

Minutes of a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE on Tuesday 2 April 2019

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Committee members:

Councillor Gant (Chair)	Councillor McManners (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Bely-Summers	Councillor Cook (for Councillor Kennedy)
Councillor Curran	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Donnelly	Councillor Lygo
Councillor Simmons	

Officers:

Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager
Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager
Stefan Robinson, Scrutiny Officer
Jennifer Thompson, Committee and Members Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Councillor Linda Smith, Deputy Leader (Statutory) of the Council, Board Member for Leisure and Housing

Apologies:

Councillors Fry and Kennedy sent apologies.

108. Declarations of interest

None.

109. Chair's Announcements

The Chair said that the Tourism Management review group had completed its main evidence gathering stage and was forming its conclusions.
The Committee's response to the consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan) had been submitted.

110.Minutes

The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2019 as a true and accurate record.

111.Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Officer reported that he was collating and evaluating submissions for the committee's and review group's 2019/20 work programme.

The Committee agreed to add to its Work Plan for 15 May:

- the Executive report on the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule
 - a report on the delivery arrangements for affordable housing,
- and noted that other items for that meeting may be rescheduled

112.Oxford Living Wage Review group - 12 Month Update

The Committee had before it a report setting out an update on progress made against the recommendations of the Oxford Living Wage Review Group in March 2018, and a report from the *Good Food Oxford* organisation. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Susan Brown, and the Economic Development Manager, Matt Peachey, introduced the report and answered questions.

The Committee discussed the report, the actions taken to promote the Oxford Living Wage and how to reduce obstacles to adoption by more local businesses.

The Committee noted

- the ambition for Oxford to be accredited as a 'real living wage city' (Dundee being the first) and that work had started to achieve this;
- proposals to develop a self-accreditation scheme for employers;
- employers were also encouraged to follow Living Wage Foundation guidelines for their apprenticeships and trainees.

The Committee noted that 11.1% of jobs in the City were estimated to pay below the Real Living Wage in 2015, falling to 10.3% in 2018, showing a move in the right direction. This was well below the 22.8% UK average. However, this is couched against Oxford being the most unaffordable City in the UK, with a significant portion of people living in some of the most deprived areas nationally.

The Committee expressed support for the direction of travel, and the need to continue promoting the Oxford Living Wage with local employers. The increasing number of local employers becoming living wage accredited was also positive to note. A discussion took place on the challenges faced in certain sectors and supply chains, where outsourced work to third party employers was often paid at the minimum wage only. The retail, catering, care and cleaning sectors were highlighted in particular as often paying below the Oxford Living Wage. The Committee also gave support to the Leader for writing to Oxford University's Colleges to ask them to pay the Oxford Living Wage to their staff, the majority of which did not.

The Committee asked what opportunities there might be to incentivise businesses to pay the Oxford Living Wage. It was explained that some councils including Ealing and Brent were offering a business rates discount scheme for London Living Wage employers. In Ealing for example, a discount of £50 to £1000 is offered to businesses depending on the number of employees, which accounts for two years' worth of living wage accreditation fees. The Committee did not recommend pursuing this approach specifically, but instead they are recommending that this and other incentives be explored as options in the future.

The Committee made clear that it wished to see more promotion of the Oxford Living Wage targeted towards customers. Specifically, there is a need to highlight which companies are Oxford Living Wage employers, and promote conscience driven spending by the public with these shops and services. This means delivering a campaign that asks the public to think twice before spending (both online and in person) with companies which do not offer the Oxford Living Wage to its employees. The process will also highlight the social value added by supporting fair wage employers.

The Committee noted that that Council is not the only partner in driving forward the Living Wage agenda. There are several campaign and pressure groups that exist which are undertaking similar activities to encourage Living Wage and Oxford Living Wage accreditation. The Committee is therefore recommending that further engagement takes place with these groups to maximise the cumulative effect of their work.

The Committee commented that employers could also be encouraged to eliminate any pay gap between male and female employees.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to the City Executive Board:

- 1. That the Council continues to seek out ways to incentivise local businesses to become Oxford Living Wage accredited employers.**
- 2. That the Council's promotional activity around the Oxford Living Wage incorporates customer facing marketing, which encourages conscience driven spending with Oxford Living Wage accredited shops and services.**
- 3. That the Council engages with trade unions, campaign groups, parish councils and other community groups to broaden the pool of pressure groups in the City and better coordinate the local Oxford Living Wage campaign.**

113. Audit of Fusion Lifestyle

Councillor Bely Summers arrived at the start of this item.

