

Minutes of a meeting of the Companies Scrutiny Panel on Thursday 12 March 2020

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Committee members present:

Councillor Fry (Chair)
Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Simmons

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Also present:

Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies, in role as Director, Housing Group and Barton Oxford LLP
Jane Winfield, Regeneration and Major Projects - Team Manager / Director Housing Companies, in role as Director, Housing Group and Barton Oxford LLP
David Watt, Finance Business Partner, Housing Companies, Housing Group
Tim Sadler, Transition Director / Chairman Direct Services Companies, in role as Director of Oxford Direct Services
Simon Howick, Managing Director, Direct Services Companies, Director of Oxford Direct Services
Emily Anrude, ODS Senior Account Manager
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development), in role as Director of OXWED
Stephen Hing, OXWED Development Director, OXWED Development Director

18. Apologies

There were no apologies.

19. Declarations of Interest

None

20. Items to be considered in private

The Panel resolved to move into private session on the grounds that the presence of the public would likely involve the disclosure of exempt information in accordance with paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

21. Minutes of the previous meeting

It was **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting of 14 November 2019 were an accurate record.

22. Responses to previous recommendations

The Panel **NOTED** that the report containing a recommendation had not progressed to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on the basis that the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group had already adopted the suggestion prior to the recommendation being made.

23. Shareholder and Joint Venture Group reports

Minutes of the consideration of the relevant Shareholder and Joint Venture Group reports are detailed below.

24. ODS minutes

Simon Howick and Tim Sadler, ODS Company Directors, Lindsay Cane, ODS Company Secretary, and Emily Anrude, ODS Senior Account Manager, joined the meeting at the commencement of this item and presented an update report on the progress of Oxford Direct Services over the previous quarter, including a customer service report on the Street Scene services.

The transformation programme was reported to be making process.

Discussion was devoted to Appendix 3, which explained the company's success in winning contracts. There was a discussion about some of the tensions between the historic work of the Company for the Council and the opportunities afforded by higher value work elsewhere.

Discussion was also devoted to the relationship between the TECKAL company and the Trading Company of ODS.

The Panel **NOTED** the reports and **AGREED** to make the following recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group:

- 1) That the Council tasks the City Centre Manager to reinvigorate and republicise its previous scheme for allowing members of the public to use shop toilets in the City Centre and the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group requires ODS to coordinate with these efforts and capitalise on any benefits accordingly.**
- 2) That the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group continues with its dashboard reporting, but with the following changes: i) to report on the outcome of bids by value rather than number, ii) to disaggregate the figures by ODS service area, and iii) to add another metric to the dashboard reports by presenting the results when Council contracts are excluded.**
- 3) That the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group seeks ODS to report each quarter on the value of work undertaken by the TECKAL company, and the Trading Company.**

Simon Howick, Tim Sadler and Emily Anrude left the meeting at the end of this item.

25. OxWed minutes

OxWED Minutes

Tom Bridgman, OxWED Director, and Stephen Hing, OxWED Development Director joined the meeting at this point.

Stephen Hing presented an update report to the Panel.

Discussion took place over whether it was desirable to implement a supplementary planning document to support particular shareholder priorities for the site. However, it was suggested that as the landowner and developer of the masterplan the need for a supplementary planning document was obviated.

The Panel also asked questions about the importance of land assembly to the viability of the development and the attractiveness for a developer.

Councillor Simmons left the meeting at this point.

Discussion was also held over the land disposal strategy – the point at which the shareholder would wish to part with the land.

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

Tom Bridgman, Stephen Hing and Lindsay Cane left the meeting at the end of this item

26. Barton minutes

Jane Winfield and Stephen Clarke, City Council representatives on Barton LLP introduced providing an update on the activities of Barton Oxford LLP over the last quarter.

An update was provided in relation to the management of the development's pavilion. The LLP had entered into a service agreement with the Council, enabling the Council to carry out maintenance and compliance functions. Reverting to the understanding of the s.106 agreement, this would be done on a freehold basis.

A free temporary bus link was being established from the development to the John Radcliffe hospital, expected to run until September after which the County Council contract for the permanent service would be ready to take over.

An update was sought regarding the Healthy New Town funding secured by the LLP. A lot had been diverted to support the existing Barton Park estate due to the particularly acute health inequalities of 'old' Barton, with significant amounts having been invested in social prescribing. Additional funding had been secured, and from a Council perspective, it was considered to be a big success that the benefits of the development were being shared between new and existing residents. The Panel welcomed the news that Grovenor had also donated approximately £90k to Healthy New Town projects as part of their corporate social responsibility funding.

The report was **NOTED** with comment from the Panel that the efforts by all involved at Barton to spread the benefits of the development beyond its own boundaries were to be particularly commended.

27. Housing Company minutes

OCHL Company Directors Stephen Clarke and Jane Winfield were joined by Lindsay Cane, Company Secretary, and David Watt, Strategic Finance Director. Chair of the Board, Richard Connolly, was unable to attend.

Housing Group Governance

Governance Update

Stephen Clarke reported that the Housing Group had successfully appointed two non-executive directors, both with significant experience in residential development within the private sector and housing associations, one with a finance specialism and the other with a greater development focus.

The report was **NOTED**.

Register of Directors' Interests

Lindsay Cane, Company Secretary, presented to the Panel a report proposing that the Shareholder, in light of the recent additions to the Board of the Housing Company, update its register of interests. Doing so was endorsed as a good time to refresh the register to ensure transparency and would be good practice. The report was **NOTED** with the Panel's support.

Housing Group Performance Report

Non Financial Performance

For the purposes of ease of comparison, the Housing Group had adopted the same key performance monitors as the Council for their management of properties.

The development programme was highlighted to have changes within specific elements of the business plan, but that the overall numbers within the business plan had remained stable from its original publication.

Financial Performance

David Watt introduced to the Panel the financial elements of the performance report.

The debt repayment and dividend strategy was reaffirmed and confirmed as still being considered deliverable. Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services, confirmed he was satisfied that the company was on track to deliver its requirements to the shareholder.

The report was **NOTED**.

28. Dates of the Next Meeting

The minutes of the next meeting were **NOTED**.

The meeting started at 5pm and ended at 7.25pm

Chair

Date: Monday 22 June 2020

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

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