

VALUE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 November 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Mills (Chair), Rowley (Vice-Chair), Abbasi, Fooks, Gotch, Haines, McCreedy, Simmons, Van Nooijen and Darke.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mathew Metcalfe (Democratic and Electoral Services), Pat Jones (Principal Scrutiny Officer), Nicky Atkin (Business Improvement), Helen Bishop (Head of Customer Services), Sarah Claridge (Trainee Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Ian Wright (Environmental Development) and Jane Lubbock (Head of Business Improvement)

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anne-Marie Canning, James Fry (Councillor Roy Darke attended as a substitute), Pat Kennedy and Sajjad Malik.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

26. STANDING ITEM: WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended) updating the Committee on the work programme for the current year.

Pat Jones from Law and Governance introduced. She informed the Committee that the Finance and Performance Panel had met on 26th November 2012 and she briefing explained the Panels recommendations it would be submitting to the City Executive Board.

Councillor Fooks said that she would like to see reports from the Finance and Performance Panel submitted to the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee. In response Councillor Rowley said that with the work on the budget being undertaken by the Panel, to bring a report to the January 2013 meeting of the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee was possible, but could mean that interviews with Directors might not take place, as these dates had already been set.

Councillor Rowley further suggested the option of co-opting councillors Fooks and Van Nooijen onto the Finance and Performance Panel.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) That Councillors Jean Fooks and Oscar Van Nooijen be co-opted onto the Finance and Performance Panel;

- (b) To support the various recommendations being submitted to the City Executive Board on 5th December 2012 and Full Council on 17th December 2012.

27. STANDING ITEM: REPORT BACK ON THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a paper (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed recommendations made from the Vale and Performance Scrutiny Committee and its Panels to the City Executive Board, between June and November 2012 and where available the responses received.

The Committee was informed of the response from the Board Member for Leisure, Councillor Van Coulter to the Fusion Leisure Contract 2011-2012 which the Committee considered at its meeting on 25th June 2012.

The Committee was also informed of the recommendation/comments from its meeting on 5th November 2012 when it considered a call-in of the City Executive Board decision concerning the review of parking in car parks adjacent to parks. The recommendations/comments would be forwarded to the City Executive Board for its meeting on 5th December 2012.

The Committee agreed to note the position.

28. COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT CHANGES - UPDATE

The Head of Customer Services submitted a report and note (previously circulated, now appended). The report detailed information on the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme, the modelling used and the exemptions offered by the other local authorities in Oxfordshire. This information had been requested by the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 19th September 2012.

Helen Bishop, Head of Customer Services attended the meeting and introduced the report and briefing paper. Councillor Turner as the Board Member, also attended and informed the Committee that the City Executive Board had accepted the recommendations and included a 50% levy on properties empty for 24 months or more.

The Committee discussed the report and asked a number of questions.

The Committee agreed to recommend Council notes that the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee supported the principle of the document and in particular not reducing benefits and that overall it represented a good package going forward into the budget process.

29. HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) LICENSING - UPDATE

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated), the purpose of which was to update the Committee on the progress and impact of the introduction of the Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Scheme in Oxford. The report was in response to the issue being part of the Committees work programme.

Ian Wright, Environmental Development, attended the meeting and introduced the report and updated the Committee by stating that 2589 applications had so far been received. That Officers were ahead of corporate performance indicators and would exceed the target and that in excess of 100 cases had been investigated, with 12 going to Court. He further added that the reputation of the scheme in Oxford was high across the country with authorities such as Birmingham City Council and Bournemouth Council visiting officers. Officers were also undertaking a survey of landlords and it was very much hoped that a survey would also be conducted with tenants in the HMO/Private Rented Sector.

In response to questions concerning landlords and tenants, Ian Wright said that it was up to landlords to decide on what type of tenant they let their properties to.

Councillor Fooks was surprised at the number of HMO's that failed on fire precautions. In response Ian Wright said that the council used national guidance on the fire safety precautions that were required.

Councillor Simmons felt that the scheme was a "brilliant scheme" but was concerned that rents had increased because of it and this would lead to poor quality accommodation being the only accommodation available to families on restricted incomes. In response Councillor Turner said that the Administration was concerned that there could be an increase in the number of poorer quality properties being available to families.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) To thank Ian Wright and Councillor Turner for attending the meeting;
- (b) To request that the outcomes of the Landlord Survey and the Tenants Survey be submitted when available to the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

30. COVERED MARKET SCRUTINY REVIEW: NEXT STEPS

Councillors Jean Fooks and Oscar Van Nooijen submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which updated the Committee on the progress of the Covered Market Review Panel work in following the Committees lines of inquiry into the economic health of the Covered Market in preparation for a Select Committee debate.

Councillor Van Nooijen presented the report and thanked Officers for their support plus Councillors Benjamin, Campbell and Clarkson. He said that the situation regarding the Covered Market was complicated and the Panel felt that the issue could not be rushed and felt that a longer period would lead to better scrutiny. He added that the Panel wished to undertake pre-scrutiny of the emerging new strategy and the Panel wanted to target its efforts in further

convincing the trader that the Council supported them. Councillor Fooks added her support to Councillors Van Nooijens comments.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) To extend the Panels brief to encompass:
 - (i) Pre-Scrutiny and engagement with the developing Covered Market Strategy and Leasing Strategy;
 - (ii) Work to engage with representatives of the Covered Market traders' Association;
 - (iii) Review the leasing decision in respect of the unit formerly occupied by Palm's Delicatessen;
 - (iv) Consideration of comparative data from similar markets elsewhere.
- (b) To invite Councillors Benjamin, Campbell and Clarkson to be part of a future Panel;
- (c) That the Review Panel would report on progress at the January 2013 meeting of the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee with a full report to follow before the end the programme.

31. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2013-2016

The Head of Business Improvement and Technology submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) prior to it being submitted to the City Executive Board on 5th December 2012. The report detailed the Council's new Procurement Strategy 2013-2016, which the City Executive Board was being asked to approve.

Jane Lubbock and Nicky Atkin attended the meeting and presented the report.

Councillor Turner also attended the meeting and said that the capital programme was very large and the money in this could do a lot to support the local economy.

Councillor Simmons was concerned that every tender that the Council did could be subject to a "Community Right to Challenge". In response Jane Lubbock said that this allowed an organisation to approach the Council at any stage. This could trigger the Council to have to market test, but it did not give the organisation the right to take over the service.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) To recommend the City Executive Board
 - (1) That in order to meet this new requirement the Council should review all new tender opportunities and include within all tender evaluation criteria a range of criteria that meets the requirement of the Social Value Act 2012 to encourage a more diverse range of organisations to be able to successfully win Council business.

- (2) That a more formal environmental assessment of the impact of products and services procured by the Council should be required as part of the tender process.
- (3) That the strategy as a living document should be kept under frequent review.
- (b) To thank Jane Lubbock, Nicky Atkin and Councillor Turner for attending the meeting.

32. MINUTES

The Committee agreed to approve:

- (a) Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting held on 19th September 2012
- (b) Minutes (previously circulated) of the special meeting held on 5th November 2012.

33. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that's its next meeting would be on Monday 28th January 2013 at 6.00pm in the Town Hall.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.50 pm