

MINUTES OF THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 17 December 2015

www.oxford.gov.uk



COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Price (Leader), Turner (Deputy Leader), Brown, Hollingsworth, Kennedy, Lygo, Rowley, Simm, Sinclair and Tanner

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Jean Fooks and Councillor Van Coulter

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), David Edwards (Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing), Tim Sadler (Executive Director Community Services), Caroline Green (Assistant Chief Executive), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Ian Brooke (Head of Community Services), Ian Wright (Service Manager Environmental Health), Diane Phillips (Corporate Asset Manager), Piers Scrimshaw-Wright, Paul Fleming (Chief Technology & Information Manager), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Lindsay Cane (Legal Services Manager) and Catherine Phythian (Committee Services Officer)

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

120. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The City Executive Board noted the following public questions and the written responses (as published) on:

Agenda item 7: Community Centre Strategy

- Ms Judith Harley
- Mr Art Well

Agenda item 17: Budget 2016/17 - Consultation

- Mr Gibson

121. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee submitted the following reports for consideration by the Board. The Scrutiny Officer and Cllr Van Coulter, Chair of the Guest Houses Review Group presented the reports. Their comments are included under the main minute items for those reports.

122. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT - COMMUNITY CENTRE STRATEGY 2016-2020

This report was considered as part of the discussion of agenda item 7: Community Centre Strategy 2015-2020 (minute 128).

123. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT - RESETTLING SYRIAN REFUGEES IN OXFORD

This report was considered as part of the discussion of agenda item 8: Resettling Syrian Refugees in Oxford (minute 133).

124. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT - ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-2020

This report was considered as part of the discussion of agenda item 12: Asset Management Plan 2016-2020 (minute 129).

125. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT - REPORT OF THE GUEST HOUSES REVIEW GROUP

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which detailed the findings of the scrutiny inquiry into preventing and disrupting the exploitation of vulnerable people in guest houses in the city.

Cllr Van Coulter, Chair of the Guest Houses Review Group presented the report and recommendations. He said that in conducting this scrutiny review, councillors wanted to understand whether there was more that could reasonably be done to deter, disrupt and prevent opportunities for exploitation of children and adults in guest houses. In drafting the recommendations the Review Group had been mindful that this was an area in which Parliament might be asked to apply national standards. He said that the report had received favourable coverage in the media and that the Council had received requests for further information from a number of other local authorities.

Cllr Price, Corporate Strategy and Economic Development, responded on behalf of the Board. He said that as this was such an important issue the Board wanted to take the time to review the recommendations in detail before responding formally. In the meantime he said that the Board was fully supportive of the overall report and the two main recommendations:

- to maintain an accurate list of guest houses operating in the Oxford area that is updated at least annually developed into an accurate list)
- the introduction of a voluntary code of good practice for owners of guest houses in the Oxford area to sign up to

The City Executive Board thanked the Scrutiny Committee for the report which provided a valuable exposition of a serious problem.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. provide a written response to the recommendations.

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

Cllr Fooks addressed the Board with regard to:

- Agenda item 7: Community Centre Strategy
- Agenda item 11: Corporate Enforcement Policy

Her comments are included in the minute for those items.

127. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES

Cllr Linda Smith addressed the Committee with regard to the Oxford City Council's Tree Management Policy and the problem of nuisance trees in Blackbird Leys. She asked the Board to reconsider what could be done to deal with the problem.

Cllr Lygo, Board Member Leisure, Sports and Events said that he was aware of the concerns raised by Cllr Smith, which had been endorsed by other ward members, and that he intended to bring a revised Tree Management Policy to the Board.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Consider** a revised Tree Management Policy at the meeting in February 2016.

128. BUDGET 2016/17 - CONSULTATION

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-20 and 2016-17 Budget for approval prior to consultation.

Cllr Turner, Board Member Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The budget had been prepared in the context of the Autumn Statement announcement of a further 24% cut in local government spending

- the Government was passing the Business Rate risk to local authorities and this was treated as a substantial risk item in later years of the draft budget
- the expiry of the staff pay settlement was another risk area
- there were no cuts to front line services
- the capital programme had been trimmed back but the Council remained committed to all the projects on the reserve list
- The Housing Revenue Account was the highest risk area as a result of government policy changes and as a result the Council was looking at other alternative options to deliver its commitment to council housing
- the City Council's element of the council tax increase was capped at 1.99%

The Head of Financial Services said that this had been a particularly challenging year and that there were still a number of uncertainties in the draft budget.

The Chief Executive reminded the Board of the scale of recent changes underpinning the Budget. It was a significant achievement to maintain service levels and the capital programme against a significant reduction in income in recent years. He commended the work of the Council staff in delivering efficiency savings.

