes to feed-in tariffs, perhaps by the Leader of the Council writing to the appropriate government minister.	Y	The Council supports the principle of making installations of solar panels viable and can make appropriate representations to Government.
4. That Council continues to support Low Carbon Hub projects where appropriate, including potentially by assisting with a bid to fund the installation of solar electricity systems on Council housing, and identifying a suitable location for an energy efficiency project in the City.	Part	Previous discussions between the Council and LCH were based on the Council leasing roof space on council houses at nil cost and LCH funding the installation and receiving the Feed In Tariff (FIT) returns. Reductions made in the FIT tariff before Christmas, made this unviable for street property but there remained a possibility to make it work on flat blocks. The Council could assist in determining suitable properties but is unlikely to provide funding unless viability is proven.

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