

Agenda

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City Executive Board

Date: **Thursday 13 October 2016**

Time: **5.00 pm**

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

For any further information please contact:

Sarah Claridge, Committee and Member Services Officer

Telephone: 01865 529920

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As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record the meeting please let the Committee Services Officer know how you wish to do this before the start of the meeting.

City Executive Board

Membership

Chair

Councillor Bob Price	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development
Councillor Ed Turner	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health
Councillor Susan Brown	Customer and Corporate Services
Councillor Alex Hollingsworth	Planning and Regulatory Services
Councillor Pat Kennedy	Young People, Schools and Skills
Councillor Mike Rowley	Housing
Councillor Christine Simm	Culture and Communities
Councillor Dee Sinclair	Community Safety
Councillor Linda Smith	Leisure, Parks and Sport
Councillor John Tanner	A Clean and Green Oxford
Councillor Andrew Gant	Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Craig Simmons	Green Group Leader

The quorum for this meeting is three, substitutes are not allowed.

Future items to be discussed by the City Executive Board can be found on the Forward Plan which is available on the Council's [website](#)

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AGENDA

PART ONE PUBLIC BUSINESS

Pages

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
- 3 ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
(15 MINUTES TOTAL)
- 4 COUNCILLORS ADDRESSES ON ANY ITEM FOR DECISION ON
THE BOARD'S AGENDA
- 5 COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES (10
MINUTES IN TOTAL)
- 6 ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBERS
- 7 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following Scrutiny Committee reports have been, or may be, submitted to this meeting:-

- a THE IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT FOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENT (REPORT TO FOLLOW)
- b REVIEW OF TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY (MAY FOLLOW)

- 8 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

9 - 20

Lead Member: Councillor Brown Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

The Director of Organisational Development and Corporate Services has submitted a report which makes recommendations for the operation of the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2017/18

Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Approve** the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme for the financial year 2017/18.

9 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

21 - 36

Lead Member: Councillor Smith Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

The Head of Direct Services has submitted a report which details an updated Tree Management Policy.

Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Approve** the draft Tree Management Policy

10 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

37 - 44

Lead Member: Councillor Brown Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

The Head of Business Improvement has submitted a report which details the corporate Customer Service Excellence standard accreditation and explains how the Council plan to embed the standard further. To report the first quarter's performance against the corporate comments and complaints scheme.

Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Note** this report, and congratulates the City Council staff in achieving the Customer Service Excellence standard across the whole Council.

11 MINUTES

45 - 56

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016

Recommendation: The City Executive Board NOTES the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 as a true and accurate record.

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.

*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.

HOW OXFORD CITY COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC CAN ENGAGE AT THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Addresses and questions by members of the public, (15 minutes in total)

Members of the public can submit questions in writing about any item for decision at the meeting. Questions, stating the relevant agenda item, must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am two clear working day before the meeting (eg for a Thursday meeting, the deadline would be 9.30am on the Tuesday). Questions can be submitted either by letter or by email (executiveboard@oxford.gov.uk).

Answers to the questions will be provided in writing at the meeting; supplementary questions will not be allowed. If it is not possible to provide an answer at the meeting it will be included in the minutes that are published on the Council's website within 2 working days of the meeting.

The Chair has discretion in exceptional circumstances to agree that a submitted question or related statement (dealing with matters that appear on the agenda) can be asked verbally at the meeting. In these cases, the question and/or address is limited to 3 minutes, and will be answered verbally by the Chair or another Board member or an officer of the Council. The text of any proposed address must be submitted within the same timescale as questions.

For this agenda item the Chair's decision is final.

Councillors speaking at meetings

Oxford City councillors may, when the chair agrees, address the Board on an item for decision on the agenda (other than on the minutes). The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one clear working day before the meeting, stating the relevant agenda items. An address may last for no more than three minutes. If an address is made, the Board member who has political responsibility for the item for decision may respond or the Board will have regard to the points raised in reaching its decision.

Councillors speaking on Neighbourhood issues (10 minutes in total)

Any City Councillor can raise local issues on behalf of communities directly with the Board. The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one clear working day before the meeting, giving outline details of the issue. Priority will be given to those members who have not already addressed the Board within the year and in the order received. Issues can only be raised once unless otherwise agreed by the Board. The Board's responsibility will be to hear the issue and respond at the meeting, if possible, or arrange a written response within 10 working days.

Items raised by Board members

Such items must be submitted within the same timescale as questions and will be for discussion only and not for a Board decision. Any item which requires a decision of the Board will be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Board

- a)
- b)

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To: City Executive Board
Date: 13 October 2016
Report of: Executive Director of Organisational Development and Corporate Services
Title of Report: Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To make recommendations for the operation of the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2017/18
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Susan Brown, Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	Meeting Housing Need An Efficient and Effective Council
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Approve the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme for the financial year 2017/18.	
Appendices	
Appendix 1	Research into Council Tax Reduction
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction

1. Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished in 2013 and replaced with local schemes of support to help people on low incomes pay their Council Tax. This support is known as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). Every Local Authority is required to adopt a scheme and consult if it wishes to change it.

2. Oxford City Council has maintained the same level of support in its CTRS as would have been available to residents under the former national scheme of CTB. All local schemes are required to adopt this principle in respect of people of pension age. However, there is scope to vary the support provided to people of working age.
3. This paper explores the options for amending the CTR scheme in 2017/18, together with their implications.

Cost of Local CTR Scheme

4. The cost of the CTR Scheme has increased significantly in the last two years. This is a result of the reduction in funding from central government. The number of CTR recipients has also been reducing since the scheme was localised, mainly due to the improvements in the local economy over this period. The cost of the scheme and number of recipients over the last four years is summarised in the Table 1 below.
5. In 2013/14 DCLG paid a separate grant to Local Authorities for CTR. Since then, funding has been incorporated into Formula Grant and is not separately identifiable. The phasing out of Formula Grant means that by 2020, the Council will bear the whole cost of the scheme.
6. The Council has flexibility within the Council Tax Exemption and Discount scheme to vary the charges made to different categories of empty property. The City Council has made use of these powers to raise revenue to offset to some extent the cost of the CTR scheme. This includes the following discounts which the council has discretion on the level of discount and how it is applied.
 - For empty and unfurnished property the council implements a one month exemption followed by a full charge.
 - On properties undergoing major works the council implements a 25% discount for 12 months.
 - For second homes the full charge is levied.
 - For houses that are unoccupied for more than two years a charge of 150% is levied.

Table 1

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
City Council share of CTR	£1,712,631.22	£1,626,666.96	£1,575,328.94	£1,637,120.67
DCLG funding for CTR	-£1,546,457.00	-£1,346,964.05	-£947,993.30	-£593,443.81
DCLG Transitional Grant	-£42,148.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Income raised by CT exemptions and discounts on empty property	-£135,810.86	-£86,306.93	-£103,358.68	-£74,456.06
Cost to the City Council	-£11,784.64	£193,395.98	£523,976.96	£969,220.80
No. of working age CTR recipients	6272	6036	5963	5933
No. of pension age CTR recipients	3529	3411	3261	3241
Total	9801	9447	9224	9174

CTR Modelling

7. Initial modelling has been carried out to look at how a reduction in support would affect Oxford residents. The modelling is based on the current year's data and assumes a minimum charge of 30% of their Council Tax liability. This approach has been taken as it is the most common approach used by other local authorities who have reduced support. The figure of 30% is a little above the average minimum charge imposed by other councils.
8. Applying a minimum payment of 30% of the Council Tax bill for all Working Age recipients of CTR would reduce total expenditure this year from £1,637,121 to £1,251,103, a saving of £386,108. However, to generate a saving of £386,108 for the City Council, an additional £2,290,910 in Council Tax would be need to be levied on low income households (as only 16.85% of Council Tax levied is attributable to the City Council, the remainder passing to the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner). For someone living in Blackbird Leys in a Band D property, 30% of their liability is £519.34 for the current year.
9. When amending the CTR scheme it is possible to protect certain groups. The reduction in potential savings arising from the protection of certain groups is shown below (the savings figures relate to the reduction in savings for the City Council based on the example of a 30% minimum charge):
 - Carers: £19,533 (307 households)
 - People with a severe disability: £36,393 (673 cases)
 - Lone parent with child under 5: £37,982 (738 cases)
10. 35% of CTR recipients in Oxford are of pension age so the cost of the pension age scheme is £578,363.65. This means the government grant now only covers slightly more than the cost of this scheme, which the Council is not permitted to change. As such, it is unfeasible for the Council to recoup the funding shortfall from working age recipients of CTRS.

