

Minutes of a meeting of the CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD on Wednesday 13 March 2019

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Committee members:

Councillor Brown (Chair)	Councillor Linda Smith (Deputy Leader)
Councillor Turner	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Rowley
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Upton

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager
Tanya Bandekar, Service Manager Revenue & Benefits
Andrew Brown, Committee and Member Services Manager
Rachel Lawrence, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager
Nerys Parry, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager
Carolyn Ploszynski, Planning Policy and Place Manager
Stefan Robinson, Scrutiny Officer
Claire Sutton, Team Leader, Design & Heritage Team
Anna Winship, Management Accountancy Manager
Ian Wright, Head of Service Regulatory Services and Community Safety
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant

Apologies:

No apologies were received

157. Declarations of Interest

None.

158. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

159. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda

Councillor Gant addressed the Board in relation to items 12 and 16 on the agenda. (Re-designation of Neighbourhood Forums & their Neighbourhood Areas and Review of Civic Flag Flying Arrangements respectively). In relation to the former he was pleased to note the very positive outcome of the recent referendum on the proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan put forward by the Summertown & St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum and placed on record his thanks for the officers who had supported the process in 4 polling stations. In relation to the latter he was disappointed to see the proposed removal of a requirement for new flag flying requests to be formally considered by a cross-party group and asked that it be restored.

The Chair was not minded to change the proposed revision to the protocol for flag flying. The proposals before the Board sought to reduce the need for such occasional decisions in the first place but to enable them to be made more swiftly if the need did arise. She however reassured Councillor Gant that she would take soundings from opposition leaders before such a decision was finally made.

160. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

161. Items raised by Board Members

None.

162. Scrutiny Committee Reports

The Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on Approach to City Centre Public Space Protection Orders) and the Board's draft response were before the Board as were the Committee's recommendations and Board responses to Securing Social Value Through Procurement and Street Art & Graffiti.

Street Art & Graffiti

Councillor Gant said the Scrutiny discussion had been useful and from which had emerged broad support for street art which was seen as most valuable when having been preceded by wide consultation. He thanked the Board for its response.

The Board Member for Safer, Greener, Environment (Councillor Tom Hayes) said the Scrutiny discussion had been helpful. It was important to remember that street art was not graffiti and was pleased that the Committee was broadly supportive of the ability of street art to add cultural value to a place. He acknowledged the importance of prior consultation.

The Board Member for Customer Focused Services (Councillor Chapman) said the report's reference to graffiti being removed from private property in public spaces within 48 hours should be amended to reflect the fact that while it would be removed as soon as possible it was that which was particularly offensive which would be removed in a very short timescale.

The Chair had understood that commercial concerns occupying Council property were required to have shutters of a design which let light through and to which it was difficult to apply graffiti. She noted, however, that many did not and asked why this was so.

Oxford Direct Services had a central role in relation to graffiti removal but as a company with its own Board and governance arrangements, it was not appropriate for its work to be scrutinised by the Council's Scrutiny Committee.

Approach to City Centre Public Space Protection Orders

Councillor Gant said there had been general but not unanimous support for the proposed consultation. That the consultation would be open and transparent was welcome. The Committee has requested to see the subsequent report.

Securing Social Value Through Procurement

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the thrust of the three social value recommendations concerned improving the amount of weighting given to social value within council awarded contracts, and improving compliance with higher international environmental standards for suppliers.

The Board Member for Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner) said the Finance Panel's recommendations had been helpful and he had been happy to support them. This was a matter in relation to which the Council should be demonstrating leadership and should do more in the future.

The Board confirmed its agreement to the report's recommendations.

163. Corporate Enforcement Policy

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to review the current Corporate Enforcement Policy and recommend the renewal of the Policy.

The Board Member for Planning and Transport (Councillor Alex Hollingsworth) introduced the report which set out the broad principles and aims behind the Council's strategic approach to enforcement. The approach was successful and it was therefore appropriate to recommend that it continue for a further three years.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Approve the existing Corporate Enforcement Policy for a further three years

164. Extension to Central Conservation Area

The Acting Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to inform the City Executive Board of the results of the consultation period and authorise officers to consider these results further.