The Board thanked the Head of Financial Services and his staff for their hard work in preparing the 2016-17 Budget for consultation.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the 2016-17 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices 1-10 noting:
 - a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £19.823 million for 2016/17 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 1.99% or £5.55 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £284.52 per annum;
 - b) the continuance of the Council's Council Tax Support scheme (formerly Council Tax Benefit) as referred to in para 34;
 - c) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2016/17 of £43.460 million and a reduction of 1% (£1.06/wk) in social dwelling rents from April 2016 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £104.79 as set out in Appendix 4;
 - d) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6.
- 2) **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 8 and the change to concessions as referred to in para 37i(viii);
- 3) **Note** the prioritised list of Capital Schemes that are held in reserve, pending the receipt of further resources, as shown in Appendix 7;
- 4) **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Board Member for Finance and Assets the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 25-26; and

- 5) **Note** the intention of officers to seek an exemption from the requirement to decrease dwelling rents by 1% as referred to in paragraph 44 and the potential changes to the HRA budget.

129. COMMUNITY CENTRE STRATEGY 2016-2020

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which presented the draft Community Centres Strategy for discussion and amendment prior to a period of public consultation.

Cllr Simm, Board Member Culture and Communities, presented the report, highlighting the two main action areas of the draft Community Centres Strategy: improving facilities and sustainable management. She referred the Board to the published responses to the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee. She said that the following recommendations were rejected or accepted in part because:

- Recommendation 5 – in part : the Council would seek an alternative way to deliver a community hub in the event that proposed approach was compromised
- Recommendation 6 - No: the draft Strategy did recognise the work of volunteers and voluntary organisations
- Recommendation 7- in part :all groups were represented in the planned consultation sessions but the Board should notify officers if they were aware of other groups that should be included.

The Head of Community Services confirmed that the strategy would be subject to 8 weeks of public consultation starting in January 2016 and that the document would be available in hard copy and on-line. He was pleased to report that the first event in the new Rose Hill Community Centre would take place before Christmas.

In response to a question from Cllr Fooks about funds previously allocated for maintenance at Cutteslowe Community Centre but which did not appear in the Action Plan, the Board noted that the details of funding for community centre maintenance would be available at the end of the financial year.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the draft Community Centres Strategy for public consultation.

130. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-2020

The Director of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which presented the Asset Management Plan 2015-2020 for approval prior to public consultation.

Cllr Turner, Board Member Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He referred the Board to the list of changes from previous versions of the plan as set out at paragraph 7 of the report and commented on the clearer links to the corporate priorities.

In response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations he said that all four were broadly accepted subject to some textual amendments as set out in the published response. In closing he thanked the Senior Asset Manager and the Corporate Asset Manager and other officers for their work. In discussion the Board noted that this was the first Asset Management Plan for a number of years which recommended investing in additional property assets.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Asset Management Plan 2016-2020 for consultation as amended in the responses to the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee.

131. CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2016 - 2019

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report seeking approval from the City Executive Board to adopt the Council's new Corporate Procurement Strategy 2016 to 2019.

Cllr Brown, Board Member Customer Services and Corporate Services, presented the report. She said that an important element of the strategy would be to invest in the local economy. With reference to the Motion submitted to Council on 7 December 2015 concerning Procurement and Tax she explained that the Council was required by the Cabinet Office to follow pre-qualification rules for all EU contracts and there was no scope for variation. However, officers would continue to explore what could be done to meet the spirit of the Council Motion wherever possible.

The Board noted:

- the introduction of an ethical and sustainable procurement statement
- the savings target of 1-3% for a range of contracts

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the adoption of the Corporate Procurement Strategy for 2016 to 2019.

Cllr Turner left the meeting at the end of this item.

132. DATA PROTECTION POLICY REFRESH

The Head of Business Improvement submitted a report which presented an updated Data Protection Policy for approval.

Cllr Brown, Board Member Customer Services and Corporate Services, presented the report. The Chief Technology and Information Manager informed the Board that this was a straightforward refresh of the existing policy and that there were no new provisions. He said that he was pleased to note a more general awareness amongst all staff of the importance of data protection and

less reliance on the data protection policy specialists. He confirmed that the new ICT service providers were fully compliant on data protection.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Data Protection Policy.

133. CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY 2015

The Director for Housing and Regeneration submitted a report which detailed proposals for an Enforcement Policy covering all the regulatory functions of the Council.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Board Member Planning, Transport and Regulatory Service, presented the report. He explained that the Enforcement Policy complied with the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and referred the Board to the details contained in the Action Plan. He confirmed that the Action Plan milestones would be reviewed and monitored by the Board Member and officers.

The Environmental Health Service Manager explained that this was a corporate not service specific policy. He said that the Council's enforcement approach would take corporate and local priorities into account. In response to questions on the Action Plan he assured the Board that safeguarding training was an on-going activity and that it was the annual review of training plans that was scheduled for completion by June 2016.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the proposed Corporate Enforcement Policy and its appendices.

134. RESETTLING SYRIAN REFUGEES IN OXFORD

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which detailed progress in accommodating Syrian Refugees in Oxford through the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme and requested approval of proposals to accommodate Syrian Refugees in Oxford.

