

## CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

**Thursday 14 May 2015**

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

**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), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance), Jane Winfield (Regeneration and Major Projects - Team Manager), Val Johnson (Policy Team Leader), Elaine Philip (Markets Manager), Dave Scholes (Housing Needs Manager), Lindsay Cane (Law and Governance), Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer) and Catherine Phythian (Committee Services Officer)

### **179. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received. Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Brown.

### **180. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **181. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The City Executive Board noted the following public questions and the written officer responses (as published):

- Ms Jane Alexander (Item 7- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy)
- Mr Chaka Artwell (Item 7 Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy)
- Mr Nigel Gibson (Item 10 - Approval of Housing Strategy 2015 - 2018)

### **182. SCRUTINY COMMITTEES REPORTS**

Councillor Simmons, Chair, Scrutiny Committee presented the following scrutiny committee reports:-

- European Funding
- Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015
- Covered Market Action Plan
- Capital Strategy

Cllr Price apologised on behalf of the City Executive Board for failing to provide written responses to the Scrutiny Committee on all of their recommendations in

advance of the meeting. He confirmed that formal written responses would be issued after the meeting.

**(a) Scrutiny Report\_ European Funding**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed comments from the Scrutiny's Finance Panel following an item on maximising the benefits of European Union (EU) funding.

In discussion the City Executive Board made the following observations:

Recommendations 1 and 5: that the Council was already working closely with the LEP.

Recommendation 4: that in the current economic climate it was unlikely that any regional partner organisations would be prepared to establish a South East England European Office.

Recommendations 6 and 8: that the Council has appointed an officer champion and as a member of the Oxfordshire Economic Planning Strategy Group has partners from the local business community for potential EU funding bids.

Recommendation 7: that all members should be encouraged to promote the possibility of joint EU bids with Oxford's twin towns.

Recommendation 9: that the Council was committed to promoting the Low Carbon Hub model as demonstrated by its membership of the Covenant of Mayors and the Climate Alliance.

The City Executive Board resolved to NOTE the Scrutiny Committee report and to provide a formal written response to the recommendations.

**(b) Scrutiny Report\_Safeguarding Children , Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee presented the report. He thanked the Executive Board Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition and officers for their assistance on this item. He said that one of the main areas of concern for the Scrutiny Committee was the length of time (often many months) that some pupils had to wait for an appointment with a school counsellor. The City Executive Board agreed that this was a matter that should be raised with the County Council.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE the Scrutiny Committee recommendations as set out in their written response:

1. To strengthen engagement and protocols with Housing Associations in relation to vulnerable groups that they house.

2. To prioritise the following in the next budget round:

a) Continuing to fund the Safeguarding Coordinator post,

b) Supporting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

3. To ensure that feedback from frontline staff is sought more widely when monitoring the effectiveness of training and policy.
4. To monitor feedback from children to test the effectiveness of safeguarding policies and plans on the ground and to identify any blockages.
5. To ensure that training for City Councillors includes a focus on their role as being the eyes and ears of their communities.
6. To raise the following with the County Council:
  - a) The need for schools to be issued with guidance on safeguarding policies, including the role of elected Councillors in safeguarding,
  - b) Concern that some school counsellor positions have been cut and that some pupils have to wait a long time to be able to access this provision.

**(c) Scrutiny Report\_Covered Market Action Plan**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the Covered Market Action Plan.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee presented the report and expressed the Scrutiny Committee's concern at the apparent lack of progress on some tasks. The Regeneration & Major Projects Service Manager said that the majority of the tasks were completed or on target for completion. She explained that not all of the points raised by the Scrutiny Committee were under the control of the City Council.

The City Executive Board resolved to NOTE the following comments from the Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Wifi in the Covered Market should remain a priority for the City Council, even if traders do not want to invest in this.
- b) The Covered Market website should be updated more regularly as the news section is several months out of date.
- c) Improvements to signage are very welcome and we would like to see progress in developing an overall brand identity for the Covered Market, which should be tied in with on-going improvements.
- d) A new leaflet promoting the Covered Market that includes a map showing transport links would be welcome.
- e) Consideration should be given to providing signage and menus in different languages to cater for the needs of the main visitor groups.
- f) Moving the gates to the Covered Market would push rough sleepers somewhere else.

The Executive Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health will provide a full written response to the Scrutiny Committee.

#### **(d) Scrutiny Report\_Capital Strategy**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Capital Strategy.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee presented the report and thanked the Head of Finance for his assistance. He drew attention to some internal inconsistencies in the detailed guidance documentation; the Head of Finance agreed to revise these before publication.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

APPROVE the Capital Strategy subject to the following suggestions:

- a) To enable more accurate and consistent ratings, Key Outcomes in the Capital Project Scoring Guidance should be more clearly defined and explicitly aligned to the Council's corporate objectives (Appendix B).
- b) The Project Delivery Process and the Gateway Process should be better integrated and provide similar levels of detail at each stage (Appendix F, pages 1 and 2).
- c) A member briefing on the capital process should be offered to all City Councillors.
- d) The City Council should look to improve its project management function by exploring what can be learnt from Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) guidance and from partners who do project management successfully, such as the University of Oxford.

Cllr Price thanked Cllr Simmons for his service as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, observing that the quality of the reports had made the work of the City Executive Board much easier. The City Executive Board noted that the feedback from the scrutiny survey had been overwhelmingly positive.

