

To: Council

Date: 25th. November 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. The Scrutiny Committee has met twice since the last briefing and has reviewed a number of decisions on their way to the City Executive Board. This is an important part of the committee's public holding to account role and one I know non-executive members value. I would like to thank all members of the committee for their constructive engagement in these debates and even though members don't always agree I have been impressed by the willingness to come to a constructive view.
2. The protocol for the consideration of "Councillor Calls for Action", the outline of which was agreed at Council last time, have been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and working arrangements have been agreed. If members want details of these they are available in the Constitution or from Pat Jones, contact details at the end of this report.
3. I would like to remind members if they are interested in any of the issues in the Scrutiny Work Programme or have issues they want to raise, they should do this through one of the protocols or directly with Pat Jones or me.

Current Activity

4. The Committee have discussed the interim finding of the Covered Market Review and agreed that these can go forward within the same

timetable as the Strategy for the Market which is currently out for consultation. This timetable will bring final recommendations from Scrutiny Members to the Committee meeting in January.

5. The Recycling Panel sent interim views on the Waste and Recycling Strategy, via the Scrutiny Committee, to the City Executive Board in November and their views on “incentives to recycle” are expected at the committee by the end of the year.
6. Members considering the “empowerment” of a number of minority groups in Oxford have been running focus groups to better understand the views and issues of these communities. A report on their findings is expected in December. I would like to thank the staff in Community Development for their support in this work.
7. In the Finance Panel members have agreed the scope for their review of the forthcoming budget which will start in December and finish in time for the City Executive Board to consider on the 12th February.
8. Members considering on-going flooding issues in the City have considered a briefing from officers on the current activity of the City Council and Thames Water and have agreed a scope for their further inquiries. I will be able to provide more details on this work at the next briefing.

Standard Information

9. 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 and in the Standing Panels. 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.
10. 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 continued attendance of Board Members at meetings and the open and collaborative way the Executive work with Scrutiny

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Appendix 1

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. Councillor Calls for Action 4. Pre-scrutiny – Riverside Land 5. Recycling – Panel update and pre-scrutiny of the Waste and Recycling Strategy.

3 rd . December	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Panel advice on Thames Water investment. 2. Enfranchisement and Empowerment – Panel report. 3. Pre-scrutiny - Public Engagement Strategy. 4. Use of Social Media by the Council. 5. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report. 6. Report back on performance Indicators.
14 th . January	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Council Tax Exemptions – issues. 2. Final Covered Market Report. 3. Recycling Incentives – Panel Report.
4 th . February	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discretionary Housing Payments – Monitoring Report. 2. Performance Monitoring – Qtr. 3. 3. Public Involvement Strategy (consultation outcome).
4 th . March	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education Attainment Panel report.
1 st . April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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

Dates	Agenda Items
6 th . September 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quarter 3 spending against budget. 2. Quarter 3 Treasury Management performance. 3. Draft Treasury Management Strategy 2014 - 2015

Housing Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2013 - 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 – not used.
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. Follow up on benefits performance indicators.
5 th . December at 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Strategy refresh. 2. Estate Regeneration – Scope 3. Management arrangements – Temporary Accommodation? 4. Communications Strategy for the Allocations Scheme 5. Outcome from review of the Mutual Exchange process. 6. STAR survey benchmarks and methodology.

	<p>7. Programme details producing results for PIs HC016, NI154 and NI155.</p> <p>8. Current rent arrears profiles.</p>
15 th . January 2014 at 5.00pm.	<p>Provisional</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possible Asset Management Strategy – Oxford Standard. 2. Management arrangements – Temporary Accommodation? 3. No second night out detailed performance information (confirmed). 4. Improving quality in the private rent sector – a City Council Letting Agency. 5. Satisfaction with Parks details of survey results.
7 th . February at 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance monitoring – Housing Measures – Qtr. 3. 2. Possible Asset Management Strategy – Oxford Standard
6 th . March at 5.00pm.	<p>Provisional</p>
3 rd . April at 5.00pm.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tenants and Residents Involvement Strategy – Implementation and opportunities for influence for tenants.

