

To: Council

Date: 30th. September 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. Since my last briefing the Scrutiny Committee has set its work programme and begun work on the various debate and inquiries. I am grateful to all councillors who made suggestions for items they wished to see in the programme and pleased to inform you that most of these suggestions will be pursued in some form by the Scrutiny Committee. There is a lot of work going on outside of formal committee meetings and I would like to commend member's hard work and focus in their areas of choice. In particular I would like to highlight and thank those members who have agreed to take a lead role for a debate, inquiry or review. These are:
 - Councillor Sanders – Vice Chair.
 - Councillor Darke – River and Sewage Flooding and Empowerment.
 - Councillor Coulter – Discretionary Housing Payments and Participation in Leisure.
 - Councillor Fry – Recycling and Evaluation Scale in Planning Applications.
 - Councillor Campbell – Educational Attainment and Covered Market.
 - Councillor Brett – Public Engagement and the Use of Social Media.
 - Councillor Smith – Chair of the Housing scrutiny Panel.
 - Councillor Simmons – Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel.
 - Linda Smith (Tenant) – Mutual Exchanges.

2. One of the aims of the new scrutiny structure was to provide as many opportunities as possible for non-executive councillors to be involved in areas that interest them or are a priority for their constituents. Officers and Lead Members have been able to do this and to date 21 out of 37 non-executive councillors are actively engaged in the programme.

Standard Information

3. The information I presented to you last time has been updated to show the progress made and is attached at Appendix 1. In addition to the larger reviews a number of other inquiries are being pursued by the Scrutiny Committee at their formal meetings. Council can see some of these in agenda schedules but more detail can be found in the full Scrutiny Work Programme which can be viewed via any scrutiny agenda, on line or is available from Pat Jones, contact details at the end of this report.
4. The Scrutiny Committee has agreed to set 2 Standing Panels to consider Housing and Finance issues. Their forward agenda are attached and any member who has a specific issue they would wish to see considered by these Panels should contact the Lead Councillor, Pat Jones or I.
5. A number of recommendations from Scrutiny have been considered by the City Executive Board and Council will see from the information attached that most of these have been accepted. I am grateful for the attendance of Board Members at meetings and the open and collaborative way the Executive work with Scrutiny. I think Council will agree that this supports non-executive councillors in having a real influence in decision making.

Current Activity

6. The Scrutiny Committee is hoping to receive final recommendations from 3 Review Panels during October and November. These are:
 - Covered Market.
 - Recycling Incentives.
 - Empowerment.

I hope Council find these outcomes helpful and supportive of the priorities of the Council.

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Appendix 1

Committee Agenda Schedules

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 Debt 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. Pre-scrutiny- Youth Ambition Strategy.
5 th . September	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance Monitoring – Qtr. 1. 2. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report. 3. Pre-scrutiny - Riverside Land(item delayed at CEB). 4. Pre-scrutiny -Customer Contact Strategy. 5. Pre-scrutiny -Oxfutures Fund (item delayed indefinitely) 6. Pre-scrutiny – City Deal (item delayed at CEB)) 7. Pre-scrutiny -Grants Programme Commissioning Review (item delayed at CEB).
1 st . October	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Safety issues – Board Member. 2. Interim Covered Market – Panel report. 3. Pre-scrutiny – City Deal. 4. Pre-scrutiny – Review of the Community and Voluntary Organisations Grants Programme.
5 th . November	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance Monitoring – Qtr. 2. 2. Pre-scrutiny - Oxpens Master Plan – consultation outcome. 3. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report. 4. Pre-scrutiny - Public Engagement Strategy. 5. Pre-scrutiny – Riverside Land 6. Use of Social Media by the Council. 7. Student Council Tax Exemptions – issues.

