

Law and Governance

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10 March 2014

Scrutiny Reports - Q3 spending and Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership.



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



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To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th. March 2014

Report of: The Scrutiny Finance Panel

Title of Report: Quarter 3 Spending 2013 - 2014

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Finance Panel on budget spending at quarter 3 contained with the Integrated Performance Report.

Key decision: No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Simmons.

Executive Lead Member: Councillor Turner.

Policy Framework: Efficient, Effective Council.

Recommendations: For the City Executive Board to say if it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendation:

Recommendation

To explore the use of Framework Agreements to provide project management and delivery of Capital Programme schemes.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Finance Panel considered budget spending at quarter 3. They were supported in their debate by Nigel Kennedy, the Panel would like to thank him for his time and advice.
2. The Panel agreed that the Council's finances are in a robust state. In particular the Panel congratulates officers on the collection of rent arrears in what is a challenging environment.
3. The Panel offers comment on the Capital Programme.

Conclusions and Recommendation

4. The Panel discussed the slippage in the Capital Programme matched against the overall delivery ambition. Officers outlined actions that are being taken to more accurately profile spending in the budget so a more accurate picture can be presented. Whilst the Panel welcomed these actions, they are proud of the Council's ambitions within the Capital Programme and do not want the Council's overall ambitions to be undermined in any way. On this basis the Panel would like to see a focus on more effective provision of project management and for the Council to explore the use of Framework agreements to provide this.

Recommendation 1

To explore the use of Framework Agreements to provide project management and delivery of Capital Programme schemes.

Comments from the Director and Board Member

We are aware that delivery of the Council's Capital Programme has in recent years fallen short of the assumptions agreed in the Medium Term Financial Plan. This has resulted in a significant amount of re-profiling of projects and slippage carried forward to future years. That having been said the slippage on projects is not always within the Councils control, one such example being the construction of the new swimming pool at Blackbird Leys.

The Council's Programme for 2014/15 is significant and totals around £68 million. Consequently, officers have recently undertaken work to clarify roles and responsibilities, strengthening client focus, provide project management training and re-enforce processes, procedures and documentation, to ensure that resources are in place to deliver the capital schemes identified. Hence we are more confident that the Programme will be delivered on time and within budget as profiled and where necessary external project managers have been and will be brought in to lead on schemes to ensure that this happens. Where external project managers are appointed they are/will be overseen by client officers to ensure the Council secures value for money.

Name and contact details of author:-

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 2

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th. March 2014

Report of: The Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

Key decision? Yes

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Gill Sanders

Executive Lead Member: Councillor Bob Price

Recommendation(s): For the City Executive Board to say if it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

For all members to see the finalised Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan as submitted to Government and kept in touch with the outcomes from this bid.

Recommendation 2

To provide a “governance structure” below the Board Member representative on the Local Strategic Partnership that can deliver on the aim of keeping all members of Council informed and engaged in the detail of progress against selected projects and the likely outcomes for the City and its residents.

Recommendation 3

The Board Member and Officers to do all they can to reflect the City’s ambition of reducing inequality in strategic planning for all themes.

Recommendation 4

The Board member and Officers to do all they can within the Innovative Place theme to produce excellent links to schools at a very early stage to support good quality advice on educational choices and career planning.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report outlining progress towards submitting the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). They were supported in their debate by Robert Hetherington and David Edwards, the Committee would like to thank them for their time and advice.
2. The Committee made a number of comments and recommendations which are presented below.

Conclusions and Recommendations

3. The Committee heard and understood the status and hopes for this document and the partnership timetable for submission to Government. Concern was expressed that the Plan, or a summary of it, was not available for scrutiny and that the City Executive Board is asked to give formal support and delegation without sight of the document.
4. Officers had a draft executive summary of the Plan which had been agreed that day by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and agreed to circulate this to scrutiny members. The Committee accepted this but expressed their desire to see proposals in more detail and be able to judge what actions mean in practical delivery terms.
5. Committee discussed broad outcomes as expressed in the report and whilst being supportive of the ambition raised a number of issues concerning the “fragility” of proposals if good quality co-operation between partners does not exist. Highlighted in particular was co-operation around housing and the provision of improved utilities infrastructure such as sewage and electricity. The broad view of the Committee was that these proposals should not in any way make Oxford worse for current residents. With this in mind the Committee asked to see a structure beneath the Board Member representative on the LEP that allowed all members to be in touch with the detail of progress against selected projects and the likely outcomes for the City and its residents.
6. Members highlighted the Council’s focus on reducing inequality in the City and expressed disappointment that this Plan was likely not to mention these ambitions. Officers advised that schemes funded through the European Structural Funding Programme would have a focus in this area. The Committee welcomed this but asked officers to do whatever they could through the LEP to see our ambitions in this area linked into the SEP document.
7. Linked to reducing inequality and our ambitions for young people in the City the Committee want actions in the Innovative Place theme to produce excellent links to schools at a very early stage to support good quality advice on educational choices and career planning.

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The Board Member and Officers to do all they can to reflect the City’s ambition of reducing inequality in strategic planning for all themes.

Recommendation 4

The Board member and Officers to do all they can within the Innovative Place theme to produce excellent links to schools at a very early stage to support good quality advice on educational choices and career planning.

Comments from the Director and Board Member

The recommendations are positive and I am happy to accept them.

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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

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