

Agenda

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Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 4 June 2013**

Time: **6.00 pm**

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

For any further information please contact:

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Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Mohammed Abbasi	Cowley Marsh;
Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan	Headington Hill and Northway;
Councillor Jim Campbell	St. Margaret's;
Councillor Van Coulter	Barton and Sandhills;
Councillor Roy Darke	Headington Hill and Northway;
Councillor James Fry	North;
Councillor Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan	Lye Valley;
Councillor Mark Mills	Holywell;
Councillor Michele Paule	Rose Hill and Iffley;
Councillor Gill Sanders	Littlemore;
Councillor Craig Simmons	St. Mary's;
Councillor Val Smith	Blackbird Leys;

The Quorum for this committee is 4 Committee Members

HOW TO OBTAIN AGENDA

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AGENDA

Pages

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2013/14

The Committee is asked to elect a Chair for the year 2013 – 2014.

The Chair must be a Scrutiny Councillor from one of the Opposition Political Parties.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2013/14

The Committee is asked to elect a Vice-Chair for the year 2013-2014.

The Vice-Chair must be a Scrutiny Councillor and can be from any Political Party.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any of the following agenda items. Guidance on this is set out at the end of these agenda pages.

5 SCRUTINY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND PREPARATION FOR THE 2013-14 WORK PROGRAMME

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Contact Officer: Pat Jones (Principal Scrutiny Officer), Tel 01865 252191, phjones@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information
The Scrutiny function starts the year with a new structure. The committee needs to decide how it will operate to deliver the best outcomes.
Why is it on the agenda?
The report outlines suggestions for working for the committee to consider and agree. Work is still underway on a number of reviews from the last programme. The Committee is asked which of these it wishes to continue.

Who has been invited to comment?
Pat Jones, Principal Scrutiny Officer, will present the work programme, answer questions and support the Committee in their decision making.
What will happen after the meeting?
Working structures will be implemented.

6 FORWARD PLAN

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The latest published version of the Forward Plan is attached to allow the Scrutiny Committee to decide which items it wishes to pre-scrutinise.

7 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

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Contact Officers: Paul Wilding (Revenues and Benefits Manager) Tele: 01865 252461 Email: pwilding@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information
Discretionary Housing Payments are award towards eligible rent for people in receipt of Housing Benefit. The Council's policy for award of these payments has been reviewed now in particular because of concerns that Welfare Reform is likely to produce an increased number of applications for support.
Why is it on the agenda?
Our scheme aims to focus funds where they are needed most and encourage people to take responsibility for their own personal circumstances. The revised policy aims have been narrowed with emphasis placed on the prevention of homelessness and Discretionary Housing Payments being used as a temporary support whilst a more sustainable solution can be found. This report will be considered by the City Executive Board on the 12 th . June.
Who has been invited to comment?
Councillor Brown – Board Member for Benefits and Customer Services. Paul Wilding – Revenues and Benefits Manager.
What will happen after the meeting?

Any recommendations will be reported to the City Executive Board.

8 END OF YEAR INTEGRATED REPORT 2012 - 2013

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Contact Officers: Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance). Tele: 01865 252708
Email: nkennedy@oxford.gov.uk and

Jane Lubbock (Head of Business Improvement and Technology). Tele:
01865 252218 Email: jlubbock@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information

Last year the Council improved its overall performance reporting with the introduction of a quarterly report that integrates outcomes for spending, performance indicators and the management of risk.

These indicators are scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee and also used as a tool to consider the “overall health” of the Council.

Why is it on the agenda?

This report shows the outcomes position for the year 2012 – 2013 and will be useful in considering ongoing priorities for scrutiny.

This report will be considered by the City Executive Board on the 12th. June.

Who has been invited to comment?

Councillor Turner – Board Member for Finance and Efficiency.
Nigel Kennedy – Head of Finance.
Jane Lubbock – Head of Business Improvement and Technology.

What will happen after the meeting?

Any recommendations will be reported to the City Executive Board.

9 CORPORATE DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Contact Officer: Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Tel 01865 252708, Email:
nkennedy@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information

A review of the Council's methods and processes for the

management of debt has been undertaken with the aim of framing a more efficient and effective corporate system. The outcomes from this review have been used to refresh the Corporate Debt Management Policy.

Why is it on the agenda?

The Debt Management Policy is presented. The report highlights in particular the following changes:

- To limit the circumstances in which credit will be offered and seek payment in advance wherever possible.
- The Council will encourage payment by electronic means and seek to eradicate payment by cash and cheques where possible
- The Council accepts payment by debit and credit card , making a 1.5% charge for credit card transactions – Para 4.5
- The Council makes use of debt collection agencies for hard to collect debts – Para 4.6
- The Council will set clear procedures for dunning processes for unregulated debts. - Para 4.6
- The Council will check other areas of the Council's business before refunds are issued and will seek to offset debts, including against creditor payments where possible – Para 4.16
- Where multiple debts are owed instalment repayments will be allocated on a pro rate basis unless the customer advises otherwise Para 4.10
- Collections staff will take into account customer's individual financial circumstances when agreeing instalment arrangements to ensure they are reasonable and will not cause undue financial hardship. Para 3.1(10)

An action plan for implementation is attached.

This report will be considered by the City Executive Board on the 12th. June.

Who has been invited to comment?

Councillor Turner – Board Member for Finance and Efficiency.
Nigel Kennedy – Head of Finance.

What will happen after the meeting?

Any recommendations will be presented to the City Executive Board.

Contact Officers: Richard Hawkes (Corporate Asset Manager) Tele: 01865 252124 Email: rhawkes@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information
<p>The Council agreed an Affordable Homes Programme 2012 – 2015. This reports sets out delivery within that programme.</p> <p>This item includes information that is exempt from publication and this is produced elsewhere on the agenda.</p>
Why is it on the agenda?
<p>This reports asks to give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration and Housing to appoint a main contractor(s) and “call off arrangements” to deliver the agreed programme as sites receive planning permission.</p> <p>The Directors authority will be only that within the overall budget envelop for the programme.</p> <p>This report will be considered by the City Executive Board on the 12th. June.</p>
Who has been invited to comment?
<p>Councillor Seamons – Board Member for Housing. Richard Hawkes – Corporate Asset Manager</p>
What will happen after the meeting?
<p>Any recommendations will be reported to the City Executive Board.</p>

11 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Council and Committee programme for the Council Years 2013/14 and 2014/15 was agreed by Council on 22 April. The following meeting dates for 2013/14 have been agreed for this Committee:

2nd July 2013
3rd September 2013
1st October 2013
5th November 2013
3rd December 2013
14th January 2014
4th February 2014
4th March 2014
1st April 2014

The start time for this Committee has been assumed as 6 pm. The Committee is asked to confirm the start time of its meetings for the remainder of the Council Year 2013/14.

12 MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

If the Committee wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Committee may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

13 APPOINTMENT OF MAIN CONTRACTOR FOR THE AFFORDABLE HOMES PROGRAMME - 2015

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Items exempt from publication relating to item 9 on the public agenda.

These documents are not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to financial or business affairs)

DECLARING INTERESTS

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licences for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". What this means is that the matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

¹ Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those of the member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