The Committee considered the internal audit report about the performance of Fusion Lifestyle which included a review of the integrity of the data reported by Fusion Lifestyle to the Council, a line of enquiry which followed a recommendation made by the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council; Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager; and Mark Munday and Graham Ashby from Fusion Lifestyle spoke about the audit findings and actions taken, and answered questions from the committee.

The Committee noted that the audit report had made favourable conclusions about the reliability of the participation data provided for 2018/19. The data was “as robust and should be expected,” and data capture was undertaken in accordance with national standards. No recommendations in this area were made by the Auditor.

A comprehensive continuous improvement plan had been in place for some time, and was now about 90% complete. Fusion had also made improvements based on an early draft of the internal audit recommendations, including improvements to their app and to managing social media comments and campaigns. Fusion confirmed they paid at least the Oxford Living Wage, and their contractors should also be paying at least the Oxford Living Wage.

Questions were raised over the validity of data presented in the previous year, which saw a significant drop in visitor attendance. A subsequent rise of 28% was recorded in the following year, bringing the visitor numbers back to ‘normal’ levels expected for 2018/19. It was confirmed that the audit methodology only considered current data, and was not retrospectively applied to previous years. The Committee heard that much of the fluctuation in data was associated with swings in seasonality trends particularly at Hinksey Pool and the Ice Rink.

The Committee discussed how repairs were responded to, and how this was communicated to customers. Fusion provided detailed responses where appropriate, but some councillors commented that they considered responsiveness to repairs needed to improve, based on feedback from residents.

The Committee noted the arrangements for user group meetings and new less formal ‘meet the manager’ sessions. Councillors asked that they be involved in reinvigorating the user groups where these were less well attended.

The Committee noted the arrangements for controlling admissions to gym facilities and for ensuring adequate oversight of the gym and its users. Fusion aimed to always operate with a fully adequate staff complement and officers received a monthly report on employee headcount and full-time equivalent numbers.

The Committee noted that Fusion carried out benchmarking using national survey and occasional comparisons were carried out with other leisure providers. It was difficult to make direct comparisons with private providers who offered a different range and quality of activities.

Councillors reiterated their wish for Fusion Lifestyle to better engage with schools and younger people, as set out in a recommendation made in June 2018. Attending the university fresher’s fairs was raised as another way to engage with young people. The Committee noted assurances that engagement with schools was widespread.

The Committee asked about progress in scheduling sessions for women-only and mother-and-child-only pool sessions in Blackbird Leys, also overseen and staffed by

women, at appropriate times (eg to coincide with crèche opening hours). The Committee specifically wanted to see this accommodated in Blackbird Leys and agreed this was a priority that should be acted on as they were disappointed that suitable sessions were not yet scheduled.

The Committee agreed to formally review Fusion's performance at 6 month interval, and that risks identified by the internal auditors should be reported as part of their review of the Annual Services Plan.

The Committee indicated that it may wish to carry out site visits to various leisure centres, including the new site at Horspath, in the new council year to gain a better understanding of the condition of the centres across the City.

The Committee agreed to make one recommendation to the City Executive Board:

- 1. That further work is undertaken to accelerate the scheduling of time appropriate mother and child pool sessions in Blackbird Leys, and that a date is provided for when this will be done.**

114. Report back on recommendations

At its meeting on 13 March 2019, the City Executive Board considered the Finance Panel's recommendations in relation to Social Value and the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations in relation to street art and graffiti and Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The Board's response to these recommendations was before the Committee.

The Committee noted the City Executive Board's responses and:

- welcomed acceptance of their recommendation to include a 5% social value weighting in procurement requirements;
- noted that further reports on the PSPO would be presented to the committee in due course;
- asked that the Chair convey further points relating to street art and graffiti removal:
 - for smaller businesses, the charging scheme should clearly state if free-of-charge removal was available on more than one occasion, and if so on what basis, for 'graffiti up to 4m²'.
 - street art projects could be contentious so there should be consultation with ward councillors, residents, and people whose routes regularly pass the project, and with clear options including rejecting the proposal.

115. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings:

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 15 May 2019