

# MINUTES OF THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 11 June 2015

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**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillors Price (Leader), Brown, Hollingsworth, Kennedy, Seamons, Simm and Sinclair.

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Jean Fooks, Councillor Craig Simmons and Councillor David Thomas

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), David Edwards (Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing), Helen Bishop (Head of Business Improvement), Adrian Chowns (Team Leader HMO Enforcement Team), Stephen Clarke (Head of Housing and Property), Geoff Corps (Cleaner Greener Services Manager), Paul Fleming (Chief Technology Manager), Elaine Philip (Markets Manager), Fiona Piercy, Jane Winfield (Regeneration and Major Projects - Team Manager), Ian Wright (Environmental Development), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Lindsay Cane (Law and Governance), Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer) and Catherine Phythian (Committee Services Officer)

## 10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Turner, Rowley and Tanner.

## 11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 12. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The City Executive Board noted that public questions had been submitted by Mr Nigel Gibson and that the questions with the written officer responses would be published with the minutes of the meeting.

## 13. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

- Support for Businesses in the City Centre, report of the Local Economy Panel
- Covered Market Leasing Strategy

He noted that the scrutiny committee report on the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order would be deferred until the City Executive Board discussion of the issue. He said that the Scrutiny Committee would welcome the opportunity to work with Board Members and Officers on this issue.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the following scrutiny reports:

- Housing Asset Management Strategy, report of the Housing Panel
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme, report of the Housing Panel

**(a) Support for Businesses in the City Centre**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which presented the recommendations of the Local Economy Panel which had considered how the City Council could make the city centre even more attractive to the public and to local businesses during a time of major developments which will affect the trading environment.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee presented the report. He thanked the Board for their responses to the recommendations, noting that in some cases the wording was ambiguous. He said that it would assist the Scrutiny Committee in monitoring the implementation of their recommendations if the Board could provide clear Yes or No replies. He said that he would ask members of the Local Economy Panel to discuss the responses with the Board Member and officers to clarify the position.

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

1. a) That the City Council ensures that information about appealing to the Valuation Office Agency is made available to local businesses. In particular, this information should be communicated to all independent traders who may be affected by the major redevelopments taking place in Oxford.
- b) that the City Council takes any opportunities to join with other local authorities to lobby the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for more council controls over business rates.
2. that the City Council works with the County Council through the Town Team to agree on a single united channel of regular communications to businesses, such as about travel disruptions, supported by a single online source of information.
4. that the City Council works with partners through the Town Team to reinforce the coordinated overall marketing and publicity campaign for Oxford in ways that cover all major potential audiences.
7. that the City Council takes a lead in establishing and facilitating a city centre commercial property landlord forum. This would be intended to bring together the owners of commercial properties, including the City Council, to ensure that there is a coordinated approach towards issues affecting the city centre, such as the minimisation of the time during which premises are empty. The forum could be chaired by the Leader of

the Council, linked to the work of the Town Team and constituted based on the model of the previous Pensions and Language School forums. We also suggest that its membership should include a representative of each political group and that City Councillors should be able to observe meetings of the forum.

8. that the City Council leads on the development of a long term strategy for the city centre as a whole. This should include a commitment to developing and supporting vibrant and distinct city quarters away from prime sites, in locations such as Gloucester Green, Jericho/Observatory Quarter, Market Street, Broad Street and a possible arts quarter around the Ashmolean Museum.

**(b) Scrutiny Report\_ City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)**

Consideration of this report from the Scrutiny Committee to be deferred to a future meeting of the City Executive Board.

**(c) Scrutiny Report\_Covered Market Leasing Strategy**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee regarding the Covered Market Leasing Strategy.

Cllr Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee presented the report and highlighted the proposed amendments to the wording of the Covered Market Leasing Strategy.

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

**(d) Scrutiny Report\_Housing Asset Management Strategy**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the conclusions of the Housing Panel, drawing attention to their concerns regarding the number of unused garages and the potential to make better use of these assets.

Cllr Seamons explained that as garages were no longer included in the Housing Revenue Account they did not come under the Housing Asset Management Strategy but he acknowledged the point made by the Housing Panel and said that this was something that officers would consider.

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

**(e) Scrutiny Report\_Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the recommendations from the Housing Panel review of the HMO Licensing Scheme. He said that the Housing Panel was fully supportive of the proposal to renew the HMO Licensing Scheme for another 5 years and advocated the need for the Council to take a flexible approach to enforcement in different sectors.

Cllr Seamons thanked the Housing Panel for their contribution to the review and said that he was supportive of the principle of a flexible approach to enforcement.

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

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

Cllr Thomas addressed the Board on item 7 – City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) – which was later deferred (minute item 16).

Cllr Thomas told the Board that he believed that a Community Protection Notice would be a more appropriate tool than a PSPO for dealing with anti-social behaviour; he also questioned the advisability of proceeding with the PSPO in the absence of an enforcement code of conduct for officers or a revision to the existing “Code of Conduct for Busking and Street Entertaining in Oxford.” In conclusion he said that he welcomed the Board’s decision to defer the item and that he hoped that this would be an opportunity for the Board Member and officers to work with all councillors and other interested parties to resolve the matter.