Benchmarking data from other authorities

11. Unfortunately there is no formal reporting of the collection of the CTRS element of Council Tax. However, some analysis of the impact of CTR on Council Tax collection has been done. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) analysed the first year of the CTR scheme in London which shows London authorities are facing lower collection rates. The collection rate for council tax owed by council tax support claimants with an increased liability in 2013/14 was, on average, 81 percent, compared with average collection rates of 97.4 per cent in 2012/13. In addition 92,648 customers in this group were charged £10m in court costs with 15,944 referred to enforcement agents (bailiffs). The collection rate of 81% also correlates with informal benchmarking

undertaken with authorities who have measured the collection rate of this additional amount of Council Tax.

12. Taking the example above of charging a minimum of 30% in Oxford, a collection rate of 81 percent would result in £435,272.80 of the additional amount levied, being uncollected, of which £73,343.47 would be borne by the City Council. This significantly reduces the potential saving of £386,108. Other councils report that significant resource has to be put into collecting amounts raised as a result of reducing Council Tax Support.
13. Appendix 1 attached, provides a summary of research conducted by the New Policy Institute. This shows that the councils that have raised the largest bills are seeing the largest increases in Council Tax arrears.

Context of wider changes to the benefits system

14. Since 2010 there have been significant changes to the benefits system, reducing payments in real terms to benefit recipients. Any changes to the CTR Scheme must be considered in light of this environment. Table 2 below shows the projected reduction in income to benefit recipients in Oxford as a result of benefit changes that have been announced in the last year. This is in addition to the £29.7m reduction in benefits that occurred between 2010 and 2015. This analysis has been carried out by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. In this context the City Council's retention of full support in its CTR Scheme plays an important role in avoiding pushing yet more households into poverty.

Table 2

Measure	Households affected	Financial loss (£m)
Universal Credit (tapers & thresholds)	4,700	5
Tax Credits (new changes)	3,400	3
Mortgage Interest Support	200	0.3
Pay to Stay	600	1.5
LHA cap in social rented sector	600	0.5
Employment & Support Allowance (new changes)	900	1.1
Lowering of Benefit Cap	420	1.2
Benefit Freeze	15000	7
	Total	19.6

15. Previous research we have commissioned shows that people affected by benefit reductions are coping with changes by borrowing money from family and friends, and regularly skip meals and/or failing to heat their homes adequately. These are the same households that would be affected by a reduction in the support available through the CTR Scheme.

Options

16. *Option 1 – Charge all households a minimum of 30% of the full Council Tax bill.*
This could potentially reduce the cost of the scheme to the Council by £386,108. However, if collection of this new debt was in line with the benchmark figure of 81% the saving would reduce to £312,765.
17. *Option 2 – Maintain the existing CTR scheme*
The scheme is forecast to cost £969,220 in 2016/17. Any reduction in support would increase the pressure on the already stretched household budgets of people on low incomes in the City.
18. *Option 3 – Conduct further modelling to develop an alternative scheme.*
Whilst this could potentially reduce the cost of the scheme to the Council it would put increased pressure on low income households. Experience elsewhere shows that the more that support is reduced; the harder it is to collect the debt which is raised.
19. Changing the CTR scheme to reduce the cost of providing support, does not fit with the Council's response to the government's "welfare reform" programme. The Council's response to this challenge has been carefully considered, with financial help given alongside practical support to those affected, in order to help them become financially sustainable. Introducing arbitrary reductions in financial support would undermine this approach. As such the City Executive Board are recommended to choose Option 2 and maintain the existing CTR scheme for 2017/18.

Legal Issues

20. If the Council wishes to amend its CTR scheme, it must carry out full public consultation, and agree the new scheme by 31 January 2017.

Financial Issues

21. The costs of maintaining the scheme or adopting a new scheme are outlined in the relevant sections above.

Environmental Impact

22. There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

Level of Risk

23. A Risk Register is included at Appendix 2

Equalities Impact

24. An impact assessment is included at Appendix 3.

Report author	Paul Wilding
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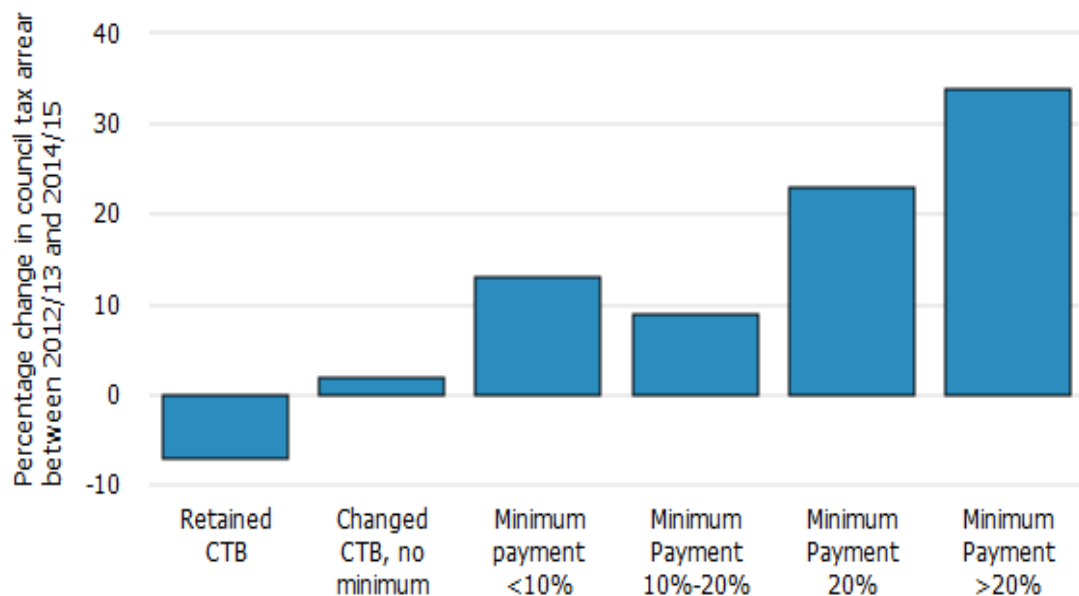
Background Papers: None

Appendix 1

Research into Council Tax Reduction by the New Policy Institute

The New Policy Institute (NPI) is an economic and social research institute, which has conducted a lot of research into CTR. Their graph below shows the change in council tax arrears between 2012/13 (the last year of CTB) and 2014/15 (the second year of CTR). It shows arrears in respect of council tax liability for the year in question. The bars are grouped according to the scheme in place in each council in 2014/15, by whether they changed the scheme from CTB, whether they introduced a minimum payment, and the size of the minimum payment if one had been introduced. The change in arrears shown controls for change in the amount of council tax that was collectable over this period.

