

CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 12 February 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Price (Chair), Turner (Deputy Leader), Sinclair, Simm, Brown, Kennedy, Lygo, Rowley, Seamons, Simmons and Fooks.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Craig Simmons (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Jean Fooks

INVITEES AND OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Craig Simmons (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Jean Fooks

OFFICERS PRESENT: Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), David Edwards (Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing), Jackie Yates (Executive Director Organisational Development and Corporate Services), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Lindsay Cane (Law and Governance) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Tanner, Tim Sadler (Executive Director for Community Services), and Peter McQuitty (Head of Policy, Culture and Communications).

124. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received

125. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Full written questions with answers were distributed as a supplement before the meeting.

Cllr Turner spoke on the question on council tax exemptions (minute xx). He said he'd prefer a national council tax exemption scheme. In the current economic climate it was unlikely the Council would be able to afford addition entitlements without reducing exemptions elsewhere.

Council tax exemptions would be reviewed in 2016/17.

The City Executive Board noted the public questions.

126. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

127. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT_ BUDGET REVIEW 2015/16

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the conclusions and recommendations of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group on the Consultation Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-2019.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, went through the recommendations and Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health provided his responses as attached (minutes 127).

The Board discussed and agreed to aspects of the following:

- Exploring new ways of increasing public engagement in its budget setting process.
- Re-energising attempts to identify new invest-to-save opportunities in future budget rounds
- Exploring how the City Council can become a more agile operator in the housing market to ensure it secures best value for new property acquisitions.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE:

1. That reserves and balances are reviewed with a view to investing any overstated reserves.

2. That Council Tax is increased by 1.99% (rather than the proposed 1.50%) in 2015/16.

3. That the City Council continues to engage constructively with other Oxfordshire Councils in order to optimise any potential benefits available from business rates pooling and distribution arrangements.

4. That further consideration is given to covering more enforcement costs through higher, related fees and charges. This should include keeping legislation under review and asking the LGA what other local authorities charge for.

5. That to protect future Park and Ride incomes, the City Council seeks agreement with the County Council on consistent charging rates across all Oxford Park and Rides.

6. That sufficient flexibility is in place to mitigate the risk of the City Council having to repay £7m to the Housing Revenue Account.

7. That the following areas should be priorities for further spending in the event that additional general fund resources become available:

a) Planning enforcement – continue funding the Beds in Sheds project at the post April 2015 level to April 2016. A more detailed review of alternative funding streams should be undertaken during this period,

b) Discretionary Housing Payments – continue the current level of funding to April 2016.

128. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON ANY ITEM FOR DECISION ON THE BOARD'S AGENDA

Cllr Fooks addressed the Board on item 6 Draft Diamond Place Supplementary Planning Document (minute 129).

129. DRAFT DIAMOND PLACE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Head of City Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the draft Diamond Place Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation

Cllr Fooks expressed the concerns of the North Oxford Association (NOA) who had missed the last consultation workshop. NOA would prefer to retain their current building rather than get a new one as it is not very old and it serves the community well.

Cllr Fooks made the following points:

- A new multi-use health centre with x-rays, bloods, physiotherapy facilities would be great.
- That in future, officers notify people that are directly affected about the proposal before it goes public.
- That the proposal of Summerfield school releasing some of their playing site for new houses be considered as part of the plan.

Cllr Price, Board member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning explained that the NOA building was an inefficient use of space, and this draft plan merely offered an opportunity to use the space better. Joint leisure, community and health area.

The plan had assumed the availability of the potential housing development site which is why the path to the site was mentioned in the report.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. APPROVE the Draft Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation
2. ENDORSE the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report
3. AUTHORISE the Head of City Development to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document prior to publication in consultation with the Board Member

130. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2015/16 to 2018-19 and the 2015-16 Budget for recommendation to Council.

Cllr Turner, Board member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He stated that the Council had lost 47% of its Government grant since 2010.