	8. Enfranchisement and Empowerment – Panel report. 9. Recycling – Panel report 10. Final Covered Market Report.
3 rd . December	1. Panel advice on Thames Water investment.
14 th . January	1. Public Involvement Strategy (consultation outcome).
4 th . February	1. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report. 2. Performance Monitoring – Qtr. 3.
4 th . March	1. Education Attainment Panel report.
1 st . April	1. Leisure centre usage and the engagement in all leisure activities across the City with a particular focus on engagement of residents from our most deprived wards.

Finance Standing Panel – Lead Member Councillor Simmons

Dates	Agenda Items
6 th . September 5.00pm.	1. Quarter 1 spending against budget. 2. Treasury Management outturn 2012 – 2013. 3. Quarter 1 2013 – 2014 Treasury Management performance. 4. Panel work programme.
7 th . November 5.30pm	1. Quarter 2 spending against budget. 2. Quarter 2 2013 – 2014 Treasury Management performance. 3. Budget review scope and timetable. 4. Contingencies detail 2008 to date. 5. Modelled effects of the agreed transfer of assets from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund.
6 th . February 2014 at 6.00pm.	1. Quarter 3 spending against budget. 2. Quarter 3 Treasury Management performance. 3. Draft Treasury Management Strategy 2014 - 2015

Housing Standing Panel – Lead Member Councillor Smith

The Scrutiny Committee has asked that this Panel also take issues from the Forward Plan related to the Housing theme. Addition dates have been reserved to allow this to happen if necessary, these are:

- 3rd. October.
- 5th December (used).
- 15th. January 2014.
- 6th. March 2014.
- 3rd. April 2014.

Dates	Agenda Items
3 rd . September 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Strategy Action Plan. 2. Long term affordable housing for homelessness prevention. 3. Allocations review and changes to the Allocations Policy. 4. Performance monitoring – Housing Measures – Qtr. 1. 5. Allocation Policies and how we communicate, give advice and take account of feedback. 6. Panel work programme.
3 rd . October 5.00pm.	Provisional
4 th . November at 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance monitoring – Housing Measures- Qtr. 2. Item to include a report back on performance against CS002 and CS005 2. Outcome from review of the Mutual Exchange process. 3. Estate Regeneration – Scope 4. Communications Strategy for the Allocations Scheme 5. Management arrangements – Temporary Accommodation? 6. Follow up on benefits performance indicators.
5 th . December at 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Strategy refresh. 2. Management arrangements – Temporary Accommodation?

15 th . January 2014 at 5.00pm.	Provisional 1. Possible Asset Management Strategy – Oxford Standard
7 th . February at 5.00pm.	1. Performance monitoring – Housing Measures – Qtr. 3. 2. Possible Asset Management Strategy – Oxford Standard
6 th . March at 5.00pm.	Provisional
3 rd . April at 5.00pm.	Provisional

Scrutiny Recommendation 2013 – 2014

All recommendations

Customer Contract Strategy		
Scrutiny Committee – 5th. September 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To ensure that separate arrangements for consultation with the Business Community are included in the information gathering to inform the final Strategy.	Agreed	City Executive Board 11 th . September
To explore the use of Skype as a communication tool within this Strategy.	Agreed with Amendment Will explore Skype as a communication tool along with other methods rather than in isolation.	
To ensure that any service developments are evaluated financially around clear value for money principles.	Agreed	
Budget Spending – Qtr. 1		
Finance Scrutiny Panel – 6th. September 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To express concern about the availability of resources to	Noted – arrangements already being	City Executive Board

deliver the Capital Programme.	considered	11 th . September
To reconsider the reporting of the Commercial Property rental measure using dates that align to produce a more accurate picture of performance.	Agreed	
That the City Executive Board bring forward their strategy for the provision of contingencies with the forthcoming medium Term Financial Strategy to the next meeting of the Panel in November.	Noted – will happen as part of the MTFS in December	
Treasury Management – Qtr. 1		
Finance Scrutiny Panel – 6th. September 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To raise the non-specified investment limits from their current levels and redefine what is grouped in this area to manage risk, in an effort to encourage investment diversity and higher rates of return.	Refused	City Executive Board 11 th . September
Wherever it provides for good value for money to consider using investment funds for internal borrowing in order to avoid prudential borrowing.	Noted this is already done	
Allocation Scheme Review		
Housing Scrutiny Panel – 3rd. September 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by