It shows that, although arrears include residents who are not in receipt of CTR, those councils with a larger increase in minimum payment saw a bigger increase in arrears. Among the 45 councils that retained CTB, arrears fell in relative terms by 7%. Among other councils, the increase was smallest across the 36 local authorities that did not introduce a minimum payment, at 2%. For the 69 councils with a minimum payment of 20% arrears were 23% higher. In the 47 councils with a minimum payment of over 20%, arrears rose 44%.



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Appendix 2 Risk Register

Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
							I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Increase in cost of CTR scheme	Increasing numbers of people qualify for support, increasing the cost of the scheme.	Threat	Reductions in both in-work and out of work benefits	Reducing incomes mean that more people qualify for support with their Council Tax.	27/7/15	Paul Wilding	3	4	2	3	2	3		Welfare Reform Team support people affected by benefit changes into work, which reduces demand for help with Council Tax.	Ongoing		100	Paul Wilding
Financial Inclusion Strategy(FIS) is undermined	Amending the CTR scheme negates work carried out as part of the FIS	Threat	Reducing the support provided for Council Tax.	An amended CTR scheme could put the budget of people on low incomes under greater pressure..	27/7/15	Paul Wilding	4	4	4	1	4	1		Recommending that CTR scheme be left unchanged	13/10/16		50	Paul Wilding
Increase in poverty 17	Reducing the support provided by the CTR scheme could push more households into poverty.		Combination of the impact of reducing Council Tax support, and changes to other benefits.	Rent, heating and food costs become unaffordable for more households.	27/7/15	Paul Wilding	4	4	3	2	3	2		Recommending that CTR scheme be left unchanged	13/10/16		50	Paul Wilding

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Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form

1. Within the aims and objectives of the policy or strategy which group (s) of people has been identified as being potentially disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

The people who will be potentially disadvantaged by this policy are the 4,904 households who do not have to pay any Council Tax, due to being on a low income. The policy recommendation is to maintain the existing level of support, which if agreed will not see anyone disadvantaged. If a different decision is made the people impacted will be those on low incomes. Research conducted into the local impact of welfare reform has shown that this group are managing the impact by borrowing from family and friends, and often skipping meals. A reduction in Council Tax Support would exacerbate this impact. Maintaining the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme, also supports the objectives of the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy, particularly the objectives linked to the theme of debt.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?

Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

The recommendation is not to make a change. However an alternative decision could see low income households facing annual Council Tax bills of between £100 and £600. A number of frontline teams work with households to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform, including Tenancy Sustainment, Revenues, Rents and the Welfare Reform Team.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

If a decision is made to alter the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme, then a full public consultation is required. The Council would also have to consult the County Council and the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner as there would be an impact on their income.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

The recommendation is to make no change, which will mean there is no adverse impact.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

The overall impact of the CTR Scheme is already monitored on a monthly basis and is part of the monthly highlight report of the Revenues & Benefits Programme Manager which is reported to the ODCS Board.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA:

Role: Revenues & Benefits Programme Manager

Date: 7 September 2016

To: City Executive Board
Date: 13 October 2016
Report of: Head of Direct Services
Title of Report: Tree Management Policy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To approve the updated Tree Management Policy
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Linda Smith, Leisure, Parks and Sport
Corporate Priority:	A Clean and Green Oxford & An Efficient and Effective Council.
Policy Framework:	None.
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Approve the draft Tree Management Policy	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The draft Tree Management Policy
Appendix 2	2016-17 Tree Planting List

Introduction and background

1. The draft Tree Management Policy is a revised version of the original Oxford City Council Tree Management Plan agreed in 2008.
2. The draft Tree Management Policy sets out how Oxford City Council proposes to manage trees within Oxford City Councils ownership. The amendments to the Policy have been derived from feedback from Members, Scrutiny Committee and the Parish Council Forum.

Amendments to the Policy

3. Feedback from Members suggested that the original Policy was too negative and that the Council should do more to help residents and tenants. Therefore the new

Policy has been amended to address these concerns. These are summarised below:

- a. It has been written with a 'friendlier' albeit still informative tone to improve customer perception of the Policy.
 - b. A new Common Law Right Section. This section aims to provide the public with more information regarding their Rights and what they are able to do.
 - c. A new Arbitration & Review Section. This has been added to formalise how we deal with customers who are unhappy with the decisions of the Tree Team.
4. In addition to the above amendments a Customer Advice Guide will be drafted once the Policy has been approved. This guide will provide the public with further details of options to resolve tree related problems that do not necessarily involve undertaking tree works.

Financial implications

5. The Policy has no financial implications

Legal issues

6. There are no legal implications

Level of risk

7. There are no additional risk implications

Equalities impact

8. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary as the Tree Policy provides an equal service to everyone.
9. However, where individual mobility or disability needs arise we will adopt a pragmatic approach on a case by case basis.

Conclusion

10. The Policy provides the framework within which Oxford City Council will manage its tree stock safely and effectively, how we reduce the risk that certain trees pose to the public and how we intend to increase the number of trees in Oxford.

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Job title	Parks and Open Spaces Manager
Service area or department	Direct Services
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Background Papers: None

DRAFT

Tree Management Policy

August 2016

Introduction

This Tree Management Policy is a revised version of the original Oxford City Council Tree Management Plan agreed in 2008.

Oxford's trees are of immense environmental and aesthetical value to the City and its residents.

Urban trees offer the following benefits:

- They can enhance the character and appearance of urban areas and can add value to surrounding properties.
- They provide a habitat for wildlife and provide a source of food for bees and other pollinators.
- They produce oxygen and improve air quality by absorbing pollutants.
- They help to reduce the rising temperatures caused by climate change and can mitigate the risk of flooding.
- They cool urban areas by providing shade and reducing heat radiating from hard surfaces.
- They deflect, and therefore reduce noise.

Oxford City Council recognises these benefits, seeks to preserve healthy trees and encourages the planting of new trees where possible. Whilst the majority live and grow without incident, a number of trees located in densely populated cities pose challenges and risks that need to be managed.

This revised policy provides the framework within which Oxford City Council will manage its tree stock safely and effectively, how we reduce the risk that certain trees pose to the public and how we intend to increase the number of trees in Oxford.

This tree policy does not cover trees in private ownership which are outside Oxford City Council's control. Trees in private ownership are the responsibility of the private landowner. If a Tree Preservation Order or a Conservation Area protects trees, the Council's Planning Department administers these controls together with high hedge legislation.

Aim of the Tree Management Policy

The overall aim of the Tree Management Policy is to ensure that Oxford's tree stock is retained, enhanced and increased in the most proactive manner whilst ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the public and property.

Management of the Council's Trees – Routine Inspections

Oxford City Council undertakes a tree inspection programme based on industry best practice.

Industry guidelines outlined in 'Common Sense Tree Risk Management' by the National Tree Safety Group ([http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS024.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/$FILE/FCMS024.pdf)) states the following management for a City Council with approximately 200,000 residents is the following:

'Street trees are inspected and managed on a three-year cycle. This obviously includes highlighting any trees found in a poor condition. Schools and parks are inspected every two years and housing trees every four. The areas described above are managed proactively throughout the year. The tree officers record all tree inspections and any emergency work carried out. If they remove a street tree, they assess the location for replanting to keep in line with the council's stated strategic increase in its tree stock.'

Accordingly, Oxford City Council undertakes a regular inspection programme of between 2 and 4 years depending on the trees' location and site usage.

It was estimated in 2004 that Oxford City Council has over 100,000 trees. To ensure that we survey these as per this best practice, we will undertake a Zoning* exercise on Council sites to highlight areas where trees are present. This method is now being used by many Local Authorities. The method is to:-

- Identify areas of sites that are high risk and require surveying more frequently
- Identify areas of sites that are low risk therefore reducing the inspection frequency of these areas. We believe a number of our trees will not be classed as high risk and will reduce the frequency of inspection required i.e. Shotover Country Park and Magdalen Wood.

