

CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 29 January 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Turner (Deputy Leader in the Chair), Sinclair, Simm, Brown, Kennedy, Rowley, Seamons and Tanner.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Craig Simmons (Chair of Scrutiny Committee)

OFFICERS PRESENT: Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), David Edwards (Executive Director of City Regeneration and Housing), Tim Sadler (Executive Director of Community Services), Dave Scholes (Housing Needs Manager), Mike Scott (Corporate Asset Manager), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Lindsay Cane (Law and Governance) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Price and Lygo.

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received

114. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Full written questions with answers were sent as a supplement agenda before the meeting.

Public questions were received on item 7 Revised Organisational Development Strategy (minute 117)

The City Executive Board noted the public questions.

115. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

Cllr Simmons presented the following reports:

Oxfordshire Growth Board

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee explained the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:

- that new housing developments should be close to jobs and sustainable transport links.
- that the housing strategy was good but would like a broader remit/scope to look at right to buy and empty homes.
- that in future the Growth Board provide written documentation as it is difficult to scrutinise without paperwork.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE:

That the City Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Growth Board conveys the following suggestions to the Board and reports back to Scrutiny:

1. That the Growth Board takes a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that it is a key consideration in all planning and development activities.
2. That the Growth Board considers whether it can and should have a wider brief in order to achieve greater benefits from collective working. This could include having scope to promote innovative ways of delivering new affordable housing, and further joint lobbying to Government.
3. That all reports to the Growth Board are available in document form.

Educational Attainment

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report.

The Chief Executive explained that:

- The KRM programme had head teachers' involvement in its procurement, schools volunteers to participate in the programme.
- Officers had reviewed the County's education programme and decided the KRM programme was complementary to the County's programmes rather than conflicting.
- The KRM programme is challenging as it requires changing teaching styles. Participating schools found it difficult to sustain commitment.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE that any future City Council educational programmes are co-designed with schools and are cohesively focused on achieving long term improvements in educational attainment and reductions in inequalities.

New Council controls over Anti-Social Behaviour

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the Scrutiny Committee report. The committee was happy with the powers enacted by the Council but would like to see Scrutiny representation on the oversight group and continued engagement with Area Forums regarding future applications.

Cllr Sinclair, Board member for Crime and Community Response agreed with the recommendations. She suggested 1 member of the Scrutiny Committee join the oversee group. The group is meeting soon to discuss the proposed City Centre protection order.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE:

1. That a Scrutiny Councillor is included in the membership of the oversight group.
2. That City Council officers engage with Local Area Forums regarding the application of new anti-social behaviour powers.

Capital Programme Process Review

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the Finance Panel's report. He commented:

- The gateway process was reviewed and is going well.
- Encouraged the flexibility of project delivery and the moving of resources to other projects when projects slip.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health agreed the recommendations. He made the following comments:

Rec 1. The Executive agrees that sustainability is a key consideration for the delivery of our capital investment programme. Sustainability is already an integral part of the key stages of our Gateway delivery process.

Rec 2. The Executive will continue to look at ways to improve our overall delivery process and will review the impact of the changes we have already made. Decisions on how we package and procure works in order to make the best use of resources and deliver value for money have been strengthened and are again an integral part of our revised processes.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE

1. To sustainability being formalised throughout the capital gateway process.
2. Continued development of a more flexible approach to the delivery of its capital programme.

Banking Services Provider

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee explained the recommendations. These included:

- Continual monitoring to make sure the social elements agreed in the contact with Barclays are delivered.
- Would like to see challenger banks included in the procurement process in future.

Cllr Turner, Board member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health responded to the recommendations (attached minute 115).

The Chief Executive said that Barclays scored well on the ethical questionnaire and provided a basic bank account (requirement of the procurement process) to more people than the other banks.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE to

1. Monitor the added social value provided by its new bank.
2. Revisit the terms and conditions for all tenders to ensure that they fully reflect the Council's ethical policies.
3. Continue to monitor which banks other former Co-op customers are switching to, and whether 'challenger banks' begin taking on local authority customers.

Fuel Poverty

Cllr Seamons, Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration agreed the two recommendations and would look into both pieces of work.

Cllr Turner explained that the consultation budget recommended a free energy efficiency review for every council home.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE:

1. That tenant-facing staff in Direct Services are encouraged to offer appropriate advice on the use of free electricity.
2. To explore the possibility of buying energy in bulk.

STAR Survey Results

Cllr Seamons, Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration said the Council needed to set out its response to the STAR survey. He asked that Scrutiny assist in reviewing the methodology used to measure tenant satisfaction and said that once the Oxford standard was implemented - it would raise the standard of peoples' homes.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE to

1. Reviews the methodology used to measure tenant satisfaction, and aims to make personal contact with tenants in future.
2. That the City Council sets out its response to the STAR Survey 2014 results, including any improvement measures taken or planned.

116. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON ANY ITEM FOR DECISION ON THE BOARD'S AGENDA

There were no Councillor addresses to the Board.