He highlighted the following elements in the budget:

- The purchase of St Aldate's Chambers will save the Council considerable money in rent
- Council tax is set to increase by 1.99, which equates to approx £5.00 per household.
- Funding available to improve and maintain the Town Hall
- Extra capital for energy efficiency project, skate parks and drainage of football pitches
- The Council will start removing graffiti on private property for free.
- City centre ambassadors project to continue
- Thames Water catchment group
- £250M available for youth ambition work
- The Oxford Living wage has been increase
- Planning enforcement work in the private sector

The public consultation was strongly supported and was broadly positive. Officers have been relentless in efficiency savings, Council has a great partnership with trade unions

Cllr Simms and Kennedy commended the continual delivery of the Youth Ambition programme, especially at a time when many councils have reduced their youth services.

Cllr Rowley welcomed the £4.7M in regeneration funding allocated to Barton over the next 5 years, and the money available for the Leys Housing projects.

Cllr Seamons mention the 200 new homes being built in Blackbird leys and the £250,000 allocated for energy efficiency measures for council tenants

Cllr Sinclair welcomed the continual funding for the city centre ambassadors project and the additional funding for CCTV cameras in St Clements which was welcomed by the business community.

The Chief Executive outlined the managerial issues in the budget. This was the first time the council was considering a 0% rate support grant by 2018/19. This budget has been made possible through council trading, efficiency savings and a strong relationship with trade unions.

The Council had

1. secured £6M through the LEP and the Growth fund,
2. retained Council housing stock
3. retained services in-house, which had allowed greater efficiency savings.
4. Continued to have no compulsory redundancies for frontline staff.

He thanked Nigel Kennedy, Head of Finance for all his hard work at putting the budget together.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. APPROVE the amendments to the Consultation Budget following the public consultation process

2 RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

a) APPROVES the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £23.304 million for 2015/16 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 1.99% or £5.44 per annum as set out in Table 8 and Appendices 1-4, representing a Band D Council Tax of £278.97 per annum.

b) APPROVES the continuance of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme (formerly Council Tax Benefit)

c) APPROVES the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2015/16 to 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 5 and 6 and an increase in average dwelling rent of 3.49% for April 2015 representing £3.59 per week an annual average rent of £105.77 as set out in Appendix 7

d) APPROVES the Capital Programme for 2015/16 -2018-19 as set out in Appendix 8 and 9;

e) APPROVES the Fees & Charges schedule as set out in Appendix 10

f) ADOPTS the criteria for adopting the Business Rates Retail Relief scheme as set out in paragraph 21 and transitional relief as set out in paragraphs 22 – 24

g) APPROVES an increase in the 2014-15 capital budget of £550,000 in relation to the property purchase referred to in paragraph 43 and referred to elsewhere on the CEB agenda.

131. SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT_TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the recommendations from the Finance Panel on the Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health agreed the recommendations.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREEED

1. To reword paragraph 14 in appendix 2 and the title of table 5 before Council is asked to approve the Treasury Management Strategy.

2. That the City Council considers all options for refinancing the £20m repayment of its external debt, which is due to be repaid in 2020/21,

3. That the City Council pursues 'real asset lettings' at a pace. This could be both a good investment and one which supports the City Council's objectives.

4. That the City Council obtains independent advice on its liquidity and borrowing potential.

132. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 15/16

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Treasury Management Strategy for 2015/16 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2015/16 to 2017/18.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He explained that because of the low interest rates, It was better for Council to invest in property rather than leave the money in the bank. Work on getting money back from Iceland was on-going.

The City Executive Board resolved to RECOMMEND that Council:

1. APPROVE the Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16, and adopt the Prudential Indicators 2015/16 – 2017/18 at paragraphs 8 to 37, and Appendix 2
2. APPROVE the Investment Strategy for 2015/16 and investment criteria set out in paragraphs 23 to 37 and Appendix 1.
3. APPROVE the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement at paragraphs 12 to 22 which sets out the Council's policy on debt repayment.

133. ADOPTION OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2015-19

The Head of Policy Culture and Communications submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the consultation on the Corporate Plan 2015-19 and proposes its adoption.

Cllr Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning presented the report.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. APPROVE the draft Corporate Plan 2015 -19 as set out in Appendix 1.
2. RECOMMEND that Full Council approves the draft Corporate Plan 2015 – 19
3. DELEGATE authority to the Head of Policy, Culture and Communications to make minor textual changes to the Corporate Plan 2015 -19 in advance of formal publication.

134. ACQUISITION OF ST ALDATE'S CHAMBERS (SAC)

The Executive Director for City Regeneration and Housing submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the acquisition of the long leasehold interest in St Aldate's Chambers; and to agree to vary the long leasehold interest at 5 Queen Street.

The Chief Executive presented the report he said it was a once in a generation chance to purchase the lease.

The Executive Director for City Regeneration and Housing explained that the Council was buying the long leasehold for 126 years. Merton College still owns the freehold of the building.

The City Executive Board resolved to

- 1) GRANT approval for the acquisition of the long leasehold interest in St Aldate's Chambers for £7,539,230 (which comprises the purchase price of £7,200,000 plus acquisition costs of £339,230).
- 2) AGREE the variations detailed in this report to the long lease of 5 Queen Street such that the City Council receives not less than £25,000 pa in rent until 2144.
- 3) RECOMMEND to Council the increase of the budget in the Council's Capital Programme for the purchase of property in the sum of £539,230 to be financed from underspends in the Council's General Fund Revenue Budget in 2014-15.

135. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT_GRANT ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the council's grant allocation for 2015/16.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE:

1. To work with OCVA to improve outreach and engagement activities with diverse community and voluntary groups, with a focus on building capacities and supporting bid-writing.
2. To consider providing a greater separation between grants allocated to smaller, localised community groups and those that seek to achieve wider community benefits.

136. GRANT ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS 2015/2016

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Communities submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the proposed allocation of grants to community & voluntary organisations for 2015/16 through the Community Grants Programme.

Cllr Rowley, Board member for Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants presented the report. He said he was keen for officers to work with the Cutteslowe Community Association (CCA) to make their holiday scheme sustainable.

Shirley McCleery, Chair of the Cutteslowe Community Association (CCA) spoke on the CCA only receiving 25% of the grant it had requested to run a children's holiday programme. She was concerned there had been an error in calculating the cost per head and that the fees the children pay hadn't been taken off the

overall cost. This had made the total figure per head significantly more expensive than it actually was.

Cllr Price said that the Council would review its decision and would get back to the CCA.

Subject to Council subsequently agreeing the grants budget as set out in Table 1, the City Executive Board resolved to:

1. APPROVE the recommendations for the three year commissioning programme as listed in Appendix one, with the addition of reviewing the Cutteslowe Community Association grant.
2. APPROVE the recommendations for the applications received to the grants annual open bidding programme as set out in Appendix three.
3. APPROVE the recommendation for Oxford Friend to be funded through the Community Safety commissioning theme.
4. DELEGATE authority to the Board member for Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants in consultation with the Board member for Customer Services and Social Inclusion and the Head of Customer Services to approve proposals for the unallocated funding (£20,000) in the Advice and Money Management commissioning theme.

137. BARTON - ACQUISITION OF AFFORDABLE PROPERTY

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which updated Members on the costs and progress in acquiring the affordable housing at Barton Park.

Cllr Seamons Board Member for Housing and Estate Regeneration presented the report.

The Director for City Regeneration and Housing explained that Oxfordshire County Council had asked the City Council to act as the guarantor of the cost of the infrastructure works set out in the s278 agreement relating to the project. While the Director held delegated authority to agree this, he thought it would be useful for the Board to be aware of this position.

The City Executive Board resolved to
NOTE the progress in acquiring the affordable housing at Barton Park.

Note that the infrastructure works set out in the Barton Park development (s278 agreement) would be guaranteed by Oxford City Council.

138. ACQUISITION OF LAND AT FIDDLERS ISLAND OXFORD TO ERECT PERMANENT BRIDGE

The Regeneration and Major Projects Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which requested approval to acquire a site at Fiddlers Island.

The City Executive Board resolved to AUTHORISE the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance and the Head of Finance to seek to acquire the site as shown in Appendix B by agreement with the owners or by compulsory purchase if agreement is not reached (any required CPO resolution to be agreed by the Board).

139. MINUTES

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on January 2014 as a true and accurate record.

140. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT_ COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Services Team.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE that the review of priority areas draws on the findings of the Inequalities Scrutiny Panel, as well as the latest social and demographic research data.

141. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT_ ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER RESIDENTS AND PREVENTING ISOLATION

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) from the Scrutiny Committee on the City Council's activities for older people and efforts to prevent isolation.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE to complete a high level review to flag up any issues of non-compliance with the Equalities Act.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.35 pm

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