* Zoning – The following extract is copied from the 'Common Sense Tree Risk Management' by the National Tree Safety Group ([http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS024.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/$FILE/FCMS024.pdf)).

'Zoning is a practice whereby landowners and managers define areas of land according to levels of use. This practice prioritises the most used areas, and by doing so contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection, focusing resources where most needed. It contributes to sensible risk management and a defensible position in the event of an accident. It may be a reasonable outcome of the zoning

process to decide that no areas require inspection. Classifying levels of use in this way requires only a broad assessment of levels of use. Typically, two zones, high and low use, may be sufficient. High use zones are areas used by many people every day, such as busy roads, railways and other well-used routes, car parks and children's playgrounds or where property may be affected. While owners and managers may deem it appropriate to use a more sophisticated approach, designating three or more zones, in the event of an accident whichever system is adopted may require justification according to the standard set.'

Zoning, inspection schedules and the inspections will be undertaken by the Council's own Tree Team. This information is held on a database of trees (Ezytreev) and plotted on a geographical information system (ArcGIS).

Tree Inspection Procedure

The routine inspection programme is designed to assess the tree's condition and health. The inspection highlights any work that may be required on a risk basis to ensure that the tree is retained in the best possible condition.

The decision to prescribe work to a tree is calculated on a risk basis. Risk is assessed using the VTA (Visual Tree Assessment) method outlined in *The Body Language of Trees: A handbook for failure analysis – C. Mattheck & H. Breloer*.

An evaluation of the tree takes into account factors including:

- Size
- Species and characteristics
- Presence and extent of structural and physiological defects including the relationship to any pathogens present.

All of these factors are considered in relation to the potential target, the damage that could be caused if the tree were to fail and the likelihood of it doing so.

If defects are observed, further detailed examination may be carried out using a range of decay detection equipment before any decision is taken regarding the trees future management.

The inspection, including further examination if required, will determine if any works (i.e. pruning or felling) are required. A tree will only be highlighted for felling through routine inspection if it is identified as:

- Dead
- Dying
- Diseased
- Dangerous and is posing an unacceptable risk to public safety
- Damaging property (e.g. subsidence when confirmed by technical evidence)

Tree works

Following an inspection a priority will be given for the works recommended. This will enable the council to organise a balanced schedule of works.

The Council will maintain a rolling maintenance programme of cyclical works highlighted by the Tree Team. This rolling programme will reduce or remove avoidable tree related issues, for example:

- Vehicle and pedestrian collision
- Identified hazards
- Trees where its relationship to a property causes excessive problems
- Obstructing footpaths or driveways by branches or epicormic growth

All tree works will be carried out according to the British Standard BS3998: 2010 Tree Work – Recommendations.

In accordance with good arboricultural management the removal of trees may be carried out when it will benefit the long-term development of adjacent better quality trees i.e. woodland and copse management. Furthermore, pruning may be carried out following the Tree Team's inspections, for example:

- Crown reduction
- Dead wood removal
- Crown lifting
- Crown thinning including the removal of crossing, weak or competitive branches
- Pollarding
- Coppicing

Management of the Council's Trees – Customer derived Inspections

Oxford City Council receives a high volume of customer requests associated with trees. We aim to provide high quality customer service with all requests for service; however the Tree Team is not resourced to undertake all the work that is requested from the public.

Following an appropriate request, an inspection will be arranged for a member of the Tree Team. The council may undertake a variety of pruning operations to remedy complaints provided that the long-term health, appearance, or potential development of the tree is not affected

Where pruning or felling works are required due to an unacceptable risk (as outlined above), this will be programmed into the work schedule based on that risk.

Work to trees will not normally be undertaken for the list of reasons below:

- Blocking light
- Television or satellite signals
- Residents do not *'like'* the tree
- Leaf or fruit drop
- Unproven allegations of subsidence or direct damage
- Construction of dropped kerbs or new driveways
- Perceived threat
- The tree's size; *'its got too big'*
- The tree *'moves in the wind'*
- Bird droppings
- Aphids
- Perceived to be causing medical issues
- Erection of fencing, walls, play areas and sports pitches

There are other solutions available to a number of these issues. These solutions can be found in the Customer Advice Guide for Trees.

The public may be able to resolve or reduce the issues above by exercising their Common Law Right which is explained in the next section.

Common Law Right

1. Common Law Right – Property owners have a Common Law Right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with trees encroaching onto their property. The following advice is given if property owners wish to exercise their Common Law Right with respect to encroaching trees:
 - a) As the property owner you can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to access, cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property;
 - b) You are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees, unless the works are trivial meaning you could do the works with hand secateurs or similar;
 - c) You are strongly advised to tell the owner of the trees what you plan to do. You can find out if the trees are owned by the Council by contacting the Parks Service Tree Team at trees@oxford.gov.uk.
 - d) You are strongly advised to find out if the trees you wish to prune are covered by a tree preservation order or are within a conservation area. If they are, you will need to seek permission from the Tree Officer in the Council's Planning Department. You can find this information by following the link below – www.oxford.gov.uk/tpo

Wildlife and Conservation

Trees are essential to the biodiversity and wildlife of Oxford and support other species such as insects, invertebrates, birds and mammals.

Tree works shall be carried out whilst ensuring adherence to all wildlife and conservation laws and regulations including:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended 1996)
- Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1999
- Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000
- Town and Country Planning Act (Trees) Regulations 1999 (amended 2008)
- Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (amended 2010)
- European Habitats Directive 1992 (amended 2007)
- Biodiversity Act 2005 (amended 2008)

In the case of areas with low access and high biodiversity value risk will be managed in accordance with ecological benefits. Management may include restriction of access, which will allow the retention of veteran trees or standing dead wood which will encourage biodiversity via habitat retention/and or creation.

Conservation Areas

When any works are recommended for trees within a Conservation area, the Tree Team will liaise with the Council's Planning Department, although there is no legal obligation to do this.

Communicating with the Public and Members

The Council will inform Ward Councillors and appropriate 'Friends Groups' of any major tree works such as pollarding or felling before any works are carried out in their ward/park. If there are a large number of trees to fell in one location, the Council may also erect notices to inform the public of the proposed works.

In the event of emergency safety work that must be carried out immediately (e.g. storm conditions), the Council will notify Ward Councillors retrospectively.

Felling is the last resort and will only be carried out when deemed necessary by the Tree Team. However, public safety is paramount and for this reason the public will be informed of tree works, via Ward Councillors and notices, but will not be consulted for approval.

Council Trees affected by Planning Applications

Requests for tree works and/or removal of trees from Council owned land to allow development shall be considered by the elected members as part of the decision as to whether to approve the planning application and any conditions that they think appropriate. Officers will not take this decision, although advice will be provided to the elected members.

Members are encouraged to consider when dealing with planning applications for privately owned land, whether there are Council owned trees on adjacent plots that may be affected by the development before approving the application (e.g. for site access, dropped kerbs or storage of materials).

Subsidence & Heave

Subsidence is a complex interaction between the soil, the building (including foundations), climate and vegetation that occurs on highly shrinkable clay soils when the soil supporting all or part of a building dries out and consequently shrinks, resulting in part of a building moving downwards.

Trees lose water from the leaves through transpiration that is replenished by water taken from the soil by the roots. If the tree takes more water from the soil than is replaced by rainfall, the soil will gradually dry out. Trees can have large root systems and can dry the soil to a greater depth, critically below the level of foundations.

The amount of water trees can remove from the soil can vary between different species. This policy seeks to set out the Council's response to subsidence claims against its own trees.