117. REVISED ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Head of Human Resources and Facilities submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed an updated Organisational Development Strategy

The Chief Executive presented the report. He explained that 4 services had gone through the Customer services excellence accreditation with most receiving high marks.

Cllr Brown said the steps taken to improve customer service in the Council will help improve customer satisfaction.

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the revised Organisational Development Strategy attached at Appendix 1.

118. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – OXFORD AND ABINGDON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEMES

The Executive Director for Community Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought approval to complete the memorandum of understanding - Oxford and Abingdon Flood Alleviation Schemes.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report.

The Executive Director of Community Services explained how last year's flooding made flood prevention a priority, and highlighted the need for agencies to work together.

The Chief Executive said that the MoU showed how partnership working and relationship building play an important part in making progress. He thanked the Executive Director of Community Services for his work at leading this project.

Cllr Tanner thanked the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and officers for their work. Although the measure won't end the threat of flooding, they will make Oxford open for business for all. He explained that more was needed than a relief channel, that Council needed to do more to clear the waterways in Oxford and put pressure on farmers and Government so that the land had a greater capacity to hold water.

The City Executive Board resolved to DELEGATE AUTHORITY to the Executive Director of Community Services to complete the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the Oxford and Abingdon Flood Alleviation Schemes.

119. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS - COWLEY ROAD, OXFORD.

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought to initiate compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to a long term empty property at Cowley Road, Oxford in accordance with the approved Empty Homes Strategy 2013-2018.

Cllr Seamons, Board Member for Housing and Estate Regeneration presented the report. He explained that it was important to the Council to bring empty houses back into use. It is rare to use a compulsory purchase order to do this but this property has been empty since 1996.

The Housing Needs Manager said there were 75 properties in the city that had been out of use for longer than 2 years.

This property had had squatters and had been damaged by arson. The Council had incurred cost in securing the property.

Officers are asking the Board to authorise the use of its CPO powers as a last resort. They will continue to engage with the owner to seek to get the property back into use. If a CPO is required the statutory process will be followed.

The Board resolved to CONTINUE the discussion in private session so that the property owner could address the Board. The press and public left the room.

120. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

Resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the items in the exempt from publication part of the agenda in accordance with the provisions in Paragraph 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (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 and that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Summary of business transacted by the Board after passing the resolution contained in minute 121

The Board heard from the property owner and discussed the item.

121. EXEMPT APPENDICES FOR COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER- COWLEY ROAD

The City Executive Board resolved to AUTHORISE the Head of Housing and Property to continue to work with the property owner on a timetable designed to bring the property back into use within a reasonable timeframe. In the event that officers are not satisfied with the progress or speed of these discussions, the matter to be brought back to the Board.

That any final decision to initiate Compulsory Purchase proceedings be made by the Board.

122. MINUTES

The meeting returned to public session.

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meetings held on 10, 17 and 23 December 2014 as true and accurate records.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.00 pm

Cllr Turner, Board member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health responds to the Scrutiny Finance Panel's recommendations for minute 115 Banking Services Provider:

Recommendation 1: That the City Executive Board monitors the added social value provided by its new bank.

The Report to Finance Scrutiny Panel gives examples of areas where Barclays bank gave added value in support to local business and communities in Oxford, including :

- a. Skills based volunteering with schools across Oxfordshire
- b. Staff volunteering to carry out activities in the local community of Oxford
- c. Life skills – education programme for 11-19 year olds
- d. Money skills – supporting disadvantaged people to make financial decisions
- e. Organising events and workshops for local businesses to help them market their products and service and to educate them in such areas as finance

Pending the Bank taking over the Council's banking contract in March, the Council have already set up a meeting with the internal Welfare Reform Group to examine ways in which the bank can help our customers engaged with the Direct Payment Project on managing basic bank accounts. Over the coming months we will engage with the bank on other areas that we believe may be of assistance directly or indirectly to the Council.

Recommendation 2: That the City Executive Board revisits the terms and conditions for all tenders to ensure that they fully reflect the Council's ethical policies.

In all of our major procurements (over £100k) the Council requires the following commitment from the successful bidder to;

- Comply with our bribery and corruption policy
- Comply with our safeguarding policy
- Commit to our Living Wage policy
- Identify and report on local jobs and apprenticeships created as a result of the contract
- Carbon reduction targets
- Arrangement for any prompt payment arrangements for SMEs
- Support the Council in creating opportunities within the Social value act
- Evidence of their business commitment to corporate social responsibility

All of the above form part of the final contract conditions.

Recommendation 3 That the City Executive Board continues to monitor which banks other former Co-op customers are switching to, and whether ‘challenger banks’ begin taking on local authority customers.

The City Council will continue to monitor which banks other former Co-op customers are switching to, and whether ‘challenger banks’ begin taking on local authority **customers.**

The Council obtains some information from trade press from time to time on the movement of local authorities from the Co-Op and the activities of challenger banks. Information to date suggests that most ex local authority Co-Op customers are moving to either Barclays or Nat West. Whilst Challenger Banks have submitted a small number of bids for local authority contracts their activities to date have been limited and represent a ‘dipping of a toe in the water’, although clearly over time this has the potential to change.