<p>A Communication Strategy should be in place to explain the scheme as agreed, what it means for applicants alongside some general information on the likelihood of being housed. Communication should include the opportunity for feedback on the scheme itself and the understandability of it.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>City Executive Board 11th. September</p>
<p>Youth Ambition Strategy Scrutiny Committee – 2nd July</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Considered by</p>
<p>To provide now a set of concrete outcome measures focused on the direct effects on the ambitions and pathways of the young people involved in this work.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>City Executive Board 10th. July</p>
<p>To monitor and revisit regularly the type of activity provided to ensure that it is flexible, contemporary and engaging the right numbers, in the right place, at the right time.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>City Executive Board 10th. July</p>
<p>To express the need for the provision of safe spaces for young people to express themselves as an overarching priority for all the schemes, actions and outcomes within this Strategy.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>City Executive Board 10th. July</p>
<p>Low Emission Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan Scrutiny Committee – 2nd. July</p>		

Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To support the setting of the Low Emissions Strategy and ambitions but for the City Executive Board to require early reference of the document to the Carbon and Natural Resources Members Board so that gaps on data, resources and financing can be discussed and a robust action plan produced.	Agreed	City Executive Board 10 th . July
Discretionary Housing Payments		
Scrutiny Committee – 4th. June 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
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.	Agreed	City Executive Board 12 th . June 2013
To extend current outreach work to include benefit take-up to maximise benefits to current and potential claimants.	Agreed with amendment. Clarity in some aspects of Welfare reform is needed.	City Executive Board 12 th . June 2013
To keep the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy under review and in particular to revisit it once regulations on further Welfare Reform are clear.	Agreed	City Executive Board 12 th . June 2013

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.	Agree	City Executive Board 12 th . June 2013
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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 (resigned), 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.</p> <p>Alongside this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face consultation with Market Traders has taken place. • Visits to 4 London markets and Bristol market have happened. • Interviews with Officers and Board Members have taken place. <p>Interim findings to the October Scrutiny Committee. Final report expected in November.</p> <p>Programmed to finish in November</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 has agreed to focus its efforts around reward and penalty schemes taking in a broad range of suggestions.</p> <p>Data gathering is underway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information has been gathered on the incentives currently used by the Council and the effects of these. • Information is being gathered from WRAP and other authorities on incentives and outcomes.

	Programmed to finish no later than November.
<p>Enfranchisement and Empowerment.</p> <p>Councillors Jones, Darke(Lead) and O'Hara.</p> <p>Scope: As census data is published we begin to see the diverse and changing 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>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. These will happen in September 2013.</p> <p>Programmed to finish in October.</p> <p>Focus groups delayed.</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 	<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>the school management team and the part KRM plays in this.</p> <p>Latterly the group has also decided to look at absenteeism.</p>	
<p>Mutual Exchanges between Council Tenants.</p> <p>Housing Panel with Linda Hill (Lead) 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>Interviews with tenants who are at various stages of the Mutual Exchange process have been completed.</p> <p>Interviews with scheme administrators have been completed.</p> <p>Observation of mutual exchange events is underway.</p>
<p>Thames Water investment to improve flooding and sewage issues in the City.</p> <p>Councillors Darke (Lead), Pressel, Hollick and Jones.</p> <p>Committee agreed to extend the Panel membership to allow a group of councillors to meet officers in October to take a brief on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of investment already made by TW. • What further investment is needed. 	<p>Panel meeting at the end of October to consider briefing.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice on our priorities for this investment.• What are the City Council responsibilities as riparian owners and what money is available to deliver on these responsibilities.• Any lessons that can be learnt from Swindon. <p>This Group will then advise the Committee on the best focus for this item.</p>	
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Called in Decisions and Councillor Calls for Action

None.