The opposite of subsidence is a process called 'heave' and this occurs when a shrinkable clay soil re-hydrates (becomes wet again) and begins to increase in volume exerting upward pressure. Heave can also cause damage to buildings but generally occurs less frequently.

All claims regarding subsidence or heave against Council owned trees will be referred to the Council's Insurer along with a brief report from the Council's Tree Team. The report will highlight if the tree(s) is the responsibility of the Council, the age, type and condition of the tree(s) and any other factors that may be of importance to the claim.

The insurers for the claimant or their consultants must provide evidence of ALL the following items before any works will be considered to Council owned trees.

- Evidence of physical damage
- Presence of live roots of a specific species

- Seasonal movement or variation of the damage during different seasons.

If the above evidence is provided, the Council will adhere to the advice supplied by insurers with regard to what, if any, works are required to the trees. If evidence is insufficient the claim will be dismissed.

Where there is a subsidence or heave concern regarding a Council owned property, we must also provide evidence of ALL the following items before any works are carried out to Council owned trees.

- Evidence of physical damage
- Presence of live roots of a specific species
- Seasonal movement or variation of the damage during different seasons.

Arbitration & Review of Decisions

If the decision of the Council's Tree Team is subject to a challenge the decision will be reviewed by the Parks and Open Spaces Manager and/or the Head of Direct Services.

Any challenge to this decision will be dealt with via the Council's Complaints Procedures.

Waste & Recycling

All waste created by working on trees will be recycled. This will be used in a variety of situations, including: mulches for shrub beds, power station fuel, firewood, donated to charities, habitat piles or dead standing timber where suitable, thereby avoiding the use of landfill sites.

Replacement Trees

It is the City Council's policy that every tree felled should be replaced to ensure that over the years the City retains its tree stock for future generations, although it is recognised that it is not always practical or prudent to replace a tree in the same location or with the same species that was previously planted.

The Council will work proactively to manage or facilitate replacement tree planting, which may include but not be limited to, working with the community and friends groups, considering new planting schemes, including memorial trees, community woodlands and by encouraging funding from new developments for tree planting through working with the Planning Department.

The Council will update and publish a programme for planting in the upcoming season that reflects the approved budget for that year.

The Council is committed to planting trees that will benefit pollinating insects e.g. bees, and if possible are native to Britain.

The planting season is from October through to March. This may vary depending on seasonal change and changes in climate. Planting outside these timescales is not generally recommended due to the increase in failure rates.

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Definitions

Arboriculture – the management of trees in the urban environment

Cyclical Works – removal or adjustment of stakes and ties from young trees, removal of basal or epicormic growth, crown lifting to clear footpaths or highway vision splays.

Dangerous – a tree can be classified as dangerous, posing a more than acceptable risk to persons or property, having been assessed of its chance of collapse and the potential damage that may result if it collapsed.

Dead, Dying, Diseased – see Dangerous

Decay Detection Equipment – a range of tools specifically designed to measure the extent of decay or remaining healthy timber in an individual tree. Tools currently owned by Oxford City Council include sounding mallet, probe, resistograph micro-drill, core sampler, fractometer, Picus sonic tomograph.

Failure Risk Assessment – An assessment based on:

How could the tree fail, what defects are present, probability of failure?

Followed by

Consequential Damage – what damage would the failure cause?

Followed by

Hazard Reduction – if an acceptable risk is present and the impact can be reduced via tree pruning, removal, or relocation of potential targets appropriate to each situation.

Geographical Information System (G.I.S) – Computer database usually represented as a map with linked tables of data.

Good Arboricultural Practice – tree surgery operations carried out in accordance with industry best practice.

Major Works – works including felling or work concentrated on many trees in a localised area.

Minor Roads – Footpaths, bridleways and ‘urban roads’ that are neither ‘trunk’ nor ‘classified’, usually with a speed limit of 30mph. These roads are the responsibility of the City Council as outlined in the Section 42(Highways Act 1980) agreement with Oxfordshire County Council.

Physical Damage – damage, usually cracking, to structures caused by incremental growth of stems or roots, or soil shrinkage due to water extraction.

Pollarding – the removal of all (or nearly all) branches leaving a trunk from which new branches will grow in successive seasons. Usually on a 5 – 15-year cycle, limited to a small number of species.

Presence of live roots – taken from test boreholes dug in the area adjacent to property damage as evidence towards proving subsidence of a property.

Seasonal Movement – physical damage to structures that increases with annual growth relating to direct damage. If subsidence is present the cracking will increase in summer and reduce in winter. (Deciduous trees extract large volumes of water during summer months and dramatically less in winter when trees are without leaves.)

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Oxford City Council

Tree Planting List 2016/17

<u>Genus</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Variety/Sub-species</u>
Acer	platanoides	Deborah
Amelanchier	arborea	Robin Hill
Morus	nigra	
Arbutus	unedo	
Betula	pendula	
Cornus	mas	
Cedrus	libani	
Crataegus		x prunifolia
Pyrus	calleryana	"Chanticleer"
Fagus	sylvatica	
Quercus	robur	
Larix	decidua	
Pinus	nigra	Austriaca
Prunus		Tai Haku
Platanus	orientallis	Minaret
Ulmus	lutece	
Taxus	bacata	fastigiata
Tilia	plataphyllos	
Pinus	sylvestris	
Zelkova	serrata	
Tillia	Cordata	Greenspire
Liquidambar	styraciflua	Worplesdon

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To: City Executive Board
Date: 13 October 2016
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Customer Service Excellence

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To confirm the corporate Customer Service Excellence standard accreditation to the City Executive Board, and explain how we plan to embed the standard further. Also to report the first quarter's performance against the corporate comments and complaints scheme.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Susan Brown, Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	Efficient and effective Council
Policy Framework:	None.
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Note this report, and congratulates the City Council staff in achieving the Customer Service Excellence standard across the whole Council.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Summary of Comments, Complaints and Compliments received between 1 April 2016 and 30 June 2016

Introduction and background

1. The City Council has a commitment to delivering excellent public service thereby enabling us to make Oxford a world-class city for everyone. One of the intrinsic values that the Council has to this commitment is putting communities and customers first
2. Customer Service Excellence is a Government standard that offers a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within organisations. Organisations self-assess their capability, identifying areas for improvement and prompting individuals and teams to acquire new skills to improve customer focus and engagement. The

accreditation involves an independent assessment of achievement and competence and highlights both exemplary performance and key areas for further development.

3. The Council's Customer Service Centre was the first to receive the Customer Service Excellence accreditation in June 2013. A programme to roll out Customer Service Excellence across the rest of the organisation in four phases ensued. This culminated in the last assessment together with the corporate accreditation in July 2016.

Corporate Customer Service Excellence Accreditation

4. Oxford City Council met the 57 criteria within the standard in full, and has been successfully awarded corporate accreditation. The assessor noted in his report:

“The staff who were involved in the process share a great passion for making sure that the needs and expectations of customers are clearly identified and met wherever possible. This passion has been effectively communicated and shared across the organisation. Inevitably, some areas of the Council have taken this on board more effectively than others but overall the organisation is committed to developing and delivering effective customer service.”

