

## Proposal to establish an 'inequalities' Scrutiny review panel

<b>Proposed Review Panel</b>	'Inequalities'
<b>Members of Review Panel</b>	Councillors Coulter, Lloyd-Shogbesan and Thomas. Lib-Dem member to be confirmed. Any co-opted members to be confirmed.
<b>Officer Support and allocate hours</b>	Scrutiny Officer support - approx. 2-3 months of spare capacity between October 2014 and March 2015.
<b>Background and Rationale</b> (key issues and/ or reason for doing the Review)	<p>Oxford is a dynamic and successful city with relatively low long term employment. However, the cost of living is higher than almost anywhere else in the UK and this presents a number of challenges. Some areas of the City suffer multiple levels of deprivation, with low skills, low incomes and poor housing. The City also has significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. These challenges have been exacerbated by the effects of the economic downturn and by constrained public spending, and are expected to intensify in the years ahead.</p> <p>City Council Members have raised particular concerns which could form the basis of a review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The level of child poverty in the City is 23.2% overall and is as high as 45% in some small areas, where educational attainment is also a significant challenge.</li> <li>- Widening social and health inequalities, in particular the reported worsening health outcomes for children, including increased hospital referrals for scurvy, rickets and malnutrition. This is linked to falling living standards and a decline in food standards since the start of the credit crisis.</li> <li>- The provision of emergency food aid by non-statutory organisations appears to have increased significantly in recent years, which indicates that many families and individuals have reached a point where they can no longer afford to feed themselves. At the same time there has been a weakening of statutory emergency provision.</li> </ul> <p>While the City Council does not have the powers and resources to effectively tackle these challenges alone, it can play a pivotal role through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paying benefits on time,</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The use of various discretionary powers and budgets,</li> <li>- Providing leadership of place,</li> <li>- Working in partnership with a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies,</li> <li>- Councillors acting as advocates for constituents.</li> </ul> <p>At its meeting in September 2014, the City Council's Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a panel to conduct one or more reviews into issues of poverty and inequality in the City.</p> <p>Review Panel Members will meet to agree their initial area of focus.</p>
<p><b>Purpose of Review/Objective</b> (specify exactly what the Review should achieve)</p>	<p>The nature and purpose of the review will be determined by the Panel Members but objectives could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding the causes and extent of poverty and inequalities in Oxford.</li> <li>- Review the impact that Oxford City Council has on both causing and mitigating poverty and inequalities in Oxford, either directly or by working in partnership.</li> <li>- Identify what is already being done and what more could reasonably be done to reduce inequalities (e.g. health inequality) in Oxford.</li> <li>- Recommending how policy, expenditure and partnership working could be strengthened to improve the situations of people in or at risk of being in poverty.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Indicators of Success</b> (what factors would tell you what a good Review should look like)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Panel engages widely with key stakeholders and reviews a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.</li> <li>- The Panel produces an evidence-based report that includes a number of substantial recommendations aimed at reducing inequalities or making a material difference to local people affected by poverty.</li> <li>- The majority of these recommendations are agreed by decision makers e.g. the City Executive Board.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Methodology/ Approach</b> (what types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence and why)</p>	<p>Evidence gathering could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inviting written evidence and/or oral evidence at public hearings from witnesses and experts.</li> <li>- Reviewing and/or commissioning research data.</li> <li>- Undertaking site visits e.g. to a food bank, health centre etc.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing key documents and policies.</li> <li>- Considering what could be learnt from other local authorities.</li> <li>- Reviewing local welfare provision and considering how resources can be targeted most affectively to address local needs.</li> </ul>		
<b>Specify Witnesses/ Experts</b> (who to see)	Evidence could be provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oxford City Council Officers</li> <li>- Oxfordshire County Council Officers</li> <li>- Oxford Heath NHS Foundation Trust</li> <li>- Citizen's Advice Bureau</li> <li>- Job Centre Plus</li> <li>- Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action</li> <li>- Child Poverty Action Group</li> <li>- Children's Society</li> <li>- Save the Children</li> <li>- The Oxford Food Bank</li> <li>- Oxford Community Emergency Food Bank</li> </ul> This list is not exhaustive.		
<b>Background documents</b> (which to look at)	The following documents may help to inform the Panel's area of focus and/or be used as evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2014-2018</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Oxfordshire Children &amp; Young People's Trust: Child Poverty Needs Assessment</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support – The Children's Society</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Poverty and deprivation statistics - Oxford City Council</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Fair Society Healthy Lives - The Marmot Review</a></li> </ul> This list is not exhaustive.		
<b>Projected start date</b>	13 October 2014	<b>Draft Report Deadline</b>	February or March 2015
<b>Meeting Frequency</b>	TBC	<b>Projected completion date</b>	By end March 2015

### Indicative timeframe

October 2014
Panel terms of reference considered by Scrutiny Committee on 6 October. Panel members meet to agree area of focus and next steps. Terms of reference updated. Evidence gathering is planned.
November 2014
Review terms of reference considered by Scrutiny Committee on 10 November. Evidence gathering begins.
December 2014 - January 2015
Evidence gathering continues but the Finance Panel's Budget Scrutiny review takes priority.
February 2015

Final evidence gathering takes place. Panel meets to review evidence and identify recommendation areas. Report drafted around recommendation areas. Panel agrees report and recommendations.
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<b>March 2015</b>
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Final report to Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2 March or 23 March. Recommendations to City Executive Board on 11 March or 1 April.
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