

To: Council

Date: 24th. June 2013.

Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Title of Report: Scrutiny Briefing

Purpose of report: To update Council on the activities of scrutiny and other non executive councillors since the Committee was appointed in May.

Introduction

1. This is my first briefing to Council this Municipal Year and I would like to take this opportunity to tell Council what is happening currently within the programme and also outline some of the standard information that I will report on behalf of scrutiny at every meeting of Council. If members would like to see other areas or issues included then please let Pat Jones or I know using the contact details at the end of this report.
2. I would like to remind all members of Council that if there is an issue they wish to see scrutinised then they are able to either ask a Scrutiny Councillor to place this on the agenda of the Scrutiny Committee or with 3 supporter add this to the agenda themselves.

Standard Information

3. I will always include the following information:
 - Current Panel work showing membership and progress.
 - Forward agendas – these will be indicative only.
 - Recommendations made and the outcome from these.
 - The number and result of any called in decisions or councillor calls for action.
4. This information is now included at Appendix 1 to this briefing.

Current Activity

5. At the time of writing the Scrutiny Committee has only met once and outside of pre-scrutinising issues on their way to the City Executive Board has concentrated on agreeing new working arrangements and deciding which of the Panels open from the previous work plan should continue.
6. Operating arrangements have been agreed and the detail can be obtained from Pat Jones. I would like to highlight some of the these:
 - The Scrutiny Committee will act as a Commissioning Committee but will also conduct its “holding to account” role at the scheduled formal meetings.
 - Formal meetings have been agreed to link into the City Executive Board cycle allowing any report to be pre-scrutinised.
 - The administrative management of the programme will be undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair but the Scrutiny Committee will take overall control of the work programme.
 - All Scrutiny Members will be encouraged to take a lead on particular topics or issues and provide advice and a link back to the Committee.
 - Scrutiny Councillors and the Scrutiny Officer will actively engage other non executive councillors in the work programme and as many opportunities as possible will be provided for those who wish to be involved to do so.
 - Opportunities will be sort to engage as many residents and “experts” in the work of the Committee in an effort to broaden opinion and improve conclusions.
7. The Council will be hosting a meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on the 12th. July in the Old Library starting at 10.00am. This will be attended by the Police and Crime Commissioner who will be there to answer the questions of the Panel. This is a public meeting so any residents or members who wish to attend are welcome. The agenda will be available by 4th. July and can be accessed via a link on the Councils web site.
8. By the time Council meets again in September Scrutiny will have considered the suggestions made by members for inclusion in the work programme, set any Standing Panels and looked at performance, finance and risk data to help to focus its inquiries. I will report further on this then.

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Appendix 1

Scrutiny Committee Agendas

Each agenda will have 2 standing items:

- Work programme and recommendation progress
- Forward Plan

Date	Agenda Item
4 th . June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutiny operating arrangements. 2. Forward Plan. 3. Pre-scrutiny – Discretionary Housing Payments. 4. Pre-scrutiny – End of Year Integrated Report. 5. Pre-scrutiny – Corporate Deb Management Policy. 6. Pre-scrutiny – Appointment of Main Contractor for Affordable Homes Programme.
2 nd . July	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work programme selection and set up. 2. Fusion Contract End of Year Performance 2012 - 2013. 3. Pre-scrutiny – Emissions Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan. 4. Youth Ambition Strategy.
5 th . September	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-scrutiny - Housing Strategy Action Plan 2. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report.
1 st . October	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-scrutiny - Oxpens Master Plan – consultation outcome.
5 th . November	TBC
3 rd . December	TBC
14 th . January	TBC
4 th . February	TBC
4 th . March	TBC
1 st . April	TBC

Scrutiny Recommendations

Discretionary Housing Payments 4th. June Scrutiny Committee		
Recommendation	Date considered	Outcome
To organise a general campaign of clear advice through as many agencies, partnerships and offices as possible making it clear the temporary nature of Discretionary Housing Payments and the requirements to engage in more sustainable solutions.	CEB 12 th . June	Agreed
To extend current out reach work to include benefit take-up to maximise benefits to current and potential claimants.	CEB 12 th . June	Agreed
To keep the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy under review and in particular to revisit it once regulations on further Welfare Reform are clear.	CEB 12 th . June	Agreed
For the Scrutiny Committee to be included in the monitoring arrangements for this policy in both financial and outcome terms. To see this at the September Scrutiny Committee.	CEB 12 th . June	Agreed

Current Panels

Details can be obtained from Pat Jones phjones@oxford.gov.uk or any of the Lead Members.