5. There is scope within the standard to be scored as “Compliance Plus” against a criterion, which denotes being an exemplar. The City Council has scored three compliance plus awards for demonstrating:
 - a corporate commitment to put customers at the heart of service delivery, and leaders in our organisation actively supporting this and advocating for our customers;
 - that we have made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers; and
 - that we have developed coordinated working arrangements with our partners to ensure customers are clear about the lines of accountability for quality of service.
6. The assessor's reflections included in the report are as follows.
 - The culture is certainly a long way from the traditional public sector culture which dominated local authorities for many years. The leaders of the organisation provide a clear lead and effective role models for the behaviours they wish to see in their staff teams.
 - Many internal and external partnerships were evidenced and these deliver clear and effective impacts for customers.
 - We have developed coordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of service.
7. In addition, the assessor noted that as the Council has been working with the CSE Standard over a period of time, a number of other positive impacts could also be identified, including:
 - the development of work with the universities to confirm student data, so that students do not need to provide confirmation documentation for example for council tax exemption;

- the development of a lettings agent focus group;
 - closer working with the land registry regarding change of ownership;
 - empowerment of staff in the Licensing team to help them take ownership and responsibility for customer service.
8. The areas where further development has been recommended include the following.
- Setting more challenging targets where they are routinely met as it helps focus staff more clearly on how things could be improved. Consideration of moving to non-numerical targets, this could involve establishing a benchmark level of satisfaction then setting a target of 'maintaining or improving' on that level. This would avoid for example; the inference that by setting a target for 90% of customers to be satisfied that it is okay for 10% to be less than happy with services.
 - Consider how metrics might be used to measure and monitor performance and service delivery across all service areas. This can help identify changes in performance and establish trend data which can then be used to inform future service delivery.

Plans for the future

9. The accreditation lasts three years, although compliance is monitored annually with a surveillance visit. We will agree a plan with the assessor to cover all parts of the organisation over the period. The next visit is scheduled for July 2017 where in addition to certain parts of the organisation being assessed, we will need to discuss any substantial changes and progress with the development areas identified.
10. In order to ensure we continue to embed Customer Service Excellence across the organisation, tailored development plans are being established for each service area using the results from the accreditation to:
- challenge what we know about our customers, using demographic data, local systems, and MOSAIC;
 - ensure our customer interface is accessible and understandable, whether that is the information held on our website, letters we write or literature we disseminate, and that customer insight is used in that design;
 - minimise avoidable contact for customers, ensuring we set the right expectation at the outset when delivering services and keeping customers informed of progress;
 - improve how we get customer feedback, including the use of mystery shopping and ensure we use that insight to improve our services;
 - refresh our approach and promotion of the corporate service standards; and
 - maximise the data we gather from the corporate comments and complaints scheme, looking for trends, and taking the opportunity to improve through corrective and preventive action.

Comments, Complaints and Compliments

11. A critical part of achieving Customer Service Excellence is demonstrating how we achieve our aims, deliver our services, manage customer expectation and resolve issues. Listening to customer views about the services we provide can be just as important as achieving key performance targets. Customer feedback can help us to make vital adjustments to support better delivery.
12. The Council's Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedure gives our customers a way of delivering their feedback to our services. Appendix 1 gives an overview of the procedure and shows a summary of the comments, complaints and compliments received in the first quarter of 2016/17. Appendix 1 also contains details of the main trends we have identified in the feedback we have received, and explains the corrective and preventive action taken to prevent reoccurrence and so improve our services.
13. In future the reporting of comments, complaints and compliments will be included in the quarterly performance report.

Financial implications

14. The corrective and preventive actions that we implement as a result of the customer feedback we receive, improve our efficiency as an organisation.

Legal issues

15. There are no known legal issues.

Level of risk

16. There are no associated risks.

Equalities impact

17. There are no specific environmental impacts.

Report author	Helen Bishop
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Service area or department	Business Improvement
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Background Papers: None

Summary of Comments, Complaints and Compliments received between 1 April 2016 and 30 June 2016

1. The Council's Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedure enables customers to contact the service involved to explain their concerns or to offer praise or suggestions. If the comment is a complaint, the officer assigned to the complaint will seek to explain and, if required, address any issues. This is called a stage 1 complaint. If the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the complaint is escalated to Stage 2, and the Head of Service will investigate and reply. In the unlikely event that the customer remains dissatisfied with earlier responses, the complaint moves to Stage 3 and the Chief Executive will arrange for an investigation to be carried out and an independent view will be taken.
2. If all the stages of our complaints procedure have been exhausted and the customer feels their complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, then the customer can refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, who will carry out an independent investigation.
3. During the first quarter of 2016/17, we received 637 complaints of which 407 (64%) were justified and 230 (36%) unjustified. A summary showing this information for each service area can be found in Table 1 below. The table shows that 82% of justified complaints (333) for this period related to Direct Services with the majority regarding Domestic Waste, Recycling or Repairs. Financial Services were the next highest reporting service with 35 (8.6%) justified complaints during this period. To give some context, these services generate between them over 70% of the customer contact centre and customer service centre enquiries.

Table1: Summary of Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Quarter 1 2016/17

Service Area	Complaints not upheld	Complaints held	Stage 1 Settled Complaints	Stage 2 Settled Complaints	Comments	Compliments
Business Improvement	3	23	23	0	21	8
Planning & Regulatory	2	9	9	0	6	5
Direct Services	196	333	333	0	315	280
Financial Services	20	35	34	1	19	5
Housing & Property	1	5	5	0	6	6
Law & Governance	1	0	0	0	5	0
Community Services	7	2	2	0	28	7
Totals	230	407	406	1	400	311

N.B. The figures exclude reporting of missed bins.

The main complaint trends identified are as follows:

- **Direct Services** - The main trends recognised during this period were noted as tenants complaining about the lack of communication regarding the status of work updates when jobs come up to their target dates, particularly on the 90 day priority work such as external work or plastering. To address this in the short term Direct Services are issuing letters to properties who are coming up to their target dates to apologise that they have yet to attend and re-assure them that they will be in touch soon with an appointment date. This is part of a wider project to improve communication with customers and reduce the number of enquiries by informing people better in the first place. Officers are currently examining the end to end processing of responsive repairs and planned maintenance calls between Direct Services and the Customer Services Team to identify where improvements can be made.
- **Financial Services** - The main trends recognised during this period were noted as e-billing/connection issues experienced throughout the annual billing cycle and after our system migration where council tax and business rate payers were unable to see bills on-line and on-line accounts could not be accessed. These issues have since been addressed by ICT. There were also a few complaints about delays in written correspondence being dealt with which was found to be due to staff vacancies. These posts have now been filled.
- **The Contact Centre** – The main trends recognised during this period were noted as Customer Service Officers either not following the correct processes or giving out incorrect information. These have all been addressed by Team Managers who have taken action to address the issues and have provided re-training or coaching where necessary.

Table 2 below shows the number of complaints that reached Stage 3 (14 in the first quarter, 11 of which were unjustified) is small when compared to the total number of complaints received. This suggests that most matters are resolved satisfactorily at the earlier stages.

Table 2: Stage 3 Complaints Quarter 1 2016/17			
Stage 3		Upheld Complaints(wholly or in part)	Decision Outstanding
Quarter 1		2	1
Quarter 1 Breakdown			
By Service Area/Team		Upheld complaints (wholly or in part)	Decision Outstanding
Housing & Property/Landlord Services		1	
Business Improvement/Digital Development		1	
Finance/Revenues & Benefits			1

Table 3 below shows the eight cases investigated by the Local Government and Housing Ombudsmen in the first quarter of the year. Compared to quarter one last year there has been an increase of four Local Government cases, although this is still low in comparison with the overall volume of enquiries and a testament to the robustness of the Council's complaints procedure. The case that resulted in a finding of Maladministration and Injustice by the Local Government Ombudsman related mainly to a delay in replacing a garage door. Compensation of £750 was agreed (the same amount that had been offered when the matter was considered as a Stage 3 complaint). The complaint upheld in part by the Housing Ombudsman was in respect of delays in completing repairs and dealing with the tenant's complaints to the Council. Compensation of £150 was agreed (an increase of £50 from the amount offered by the Council).

