

MINUTES OF THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 21 January 2016

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

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Jean Fooks and Councillor Linda Smith

OFFICERS PRESENT: Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Lindsay Cane (Legal Services Manager), Stephen Clarke (Head of Housing and Property), Mark Jaggard (Spatial & Economic Development Manager), Sarah Harrison (Senior Planner) and Catherine Phythian (Committee Services Officer)

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Brown, Councillor Lygo and Councillor Sinclair.

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

154. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

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

Councillor Fooks addressed the Board on agenda items 4a, 4b and 7. Her comments are included in the minutes for that item.

156. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES

There were no Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues.

157. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Board noted that the Oxpens Revised Delivery Strategy decision had not been called in.

Councillor Smith, Chair Scrutiny Housing Panel, presented the scrutiny reports and recommendations on Rent Performance and Choice Based Lettings.

158. REPORT FROM HOUSING STANDING PANEL: RENTS PERFORMANCE

Councillor Smith, Chair of the Housing Standing Panel presented the Panel's recommendations on the Council's rents performance. She cited the success of the Council's incentive scheme for waste recycling and said that the Panel hoped that a similar approach could be taken to encourage people to pay their rent by direct debit. She explained that the Panel felt a performance indicator targeted on this issue would be a valuable monitoring tool. She said that the Panel intended to monitor the success of any scheme that was introduced.

The Board Member said that he was pleased to accept the scrutiny recommendations and that housing officers were looking positively at scheme options.

In discussion the Board noted the following points:

- that the Council already collected some performance data relating to Direct Debit payments and it would be relatively straightforward to adapt this to target the proportion of Council tenants paying rent by Direct Debit
- that the Council favoured incentive scheme rather than a discount scheme so that people who did not have access to a Direct Debit banking option were not disadvantaged
- the need to take into account any legal constraints when devising the incentive scheme

The Board agreed to accept the Scrutiny Housing Panel recommendations:

- Recommendation 1 – That the Council should look at ways of incentivising Council tenants to pay rent by Direct Debit, including the option of holding a prize draw.
- Recommendation 2 – That the proportion of eligible Council tenants paying rent by Direct Debit should be a performance indicator in future years.

159. REPORT FROM HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL: CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Councillor Smith, Chair of the Housing Standing Panel presented the Panel's report and recommendations on proposed changes to the Choice Based Lettings scheme. She said that the Panel was very supportive of the scheme and the proposed change from a fortnightly lettings cycle to a weekly cycle.

She explained that the Panel had focused on two main areas of concern: reviewing what methods of bidding were available to people who were disabled or visually impaired; and understanding the reasons for the high level of refusals post-allocation.

In discussion the Board noted the following points:

- that the Council already collates some information on the reasons for post-allocation refusals but more detailed analysis and review would be beneficial
- that wherever possible the Council identifies “support contacts” assist people without internet access
- that the move to a weekly cycle would not increase the workload for officers

The Board Member said that he was pleased to accept the scrutiny recommendations.

The Board agreed to accept the Scrutiny Housing Panel recommendations:

1. Recommendation 1 – That the Choice Based Lettings cycle should be changed from a fortnightly (13 days) to a weekly cycle.
2. Recommendation 2 – That advice should be sought from relevant council officers and local disability groups on making the Choice Based Lettings bidding process more accessible to individuals with disabilities.
3. Recommendation 3 – That Council Officers should explore positive ways of reducing the number of offers of housing that are refused.

160. OXFORD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2016-2019

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services submitted a report which sought approval of a three-year programme for the preparation of various planning documents that will form part of the City Council’s Local Plan.

The Board Member, Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services presented the report. He explained that it was intended that the City Council should produce a new Local Plan 2036. This plan would be a single document that would replace most existing documents containing planning policy (other than the Area Action Plans). He said that the Local Plan 2036 will provide a long-term planning framework to deliver managed growth of the city for an additional 10 years to 2036. He emphasised that all the existing planning policies would remain in force until the new Local Plan 2036 was formally adopted. In conclusion he commended the report to the Board and encouraged all members to engage in the creation of the new plan.

In discussion the Board noted the following points:

- the target completion date was 2018
- this would be a major undertaking and provided a significant opportunity for a comprehensive review of all the current planning policies
- key areas to address would include renewable energy, transport and transport hubs, height and density considerations, affordable housing

- it was essential to use the process to identify flexible and creative means by which to deliver growth whilst retaining the city's green spaces, historic buildings and its skyline

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. Approve the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2016-19; and
2. Endorse the production of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 and the Local Plan Consultation and Engagement Programme appended to the LDS.

161. ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBERS

No items were raised by Board Members.

162. MINUTES

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 as a true and accurate record.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 5.30 pm