The Board Member for Planning and Transport (Councillor Alex Hollingsworth) introduced the report. The proposed extension would, inevitably, have potentially significant consequences for some landowners and others with an interest in the area.

The initial consultation had made it clear that some further consideration was desirable as well as deciding, at this point, to remove the area entitled “southern boundary around Folly Bridge”.

The Team Leader, Design & Heritage Team, explained that the area to be removed from the proposal was already protected but might be included in an expanded conservation area to the South of the City at some point in the future.

The Planning Policy and Place Manager said a further report, following the further consideration, would come to the Board in the Summer.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Authorise** the Head of Planning to consider further points raised during public consultation and return a report with recommendations on areas for inclusion within the Central Conservation Area to the City Executive Board for decision; and
2. **Approve** the removal of the area entitled ‘southern boundary around Folly Bridge’ in the January 2019 consultation document from further consideration for Central Conservation Area boundary alteration in line with officer recommendations

165. Project Approval for the acquisition of properties into the Housing Revenue Account

The Head of Housing had submitted a report to seek Project Approval for the acquisition of properties by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), specifically new units that may be purchased ‘off-plan’ from a developer. The purpose is to deliver more affordable housing, and to manage these properties within the Council’s HRA let at Social Rent levels.

The Board Member for Housing (Councillor Mike Rowley) introduced the report. He was pleased to be able to propose the purchase of 9 properties “off plan” to be used as social rented housing. He noted that this was a more cost effective means of acquiring properties than buying those already built.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Give Project Approval** to the proposal to purchase accommodation, as set out in this report, and within the allocated capital budget for this purpose;
2. **Note** that the expected budget requirement for this project was set out in the 2019/20 Council budget report, albeit at the time of drafting the budget report, the expectation was these acquisitions would receive grant as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal (OGD) activity, whereas use of Retained Right to Buy receipt funding is now proposed to part fund this project instead;
3. **Delegate** authority to the Regeneration and Major Projects Service Manager, in consultation with the Head of Finance, to approve any property purchases for this project and to enter into agreement on the basis that in the opinion of the Head of Finance this continues to represent best value; and

4. **Note** that any properties purchased are to be used as social rented housing and let to housing applicants in housing need and on the Housing Register in Oxford, as secure tenancies.

166. Performance monitoring - quarter 3

The Head of Financial Services and Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to note the projected financial outturn and the current position on risk and performance as at the 31st December 2018.

The Board Member for Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner) introduced the report. He was pleased to report a favourable variance in relation to the General Fund. There was a considerable underspend in the Capital Programme but the establishment of a Project Management Office was intended to put more rigour into the management of capital projects. Future reports would have more information about the delivery of the Capital Programme. Two indicators were not meeting their targets: the number of new homes granted permission in the City; and the net increase in number of businesses operating in the City. This was regrettable but it was recognised that these were measures over which the Council has no direct control.

The Board Member for Planning and Transport said the housing shortage was a serious matter for the Council. The emerging Local Plan identified 60 sites for housing and officers were working with land owners and interested parties to bring these sites forward, this was a high priority for the planning team.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Note the projected financial outturn and the current position on risk and performance as at the 31st December 2018.

167. Re-designation of Neighbourhood Forums and their Neighbourhood Areas

The Acting Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to re-designate the Forums and Neighbourhood Areas for Summertown and St. Margaret's and Wolvercote.

The Board Member for Planning and Transport (Councillor Alex Hollingsworth) introduced the report noting that there was a statutory requirement for neighbourhood forums to be re-designated after 5 years. He also drew attention to the fact that Neighbourhood Plans were subordinate to Local Plans.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the redesignation of Summertown and St. Margaret's Forum in respect of the original designated neighbourhood area to which it related; and
2. **Approve** the redesignation of Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum in respect of the original designated neighbourhood area to which it related.