#### **183. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON ANY ITEM FOR DECISION ON THE BOARD'S AGENDA**

Cllr Fooks addressed the Board on item 10 Approval of Housing Strategy 2015 – 2018 (refer minute 188).

Cllr Fooks commended the report as a thorough piece of work setting out the problems facing the Council and the options for tackling them. In particular she highlighted the challenges around affordable housing and cited the London Borough of Sutton as an example of best practice.

In response Cllr Price noted that the Council already had contacts with other best practice organisations. Cllr Turner agreed to speak privately to Cllr Fooks on the issue of pod housing models which included an affordable housing element. Cllr Seamons advised that a report on Housing Development delivery

models was scheduled to come to the December meeting of the City Executive Board.

#### **184. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES**

No Neighbourhood Issues were raised.

#### **185. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY**

The Head of Policy, Culture and Communications submitted a report which details the progress made on Oxford City Council's Section 11 (Children Act of 2004) Self-Assessment Action Plan 2014-15 and seeks to approve the Action Plan for 2015-16.

Cllr Pat Kennedy, Board member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition presented the report.

Cllr Price expressed some concern at the number of amber items on the action plan. The Policy & Partnership Team Leader assured the Board that steps had been taken to mitigate the situation and ensure that these items became green not red.

Cllr Brown said that she welcomed the steps proposed to promote councillor engagement in the safeguarding programme as it was essential that all councillors understood how to respond to safeguarding issues when raised in their ward. The Policy & Partnership Team Leader advised that mandatory training sessions were scheduled for May and June 2015 and offered to send additional guidance and briefing material to all councillors in advance of the training.

Cllr Brown said that she felt that more emphasis needed to be given to vulnerable adults as Oxfordshire's aging population profile meant that this was now a key issue for the Council. The Policy & Partnership Team Leader acknowledged this point and agreed there was more to do in this area; she said that the September Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub would be looking at this.

Cllr Simm said that it was important to remember that many vulnerable children lived with vulnerable adults and that they should be considered together. Similarly it was important to note that child sex abuse took place mainly in a domestic context.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. NOTE the progress and development of the Council's safeguarding function in 2014-15.
2. AGREE the 'Section 11 Self-Assessment Audit Action Plan 2015-16', as set out in Appendix 1.
3. AGREE that this report be presented to Council, to note the progress and development of the safeguarding function in 2014 and the adoption of the Action

Plan 2015-16, as set out in Appendix 1 (subject to the report being updated to show the latest progress against the Action Plan).

## **186. COVERED MARKET ACTION PLAN**

The Regeneration and Major Projects Team Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which updated the Covered Market action plan & programme to include costs and also addressed recommendations 5 – 8 from the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Ed Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He said that he was very pleased to report good progress on the action plan and that there was now a clear direction of travel for the Covered Market. He thanked Cllr Clarkson, the Regeneration & Major Projects Service Manager and the Markets Manager for their hard work and contribution to the on-going success of this project.

Cllr Brown expressed concern at the lack of progress with the wifi initiative. The Markets Manager explained that although there was currently insufficient support from the traders the issue would remain a Council priority for future implementation. The Markets Manager confirmed that representatives from the County Council had been involved in the development and delivery of the action plan.

In response to a question from Cllr Tanner, the Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health confirmed that the Council had reached agreement with all tenants on rents and payments. A report on the leasing strategy for the Covered Market would be submitted to the June meeting of the City Executive Board. Cllr Price noted that the arrangements for the rent review process still needed to be decided.

The City Executive Board resolved to NOTE the report.

## **187. CAPITAL STRATEGY**

Cllr Turner left the meeting at 6pm.

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Capital Strategy and set out proposed revisions to the Council's approach to capital investment and the rules and processes against which the capital schemes are prepared, evaluated and monitored.

Cllr Ed Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He emphasised the importance of following appropriate governance procedures in the future given that the Council had a very large capital expenditure programme to deliver in challenging market conditions.

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A, subject to the Head of Finance revising the documents in line with the comments from the Scrutiny Committee (refer minute 182d).

## **188. APPROVAL OF HOUSING STRATEGY 2015-2018**

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2018.

Cllr Seamons, Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration presented the report. He said that further reports including the Housing Asset Management Strategy would be brought to future meetings of the Board.

The Housing Strategy and Needs Manager drew the Board's attention to the list of key objectives that had been achieved against the 2013 - 2015 Housing Strategy. He believed that the hard work and achievements of recent years provided a strong platform for the success of the 2015 – 2018 Housing Strategy and Action Plan in what would be a challenging environment.

Cllr Simmons said that the Scrutiny Finance Panel would be looking at innovative funding models for social and affordable housing.

Cllr Brown asked whether the asset management strategy would consider the quality of housing stock in the private rented sector. Cllrs Seamons and Turner agreed that this was an important issue and explained that it would be addressed through different approaches such as HMO standards and licence renewal. In particular Housing Strategy Priority 4 includes a short term action, for delivery by January 2016, for the development of "a private sector housing strategy that tackles standards and options for maintaining stock in the most deprived areas".

The City Executive Board resolved to RECOMMEND that Council adopt the Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2018.

## **189. ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBERS**

No items were raised by Board Members.

## **190. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2015 were approved as a correct record.

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.15 pm**

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