Table 3: Ombudsman Cases Decisions Quarter 1 2016/17			
Quarter	Local Government Ombudsman		Housing Ombudsman
Quarter 1	6		2
Quarter 1 Decisions			
Local Government Ombudsman Cases			
Finance	2	Team: Revenues & Benefits	Out of Jurisdiction
Direct Services	1	Team: Responsive Repairs	Maladministration and Injustice
Planning & Regulation	1	Team: Development Control	Premature
Planning & Regulation	1	Team: Environmental Health	Closed after Initial Enquiries
Planning & Regulation/Law & Governance	1	Team: HMO/Litigation	No Maladministration
Housing Ombudsman Cases			
Housing & Property/Direct Services	1	Team: Property Services/Responsive Repairs	No Maladministration
Direct Services	1	Team: Responsive Repairs	Evidence of Some Service Failure

NB Ombudsmen Decisions Glossary

- Out of Jurisdiction – Complainant has other recourse (to pursue the complaint) or is out of time
- Premature – Case referred back to the Council because the Council's complaints procedure has not been exhausted
- No Maladministration – No finding of maladministration
- Maladministration and Injustice – Maladministration that has resulted in injustice
- Evidence of Some Service Failure – Partial service failure

All compliments are passed to the relevant staff member or service. Compliments are important feedback and can be used to evidence great customer service. Direct Services clearly had the most compliments and the main themes were:

- satisfaction with the high quality of work carried out;
- politeness and friendliness of staff;
- professional attitude.

Comments trends that have been identified are as follows.

- Direct Services – Similar to complaints, customers commented on not getting updates on work requests.
- Financial Services – Again, comments were similar to complaints around the e-billing connection issues.
- Contact Centre – Not any real trends but a few comments regarding the hold music and routing of calls in the Contact Centre

MINUTES OF THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 15 September 2016



COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Price (Chair), Turner (Deputy Leader), Brown, Hollingsworth, Kennedy, Rowley, Simm, Sinclair and Smith.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Andrew Gant (Chair, Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Jean Fooks

OFFICERS PRESENT: Caroline Green (Assistant Chief Executive), Lindsay Cane (Acting Head of Law and Governance), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Dave Scholes (Housing Strategy & Needs Manager), Ossi Mosley (Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Tanner.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

50. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

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

Cllr Fooks spoke on the following items during the discussion of each item.

Item 9: OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan Refresh (minute 56)

Item 14: Community Centre Strategy 2016- 2020 (minute 61)

Item 16: Quarterly Integrated Performance 2016/17 - Q1 (minute 63)

52. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES

None

53. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following Scrutiny Committee reports were submitted to this meeting:-

(a) OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan Refresh

Cllr Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report. All three recommendations were agreed by the Board.

(b) Equality and Diversity Review - Recommendation 15

Cllr Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report. He confirmed that the Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the new material and decided not to change the recommendation.

Cllr Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services accepted the scrutiny recommendation. The money saved would be used to promote equality in the workforce. She would discuss with officers how best to use the money.

(c) Oxfordshire Credit Union

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report on behalf of the Finance Panel. He outlined the following points in the report:

- Regret of the failed merger between Oxfordshire and Blackbird Leys credit unions due to the different operating models.
- Oxfordshire credit union would like funding for a part time development manager and they have been informed of the Council's grant funding process.

The Panel recommended to the Board that the Council promotes Oxfordshire credit union to Council employees.

Cllr Brown said she would be happy to promote Oxfordshire credit union to Council employees at the point that they are paying a dividend. Promotions could involve the credit union having a 'stall of offer' at Council and emails and leaflets advertising its services. All promotions of the credit union would have to be put in the context of other services offered to staff.

54. ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBERS

None

55. EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF) INNOVATION PROJECTS - MATCH FUNDING

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which requested approval to commit match funding towards the Oxford City Council led element of the European Regional Development Fund Innovation allocation for Oxfordshire, if funds are successfully awarded.

Cllr Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development presented the report.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Recommend Council** to approve the required match funding to deliver the capital (£33,939) and revenue (£45,000) elements of the projects detailed in this report.
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director, Regeneration and Housing to enter into any necessary agreements to secure European Regional Development Fund funding

56. OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (OXLEP) STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN REFRESH

Cllr Rowley arrived

The Executive Director, Housing and Regeneration submitted a report to update Members on the consultation draft of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), and to agree feedback on it, prior to formal endorsement of the document.

Cllr Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development presented the report.

Cllr Fooks said she approved of the sustainability issues which were highlighted by the Scrutiny Committee. She felt the SEP did not put enough emphasis on the gap in key skills and jobs and the need for more affordable housing in Oxford. Cllr Price acknowledged that there were not enough training opportunities available, the Government refusing to release the adult training budget to local councils was not helping.

Cllr Fooks asked for a break-down of costs for the £452M invested in the Northern Gateway project. Cllr Price agreed to pass this information on.

Cllr Fooks asked whether OxLEP had discussed how they were to fund the projects without EU funds. Cllr Price said it was an area for discussion and would depend on the Brexit discussions and whether the Government will release money that would have gone to the EU.

Cllr Turner said that OxLEP needs to remind the government that the scientific and educational communities and tourism are extremely vulnerable to Brexit.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Agree** to formally endorse the draft Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan, subject to the feedback in the report and any additional member comments being relayed to the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board for consideration.

57. CHANGES TO CHARGING FOR BUILDING CONTROL APPLICATION FEES

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Service submitted a report which set new Building Control application fees and introduced one new charge.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report. He said the amendments will bring fees in line with costs.

That the City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Approve** the proposed Building Control application fees and charges to take effect from 30 September 2016 and that a strategic review of the service will be undertaken by December 2016.

58. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES FOR FLY-TIPPING

The Head of Community Services submitted a report to adopt the powers to issue fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping in Oxford and set the fine levels.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Adopt** the power to issue fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping offences under the Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016 and section 33ZA of The Environmental Protection Act 1990;
2. **Delegate** the power to authorise officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the Head of Community Services.
3. **Agree** to set the amount of the Fixed Penalty Notice for fly-tipping at £400 and the lesser amount of £200 if paid within 10 working days and include these items in the Council's Fees and Charges.

59. HOME CHOICE PILOT & RENT GUARANTEE SCHEME

The Executive Director of Regeneration & Housing submitted a report which requested approval to adopt a Rent Guarantee Scheme to enable the delivery of a Home Choice pilot, providing support to tenants to help them become financially independent.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing presented the report. The pilot is to try and make the home choice scheme (which provides private rental accommodation for people at risk of homelessness) more effective.

The pilot's aim is to support at least 80 people. A Home Choice caseworker will work closely with tenants to assist them with budgeting so they can become financially independent. This two year pilot will follow the same process used by the Welfare Reform Team in administering Discretionary Housing Payment, to ensure a consistent approach in dealing with both groups of customers.

The Housing Strategy & Needs Manager said the pilot would mainly target families.

A report on the pilot will be presented to CEB in 12 months.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the proposed Rent Guarantee Scheme outlined in the report

60. LEISURE INVESTMENT OPTIONS

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which sought project approval to improve tennis provision at Florence Park and the car parking to the sports facilities at Court Place Farm.

Cllr Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sports presented the report. £130,000 will be match funded by the tennis association to install flood lights at Florence Park and £117,000 in addition (to the £70,000 already agreed) will be spent on resurfacing the car park. We also want to start charging for the use of the car park.

Cllr Turner said it was good to invest in tennis but further consideration was needed in regards to charging for car parking as the car park at Oxford United Football Club is free across the road.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Grant project approval** for the improvements to:

- Tennis provision at Florence Park
- The car park at Court Place Farm

as outlined in this report

2. **Delegate authority to** the Executive Director for Community Services, in consultation with the Board Members for Leisure, Sport and Parks; and Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health, the Head of Financial Services and Acting Head of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary agreements or contracts to complete the works.