168. Corporate Debt Policy

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to approve the proposed Corporate Debt Management Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Board Member for Customer Focused Services introduced the report. The policy sought to strike a fine balance between the proper need to collect monies owed to the Council while, at the same time, doing so in way which took account of the fact that many of those who owed money were vulnerable and in financial difficulties through no fault of their own. Officers implemented the policy in a pragmatic way dealing with each case on its merits. It was noteworthy that there were very few complaints about the way in which debt was collected.

The Service Manager Revenue & Benefits said the team took care to treat all those from whom money was owed as individuals, seeking to help and advise them where possible. All of the team's staff had safeguarding training so they would be alert to any safeguarding issues they might come across in the course of their work. Enforcement was never undertaken unless a bill had been issued.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager Revenue & Benefits for the work of her team which, it was widely recognised, did an excellent and important job in a compassionate way.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Approve the proposed Corporate Debt Management Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

169. Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds 2019/20

The Head of Housing Services had submitted a report to seek approval for the allocation of homelessness prevention funds with the purpose of helping to meet the objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018/21.

The Board Member for Leisure and Housing (Councillor Linda Smith) introduced the report which sought agreement to approve a total of £1.7m on a wide range of measures to prevent homelessness. Preventing homelessness was not just a matter of providing additional beds, as witnessed by the range of measures described. Those experiencing homelessness often have complex and overlapping needs which are exacerbated by the Government's welfare reforms and cuts to services previously provided by the County Council and NHS. The effectiveness of the many and various measures were carefully monitored to ensure that the funding was being put to good use.

The Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Manager was able to report the recent confirmation by MHCLG that the Council has been allocated a further £0.5m for 2019/20 as part of the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative. She also indicated that, as shown in the report, the cost of SWEP provision in 2018/19 had been forecast to be up to £50,000. However, despite needing to increase safety and security measures in relation to some high risk users mid-winter and opening SWEP on officer discretion on

three occasions, the relatively mild winter has meant the costs of delivery are now expected to be lower than expected. MHCLG has also now confirmed that they will cover costs up to £35,000. This was welcome however the financial effect of this will simply be to reduce the proposed draw down from the homelessness reserve in 2019/20.

The many projects and different sorts of provision supporting this area of work could make it difficult to see at a glance how many beds of what type were available. The Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Manager agreed to provide clarification to the Board Member for Planning & Transport on the number of beds commissioned in the Adult Homeless Pathway including schemes to enable users to move on.

The Chair said the Council would like to be in a position not to have to allocate resources for this area of work but given its commitment to supporting these most vulnerable members of the community and reductions in services elsewhere there was no alternative. She thanked officers for all their excellent work over the last year in this very challenging area.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2019/20 as outlined in paragraph 56 to 58 below and in Appendix D, including the following changes to allocations
 - Big Issue Service Broker – that this Payment by Results contract is ended and a contingency of £3,125 is made available to facilitate this
 - OxTHINK – allocation increased from £4,396 in 2018/19 to £5,272 to cover costs relating to the continuation of licence agreements for service providers' staff and further system development. This allocation to be reviewed in year to take account of alternative ICT solutions, including the new housing database.
 - Emmaus – that funding is reduced from £10,000 in 2018/19 to £5,000 and will taper to zero in 2020/21 in recognition of the fact that Emmaus' second-hand furniture superstore is expected to be financially self-sustaining in 2020/21 and will continue to provide work opportunities
 - Network development - £5,000 towards the development and delivery of a programme of networking, learning and development for commissioned service providers' staff and others as appropriate
 - Access to leisure services - £5,000 to support former rough sleepers to access the Council's leisure facilities free of charge.
 - Contingency for Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness - £1,587 allocated for in-year changes to committed allocations.
2. **Approve** that the Council enter into 24 month [1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021] grant agreements with the Response Organisation and Homeless Oxfordshire to deliver a combined Acacia / Housing First Service, with increased capacity to meet the needs of chronic and entrenched rough sleepers; and
3. **Delegate** to the Head of Housing in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required.