Scrutiny Recommendation 2013 – 2014

All recommendations

<p>Oxpens Site Master Plan</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee 5th. November.</p>		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To support the Oxpens Site Master Plan noting the concerns made by some committee members.	<p>Agreed with amendment.</p> <p>The Board commented that this an outline Master Plan and these concerns will be considered in more detail as we move forward through the planning process.</p>	City Executive Board 13 th . November 2013.
<p>Riverside Land Aquisition</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee 5th. November 2013</p>		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
To support the proposals in the report and ask the City Executive Board to note the offer of residents.	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Officer will talk directly to residents about their offer.</p>	City Executive Board 13 th . November 2013.
<p>Waste and Recycling Strategy</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee 5th. November 2013</p>		

Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
That the strategy reflects in its vision the view that waste is a resource and a commodity from which the Council can generate income, and that the Council should continually be looking for further opportunities to benefit financially from the waste that the City produces.	Agreed	City Executive Board 13 th . November 2013.
That CEB investigate and cost opportunities to pre-sort and divert recyclables from household waste collection before sending it to landfill.	Refused The Board Member agreed that this was needed within the County but the County Council has decided on incineration. Any consideration of an MRF provided by the City would be unaffordable. We are tackling these issues using other solutions.	
That the City Executive Board provide to the Scrutiny Committee more detailed information on the costing and feasibility for the options to recycle food from flats that have been considered alongside the details of the current capital bid	Agreed	
That CEB more actively use the penalty at its disposal to convince residents who do not present waste in the manner required.	Agreed	
That CEB investigate, through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, local opportunities to reduce excess packaging and reduce the use of plastic bags.	Agreed	

That CEB take all opportunities to promote the benefits of food waste separation to commercial customers and investigate opportunities to offer incentives to new business customers.	Agreed	
Performance Indicator LP106 Scrutiny Committee – 1st. October 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
<p>The Committee is pleased to see improvements in participation amongst target groups and looks forward to reviewing this data in more detail at the end of the year. The overall target improvement of 5% is consistently overachieved so the Committee want to see a more challenging target set to ensure that we are challenging the provider to do the best they can in this important community development area. The target should be at least that achieved in the previous year.</p>	<p>Refused</p> <p>RESPONSE: "While leisure usage by target groups continues to increase, we'd like to do better still. We're looking at why the increase in usage by target groups appears to have slowed down last quarter, including the way usage is measured, the effect of weather conditions, and the deteriorating state of Temple Cowley Pool, as well as what more we could do to publicise what's available and make it more attractive.</p> <p>"The Council and Fusion remain determined to meet and exceed the 5% target, as we have in previous</p>	<p>Board Member for Leisure Services.</p> <p>Recommendation sent 8th. October 2013.</p>

	years. However, until the reasons for last quarter's performance have been determined and we have a slightly longer indication of trend to work with, I don't think it would be helpful to adjust the target. We will of course keep this under review."	
Operation of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)		
Scrutiny Committee – 1st. October 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
As a follow up, I have been asked to remind you that members of the Scrutiny Committee would be very grateful if you could reflect their views when next you contact the local Police Commander; and in particular if you could ask the Commander where he/she sees the role of NAGS – what is their priority in Police work?	Agree. Response from Cllr. Kennedy on the agenda.	Board Member for Education, Crime and Community Safety. Recommendation sent 2 nd . October 2013.
Grants Commissioning Review		
Scrutiny Committee – 1st. October 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
That a member of the Scrutiny Committee has a seat on the Welfare Reform Members Panel. This would be Councillor	Agreed with amendment.	City Executive Board 9 th . October

Coulter until May 2014.	Scrutiny Councillor to have observer status on the Welfare reform Members Panel.	
City Deal Bid		
Scrutiny Committee – 1st. October 2013		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
For the expected future reports (recommendation 4 in the report) to establish the principle of public scrutiny through Local Authority Scrutiny Committees and discuss how this might work.	Agreed	City Executive Board 9 th . October
In developing the ambitions and programmes within the “Skills “ heading for Joint Committee Members to ensure that education, training and apprenticeship programmes are accessible to all through local schools and other educational bodies with an emphasis on early advice and guidance to young people so they are “work ready” for real jobs. For the emphasis of these programmes to be in areas of highest deprivation.	Agreed	
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 deliver the Capital Programme.	Noted – arrangements already being considered	City Executive Board 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
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.	Agreed	City Executive Board 11 th . September
Youth Ambition Strategy		

Scrutiny Committee – 2nd July		
Recommendation	Outcome	Considered by
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.	Agreed	City Executive Board 10 th . July
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.	Agreed	City Executive Board 10 th . July
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.	Agreed	City Executive Board 10 th . July
Low Emission Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan		
Scrutiny Committee – 2nd. July		
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 out reach 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

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 January alongside consultation on the Covered Market Strategy.</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.

	<p>Programmed to finish at the end of the year.</p> <p>Interim report on the Waste and Recycling Strategy agreed at committee.</p>
<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 and October 2013.</p> <p>Programmed to report to the December scrutiny Committee.</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. 	<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>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>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 completed.</p> <p>Report to Housing Panel in December.</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 	<p>Panel meeting at the end of October to consider briefing.</p> <p>Scope agreed for further work.</p>

<p>already made by TW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What further investment is needed. • 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.

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