61. COMMUNITY CENTRE STRATEGY 2016- 2020

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which requested the approval of the Community Centres Strategy which had been updated following consultation.

Cllr Simm, Board Member for Communities and Culture presented the report. She highlighted the high levels of responses to the consultation (Appendix 4) and thanked all the consultees.

The strategy focuses on facilities, in particular, making sure Rose Hill is used extensively and supporting Blackbird Leys and Barton. The Council has also carried out a feasibility study for the East Oxford site - the consultation will begin soon.

The strategy also draws up a 5 year maintenance plan, as several community centres were built after WW2.

New leases for all community associations and recruitment and support of volunteers, especially on-going training is also a priority.

Cllr Fooks endorsed the consultation done. Having two community associations in her ward, she would prefer new leases to be available before November 2017. Cllr Simm said that the Council has trialled a lease with one community association to get the model right and once this is finalised, the rolling out to the other associations won't take long.

Cllr Price said that the Communities Officer was always willing to meet with associations, so if associations are willing, they could have a new lease by early 2017.

Cllr Price said the strategy's title "Building Communities together: Skills Health and Life" suggests that the role of community centres is to provide a wide range of activities and to work with partner organisations. There is the potential for community associations to link with health services and the police to deliver services.

Cllr Simm said that the Stronger Communities Partnership is constantly looking at ways we can use community centres to deliver social services. Trustees have shown an appetite to do this, but we need to work on how we can best co-ordinate these services.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Adopt** the Community Centre Strategy

62. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report which set out the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the financial year 2015/2016. The report also identifies some reductions in interest rates in 2016/17 and recommends a change to the Treasury Strategy for 2016/17.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He said that the Council had done well on the property funds but as a result of Brexit, capital values had reduced but were still significantly above the Council's purchase price. He was cautious about over-exposing the Council to risk in the property market.

The Head of Financial Services said that a 0.10% base rate was expected. In terms of internally borrowing, it was better for council to borrow internally as you only forfeit the interest from saving the money in the bank (which is very low at the moment) rather than paying a higher interest rate through external borrowing.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Note** the report
2. **Recommend that Council** approve the amendment to the Specified Investments list attached at Appendix 1 (paragraphs 35 – 37 below)

63. QUARTERLY INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE 2016/17 - Q1

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report which updated Members on the Council's Financial Risk and Performance as at 30 June 2016.

Cllr Turner, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He highlighted two concerns:

- The base budget around planning/ regulatory is more than expected.
- Leisure usage was down on target for the year.

Cllr Fooks commented on the difficulties the Council has had in recruiting and retaining staff in the planning department. She recommended offering higher salaries.

Cllr Hollingsworth said that a number of planning posts had had their salaries increased to encouraged recruitment. There were 4 planning apprentices starting next week

Cllr Smith said that the leisure usage figures for August showed improvement on the June figures (published in the report).

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn, the current position on risk and performance as at the 30 June 2016;
2. **Recommend to Council** that additional budget of £0.118 million and £0.399 million is approved for Super Connected Cities and Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure to be financed from external grant funding in accordance with paragraph 12.

64. POOLED BUDGET ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF ADULT HOMELESS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION IN OXFORDSHIRE

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report which sought agreement to enter into a pooled budget arrangement with Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxfordshire District Councils; and to agree Oxford City Council's initial 3 year contribution to the pooled budget from existing base budget provision.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing presented the report. He explained it was the outcome of long negotiations and thanked officers and the Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health for the work done.

The pooled fund will pay for vital homeless support services in Oxfordshire. He said the proposal was a success in some respects as it meant that all surrounding councils will contribute towards providing homeless services roughly in proportion to the homelessness need of their areas.

However it's not overall good news for city homeless services as their will be less money available from the County Council. In three years, time the County will be cutting funding completely for Housing related support.

This agreement provides stability for services to continue and brings in money we wouldn't have got from clinical service providers. With less money available for homelessness, services must be co-ordinated if they are to have a future. This is a large amount of work to do with homelessness providers to co-ordinate services.

Cllr Turner explained that he had been involved in the negotiations as the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing partnership which has been the mechanism for agreeing the work. He thanked officers and explained that rough sleeping in Oxfordshire was increasing whilst funding was being cut. The Government has just announced they were planning to further cut housing benefit which will put more pressure on the homelessness budget.

The Council needs to review how our money is being spent. The quality of services is important and needs to be properly resources. There's no point in providing housing without adequate support.

Officers explained that the first year is better resourced as it provides transitional money. However there was concern that the pooled budget wouldn't meet the single homelessness need in the city.

Cllr Price asked if the City Council could fund additional accommodation independently? Cllr Rowley said that would mean taking money from the homelessness budget which is ear-marked for preventative measures. Taking money from homelessness prevention to pay for reduction measures doesn't make sense.

Cllr Rowley said that a report on allocations is expected to come to the Board before April 2017.

The Housing Strategy & Needs Manager said the decision today was important to inform the County of what our intentions are, before the budget process begins.

Cllr Brown asked what the Council was doing in terms of lobbying against the housing benefit cuts. Is the Council doing everything it could so that our MPs knew what will happen with the proposed housing cuts. The Assistant Chief Executive said the City's MPs had been informed of the increased homelessness need but more work will be done.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Agree** the commitment by Oxford City Council to enter into a pooled budget arrangement in order to fund adult homeless supported accommodation in Oxfordshire.
2. **Agree** Oxford City Council's annual contribution of £161,700 towards the pooled budget from Housing and Property's existing Homelessness Prevention funds base budget provision that is included in the current approved Medium Term Financial Plan
3. **Delegate to** the Head of Housing and Property Services, in consultation with the Board Members for Housing; and Finance, Asset Management and Public Health, the discretion to increase/reduce the Council's contribution in years 4 (2020/21) and 5 (2021/22) from within existing approved homelessness prevention funds budgetary provision, if it is agreed by all parties to extend the current 3 year proposal.
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing to enter into a governance agreement for the pooled budget before April 2017

65. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER-SPENCER CRESCENT, ROSE HILL

The Head of Head of Housing & Property submitted a report which obtained approval to initiate compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to a long term empty property.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing presented the report. The Board noted the confidential appendices.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Acting Head of Law and Governance and the Head of Financial Services, to initiate compulsory purchase proceedings to acquire all interests in the property situated in Spencer Crescent, Oxford (full address provided in Appendix A)
2. **Delegate authority** to the Acting Head of Law and Governance to take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order, including the publication and service of all Notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any public inquiry;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Regeneration & Major Projects Service Manager to take all necessary action to acquire and obtain possession of the property either compulsorily or by agreement and to negotiate and agree all matters relating to compensation payments;
4. **Delegate authority to** the Regeneration & Major Projects Service Manager to dispose of the property in accordance with the Disposal Options set out in this report.

66. RENT SETTING FOR A HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT PROPERTY LEASED TO A PARTNER AGENCY AS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report which set out the basis for the charging of rent for an externally leased HRA property to a partner organisation as supported housing

Cllr Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing presented the report. He explained that a report came to CEB earlier this year for rent setting and that one property had been left off the list. This report was to tidy things up.

The Board noted the confidential appendix.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Agree** rent setting on the basis set out in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of this report.

67. MINUTES

The Board resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 2016 as a true and accurate record.

68. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

If the Board 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 Board 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 Board 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.

69. CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES_ COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER- SPENCER CRESCENT, ROSE HILL

Noted

70. CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX_RENT SETTING FOR A HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT PROPERTY LEASED TO PARTNER AGENCY AS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Noted

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.10 pm

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