

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 27 April 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Simmons (Chair), Altaf-Khan, Anwar, Darke, Fry, Hollick, Henwood, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Smith and Upton.

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT: Councillor Pat Kennedy, Board Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition

OFFICERS PRESENT: Jane Winfield (Regeneration and Major Projects - Team Manager), Val Johnson (Policy Team Leader), Elaine Philip (Markets Manager), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Coulter and Hayes

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

112. UPDATES SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Cllr Hollick updated the Committee on the progress of the Housing Panel. The City Council continues to provide non-statutory housing services to minimise the effect of the County Council's service cuts.

The next Housing Standing Panel is scheduled for 4 June 2015.

Cllr Upton updated the Committee on the progress of the Cycling Review Panel. At their last meeting the Chair of Cyclox attended. The County Council has allocated £50,000 to improve cycle provisions in the city, the panel has drafted a list of priorities which they will submit to the County for consideration.

The Finance Panel's next meeting is scheduled for 28 April 2015 where they will be discussing bonds and low carbon initiatives.

113. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN ACTION PLAN 2014-2015

The Policy Manager and Cllr Pat Kennedy, Board Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition presented the proposed amendments to the Safeguarding Children action plan (part of the Safeguarding Children Policy).

The Policy Manager explained the Council's duty to make arrangements to look after children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004. The new changes included:

- The creation of the Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) to co-ordinate and share information on vulnerable children within the county.
- Amending taxi licensing regulations to educate taxi drivers on the signs of vulnerable children and who to report it to.
- Challenging unacceptable behaviour in the community.

All Councillors would receive safeguarding training as part of the compulsory members training organised for May and June 2015. If Councillors are concerned about the safety of any children in the city they should contact the Policy Manager.

The Chair thanked the Policy Manager for the hard work done.

The Committee discussed the following:

A Members Briefing with Maggie Blythe, Chair of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board (OSCB), was rearranged from a general introduction to the work of the OSCB to become a Serious Case Review meeting. The meeting on the overall work of the OSCB will be rearranged for the summer.

Councillors working with local schools to spread the message. As all schools are required to have a safeguarding policy, the City Council needs to work with the County Council to ensure Councillors can communicate this message to schools. Council officers are trained to identify vulnerable children in the community and report incidents they witness.

The MASH has helped improved council procedures, allowed officers to work closer and develop stronger relationships with other agencies.

An interim budget has paid for a consultant to assist officers in the development of the action plan. A longer term budget will need to be sought.

There is no national legislation that regulates guest houses, can Council do anything under its licensing regime?

Despite the small number surveyed, officers felt the training review questionnaire had provided a good cross section of responses.

The Committee made the following recommendations to CEB:

- That further engagement with housing associations is needed to assist vulnerable people.
- Note the need for additional funding for safeguarding measures.
- Future feedback training sought
- Request a review of what Council could do to licence guesthouses
- Outreach work aimed at students needed to be monitored more effectively.
- Raise with the County Council the need for every school to have and retain a school counsellor.

114. COVERED MARKET ACTION PLAN

The Regeneration and Major Projects Manager presented the report which provided costs for the projects listed in the Covered Market action plan. The action plan is a combination of recommendations from the Retail Group's Covered Market strategy, the Scrutiny Covered Market Panel and officers' ideas. She explained that priorities in the plan were listed as short, medium or long term projects.

The Committee discussed the following:

- Traders are not interested in paying for free wi-fi in the market. Many of them already pay for their own internet access and see little benefit in paying extra for public wi-fi.
- The Market Manager is working on a common signage policy for the market. She is liaising with the owners of the Golden Cross arcade to possibly incorporate it into the common signage area.
- There are aspirations to create zones in the covered market which contain stores that complement each other. There is also potential to have more dining areas available outside of shops.
- The website is currently out of date and the market manager is working with the Covered Market Traders Association (CMTA) to rectify this.
- The leasing strategy will be reviewed by CEB in June, there is no change proposed in the store ratio for food to retail, but a move to improve the offer and mix of food stores available. The Scrutiny Committee asked to pre-scrutinised the strategy.
- There is a plan to move the gates forward on the High Street entrances to deter rough sleepers.

The Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to CEB:

- Invest in public wi-fi in the market
- Build brand identity through a common signage policy, up-to date website and multi-lingual advertising.

115. SCRUTINY SURVEY RESPONSES

The Scrutiny Officer presented the results of the scrutiny survey that was sent to all non-scrutiny members. He summarised the following comments made:

- A number of ideas for future review panels had been offered.
- The balance of scrutiny reviews vs pre-scrutiny work was commented on – however there are no extra resources to do additional review work.
- Currently the timetable for pre-scrutiny items is very tight – to meet the CEB meeting schedule. However the Committee could review scrutiny reports more thoroughly before they go to CEB.
- The Standing Panels could increase their membership to include more backbench councillors.

116. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Officer presented the work programme and Forward Plan. The Committee noted the progress of the review groups. They asked for a safeguarding in guest houses review to be added to the list of possible reviews for next year.

The Committee listed the following Forward Plan items they wished to pre-scrutinise:

Scrutiny Committee

- City Centre Public Spaces Protection Orders
- Covered Market Leasing Strategy
- Oxford Railway Station Re-development
- Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy
- Statement of Community Involvement 2015

Housing Panel

- HMO Licensing Scheme

Finance Panel

Corporate Debt Policy

117. REPORT BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report back on recommendations. Work is on-going to develop an effective implementation tracking system.

The Committee noted the report.

118. MINUTES

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2015 as a true and accurate record.

119. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the next meeting was scheduled for 2 June at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.15 pm and ended at 7.40 pm