Panel	Comment
<p>Covered Market Strategy and Leasing Strategy.</p> <p>Councillors Fooks , Campbell(Lead), Van Nooijen, Clarkson and Benjamin</p> <p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-scrutiny and engagement with the developing Covered Market Strategy and Leasing Strategy. • Independent engagement with the Covered Market Traders Association. • Review of the leasing decision for the unit formerly occupied by Palm’s Delicatessen. • Consideration of comparative data from similar markets. 	<p>The Group is currently observing the Covered Market Stakeholder engagement and is planning to talk directly to Market Tenants when the draft Vision Document is available.</p> <p>In addition visits are being considered to other markets and managers of commercial trading centres to learn from their experience. Bristol Market is the most likely comparator.</p> <p>Programmed to finish in October.</p>
<p>Recycling Rates – Are our targets ambitious enough.</p> <p>Councillors Fry(Lead), Simmons and Jones</p> <p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider our current policies and their effects. • Review with service officers barriers to improvement alongside best practice and new initiatives. 	<p>The Group have identified a number of areas for potential improvement and are currently working with officers to explore these.</p> <p>The Group is considering focusing its efforts around reward and penalty schemes taking in a broad range of suggestions.</p> <p>Programmed to finish no later than October.</p>
<p>Enfranchisement and Empowerment.</p> <p>Councillors Jones, Darke(Lead) and O’Hara.</p> <p>Scope:</p> <p>As census data is published we begin to see the diverse and changing</p>	<p>Planning is underway for the Group to run 3 focus groups talking to the Somali, Pakistani and Polish communities to understand the extent of their knowledge of public services and issues they have with engagement.</p>

<p>nature of Oxford and the number of people who failed to complete details without a least 1 reminder. Alongside this there are a number of properties with no one registered to vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect does this have on our understanding of Oxford's communities? • Do we understand why some households/communities choose not to engage? • What is the extent of this democratic deficit? • What does this mean for communities, services and funding? 	<p>Programmed to finish in October.</p>
<p>The effects and value of the City's investment in educational attainment at primary level.</p> <p>Councillors Campbell, Jones, Coulter, Paule and Khan.</p> <p>Scope: To partner with a participating school to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the on the ground effects of the KRM model. • Understand the effects for children of all ability types. • Hear and see how the school copes with the cultural and professional challenges. • See how school inspectors respond. • Understand the targets set by the school management team and the part KRM plays in this. <p>Latterly the group has also decided to look at absenteeism.</p>	<p>The Group has agreed continuing discussions with its partner school which will happen in July.</p> <p>The Group has 5 members 1 of which has had no involvement in the partnership work and 2 others have been replaced because they became Executive Members.</p> <p>Work with the school will continue for a third term.</p>
<p>Mutual Exchanges between Council Tenants.</p> <p>Housing Panel with Linda Hill (Lead)</p>	<p>This has just started so no progress report is available. This work is being conducted by Linda Hill (co-opted tenant) supported by the scrutiny and</p>

<p>tenant.</p> <p>Scope: To consider the under occupancy in the Council's stock and the potential for mutual exchanges to support those tenants affected by the changes to benefits and in particular the "bedroom tax".</p> <p>To consider what changes and support is needed to make mutual exchanges a more useful tool for tenants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview a range of tenants who have just registered to move. • Interview a range of tenants at the point of swap within the mutual exchange system. 	<p>housing officers. This work links to a significant issue for the City.</p>
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Called in Decisions and Councillor Calls for Action

None.