Cllr Price, Board Member Corporate Strategy and Economic Development, presented the report. He said that he was pleased to inform the Board that the first two refugee families had arrived in Oxford and were being supported by the City Council and partner organisations. He said that he was able to accept all of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations as they reinforced the City Council's preferred approach to work closely with partners and the County Council to co-ordinate and strengthen local arrangements for accommodating and supporting Syrian and other refugees.

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the Board that that the neighbouring district councils had expressed an interest in joining the City Council arrangements for resettling refugees. She said that she would bring further updates to the Board and to Council in 2016.

The Board noted the excellent work of Asylum Welcome and other voluntary organisations in accommodating and supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The Board thanked the Assistant Chief Executive and the Policy and Partnership Team Leader for their ongoing work in supporting the refugee programme in the City.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the participation in the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme for the purpose of settling refugee families in Oxford on the terms set out in the body of the report.
2. **Delegate** authority to the Assistant Chief Executive, to make any necessary arrangements for effective participation within the above Scheme.

135. THE OLD SCHOOL, GLOUCESTER GREEN

The Director of Regeneration & Housing submitted a report requesting approval for the principle of acquiring the long leasehold interest in The Old School, Gloucester Green.

Cllr Price presented the report and recommended its approval to the Board. He thanked the Major Projects and Development Surveyor for his work on the project.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the acquisition of the long leasehold interest in The Old School, Gloucester Green providing the Council's investment portfolio with additional income of £58,000 per annum, and make a recommendation to Council to increase the budget within the Council's capital programme by the requisite amount in 2015/16.

136. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2015/16

The Head of Financial Services and Head of Business Improvement submitted a report which detailed the Council's projected outturn for finance and performance and the risks faced as at the end of Quarter 2, 30 September 2015.

The Head of Financial Services presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The General Fund estimated outturn was estimated to be a £0.136M overspend
- The Housing Revenue Account was on target to spend to the latest budget
- The shortfall on the apprenticeships target was in part due to the fact that 6 apprentices have now been appointed to full time roles and 2 apprentices did not complete their probation
- The main area of risk remained the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

He explained that the Capital programme outturn position showed a net underspend against budget as a result of the City Executive Board decision in September 2015 to defer some capital projects. He referred the Board to the supplementary agenda which set out an additional recommendation to lift the temporary moratorium on capital schemes.

In response to questions about the amber risks the Chief Executive informed the Board that:

- Resilience of the ICT function - the detailed project plan for the transfer of the service from the County Council to the new contractor was monitored closely in order to manage the risk
- Partnership Funding reductions – will have a huge impact on the work the City Council does to tackle homelessness and has the potential to be very expensive for the City Council. The City Council will need to look at options for providing support through the grant allocation budget
- Recruitment and Retention – officers have already taken some action to address this and are considering taking a more generic approach to recruitment for some posts in areas with multiple or frequent vacancies

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected outturn position and the performance and associated risk information contained in the report;
2. **Agree** that, following the preparation of the Consultation Budget for 2016-17, officers should recommence the capital schemes in 2015/16, listed in Table 1, that were deferred at CEB in September.

Table 1	2015/16
	£
General Fund	
E3511 Renovation Grants	25,000
B0048 Leisure - Cemeteries	10,000
E3554 Additional SALIX Plus funding	78,000
A4833 Horspath Athletics Ground	170,000
B0086 Extension to Seacourt Park & Ride	115,000
Cycling and Public Realm	50,000
Total General Fund	448,000
Housing Revenue Account	
N6387 Controlled Entry	10,000
N7033 Energy Efficiency Initiatives	163,000
N7037 Solar Panels	215,000
N7040 Blackbird Leys Regeneration	15,000
Total HRA	403,000
Total	851,000

Cllr Fooks left the meeting at the end of this item.

137. TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report which presented the performance of the treasury management function for the 6 months to 30 September 2015.

The Head of Financial Services presented the report to the Board. In consideration of the report the Board noted the following points:

- That the average rate of return on investments was 1.23%, which was 0.23% above the performance target of 1%
- Forecast investment income is down by £0.136 million, due to interest rates being lower than predicted
- The merits of increasing investment in property should be looked at in the round

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Note** the performance of the treasury management function for the six months to 30 September 2015.

138. CORPORATE PLAN 2016-20 - CONSULTATION

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the draft Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020 for public consultation.

Cllr Price, Board Member Corporate Strategy and Economic Development presented the report. He said that officers had been working on the style and content of the Corporate Plan with the aim of making it a shorter, sharper and forward looking document.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that the year on year target information would be available in the post-consultation version of the Corporate Plan. She would also be reviewing the design and style of the final document.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the draft Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020 for public consultation.

139. ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBERS

No items were raised by Board Members.

140. MINUTES

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2015 as a true and accurate record.

Matters Exempt from Publication

The City Executive Board resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the item 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.

141. CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX: THE OLD SCHOOL, GLOUCESTER GREEN

The Board received and noted the contents of the not for publication appendix to the report on The Old School, Gloucester Green (agenda item 13; minute 134).

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm