

To: City Executive Board
Date: 12 March 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments from the Scrutiny Committee on the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Susan Brown, Executive Member for Customer Services and Social Inclusion

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

We recommend that the City Executive Board approve the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy on 2 March 2015, and would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown and Paul Wilding for assisting its deliberations.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Committee regret that the unaffordability of private rented housing in Oxford has perversely resulted in a lower DHP funding allocation for the City Council, as explained in paragraph 4 of the report of the Head of Customer Services. The Committee also noted that there is a high degree of funding uncertainty in future years.
3. The Committee considered the policy change set out in paragraph 14 of the report and section 2.3 of the policy (first bullet point). The

majority view of the Committee was to support this revised policy. However, a minority of the Committee did not support this change.

4. The Committee also considered the level DHP funding. A minority view was that additional funding should be made available now by allocating a further £80k to the DHP budget from the homelessness reserve. This would increase DHP funding to a level previously assumed before the current funding allocation was confirmed. However, the majority view was to maintain the existing budget allocation.
5. The committee agreed to closely monitor DHP spend, noting that there is some flexibility to make adjustments later in the year.

Recommendation – We recommend that the City Executive Board approve the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None