170. Review of civic flag flying arrangements

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report for the City Executive Board to consider the outcomes of a review of the Council's arrangements for flag flying and to agree a new protocol for flag flying and bell ringing together with lists of annual flag flying and bell ringing commitments.

The Chair introduced the report and proposed the addition to Appendix 2 of the Living Wage Flag, to be flown for a week at the beginning of April when the rate of the latest Oxford Living Wage takes effect.

In further discussion it was agreed that flags should also be flown to mark the following:

- a) International Day of Persons with Disabilities - 03 December
- b) Earth Day - 22 April (given recent Council resolution re Environmental Emergency), noting that if Earth Day fell on a weekend it would not be possible to fly the flag due to the timing of other commitments and a lack of available trained staff.
- c) For 2019 only the European Flag on Brexit Day (29 March).

All of which subject to the usual constraints about the ability to fly flags in certain circumstances as set out in the report

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing attached as Appendix 1 with the addition of those flags listed above.
2. **Agree** the List of Annual Flag Flying Commitments attached as Appendix 2; with the inclusion of flag flying commitments for the Living Wage (first week of April), Earth Day (22 April) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December).
3. **Agree** the List of Annual Bell Ringing Commitments attached as Appendix 3; and
4. **Delegate** responsibility to the Head of Law and Governance for the operation of the protocol, including the arrangements for considering one off requests, and for holding and maintaining the List of Annual Flag Flying Commitments and the List of Annual Bell Ringing Commitments.

171. Corporate Plan Update 16-20

The Assistant Chief Executive had submitted a report to seek approval for the 2018-19 Annual Update on the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

The Chair introduced the report which she reminded the Board would be one of the last updates of current plan before work began on the period beyond 2020.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Update on the Corporate Plan 2016-20, as set out in Annex 1; and
2. **Delegate** authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to make minor textual/formatting changes to the Annual Update Report in advance of formal publication.

172. Approach to the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to approve the approach to setting standards of behaviour in the City Centre.

The Board Member for Safer, Greener, Environment (Councillor Tom Hayes) introduced the report. Prior Scrutiny consideration had focused on whether or not the proposed consultation should take place and, if so, what form it should take. He emphasised that the consultation, focusing on what behaviours were acceptable in the City Centre, would be very wide ranging and inclusive and, therefore, conducted by a number of different means to ensure maximum engagement. The outcome of this consultation would inform whether a statutory consultation on a PSPO would be undertaken at some point in the future. It was important to be clear from the outset that the Council did not and would not seek to criminalise rough sleeping or homelessness and would speak out against those who did.

The Chair said there was an unwarranted inference by some that those who were homeless were, somehow, necessarily anti-social. The highest incidence of anti-social behavior was associated with drunkenness of people who, for the most part, were not homeless. It was agreed that these proposals should be developed in a way which saw that the interests of homeless people and rough sleepers were properly protected.

It was recognised that the police had an important role in relation to these matters and other 'low level' crime but that, with diminished resources, their involvement appeared to be limited. Councillor Hayes said he continued to seek views from the police about these matters.

The Community Safety Service Manager said that PSPOs represented just one means of tackling inappropriate behaviours and were designed to have a declaratory effect.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** a city centre consultation process to determine the standards of acceptable behaviour in the city centre and the acceptability and appropriateness of a City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order for tackling particular behaviours; and
2. **Endorse** the use of the Anti-social Behaviour Enforcement Policy to address behaviours in the city centre addressed by the 2016-19 City Centre Public Space Protection Order.

173. Minutes

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 07 March as a true and accurate record subject to recording an apology for absence from Cllr Tidball.

174. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 10 April
- 22 May
- 12 June
- 10 July

All meetings start at 6pm.

175. Matters Exempt from Publication

No matters were considered in confidential session.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.55 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 10 April 2019