**15. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES**

Cllr Fooks addressed the Board on her concerns regarding overcrowding in a Cutteslowe playground. She said that the popularity of the playground meant that there was often a queue to use the equipment and that this was becoming a safety issue. She asked the City Executive Board to consider whether there were any funding options available to provide more playground equipment.

The City Executive Board AGREED that the Head of Community Services should be asked to consider the matter.

## **16. CITY CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)**

The City Executive Board resolved to AGREE to defer this item until a future meeting in order that the Council had sufficient time to consider the submission from the civil liberties and human rights organisation Liberty.

## **17. COVERED MARKET LEASING STRATEGY**

The Regeneration and Major Projects Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the updated Covered Market Leasing Strategy. The Regeneration and Major Projects Manager said that this was an update to the previous strategy and that it had been subject to extensive consultation with the market traders.

Cllr Price presented the report and emphasised that the proposed changes to the strategy were intended to ensure that the covered market remained a “must visit experience” and “focussed on the needs of all Oxford residents”.

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the updated Covered Market Leasing Strategy 2015.

## **18. RECYCLING REWARD SCHEME BID – BLUE BIN PREMIER LEAGUE**

The Head of Direct Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the Council’s successful bid for £350,000 funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government for a 3 year recycling incentive scheme.

Cllr Price presented the report and congratulated officers on the successful bid.

The Cleaner Greener Services Manager briefed the Board on the details of the scheme and explained that Ward Councillors would be involved in its implementation. He said that it was planned to launch the scheme during recycling week at the end of June. He said that the idea to submit the bid had originated from discussions at the Recycling Scrutiny Panel.

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the implementation of the proposed recycling incentive scheme outlined in the report.

## **19. ICT STRATEGY 2015 - 2018**

The Head of Business Improvement submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the new ICT Strategy and the arrangements for its implementation.

Cllr Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services presented the report. She said that this was the first of a number of ICT related reports that would come to the Board from this service area.

In response to questions from Board Members the Chief Technology Manager confirmed that the telephony project and the new ICT partner project were both on target for delivery; and that the lessons learnt from the South Oxfordshire District Council fire would be taken into account in discussions with potential ICT partners.

The City Executive Board resolved to APPROVE the new ICT Strategy 2015 – 2018.

## **20. HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) LICENSING SCHEME**

The Executive Director for Community Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed findings from a review carried out for the HMO Licensing Scheme and sought approval to conduct a statutory consultation to renew the scheme in January 2016.

Cllr Seamons, Executive Board Member for Housing presented the report. He said that the review had identified a number of successes but that there remained a large volume of work to do to regulate the service and improve standards.

The Service Manager Environmental Health and HMO Enforcement Team Manager outlined the arrangements for the consultation which would include an on-line questionnaire, roadshows, focus groups with students and ethnic tenants, and meetings with ward councillors and local resident groups.

Cllr Brown raised concerns about the growing problem of “beds in sheds” and “hot bedding” in parts of the city.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. NOTE the Review of Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2015;
2. NOTE that the Review indicates that a significant proportion of HMOs in the Council's area are being managed ineffectively;
3. INSTRUCT Officers of the Council to proceed with a statutory 10 week consultation on the basis that it is necessary to renew the licensing scheme in its entirety for a further 5 years from the 25 January 2016 (Option 3);
4. REQUEST a future report in October 2015 setting out the results of the statutory consultation and the proposed future of the licensing scheme.

## **21. HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Head of Housing and Property Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the proposed Housing Asset Management Strategy and associated action plan for Oxford City Council's housing stock.

Cllr Seamons, Executive Board Member for Housing presented the report, highlighting the proposal to adopt and deliver an Oxford Standard which would be higher than the statutory Decent Homes standard. The Head of Housing and Property Services said that the Council was already commissioning work that would meet this enhanced standard.

In considering this report the City Executive Board discussed the implications of the Government's proposals for housing association tenants to buy their homes at discounted prices. The Chief Executive said that this was potentially a very serious issue for the Council which would challenge all aspects of the Council's housing strategy and management of its housing stock.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. RECOMMEND to Council the adoption of the Housing Asset Management Strategy along with the Oxford Standard as part of the Council's policy framework;
2. ENDORSE the action plan;
3. NOTE that an Energy Strategy will be presented to the Board later this year.

## **22. TOWER BLOCKS REFURBISHMENT PROJECT REPORT**

The Head of Housing and Property Services submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed proposals to increase the project budget and reconfirm delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Heads of Finance and Law and Governance, to be able to appoint and award the contract to the preferred principal contractor.

Cllr Seamons, Executive Board Member for Housing presented the report. He stressed that although it was regrettable that the cost of the project had increased it was important to note that this was a very exciting community project with high levels of resident engagement which would deliver very positive benefits.

Cllr Fooks addressed the Board on this item.

In response to a question around the use of £700,000 Section 106 affordable homes contribution to finance the tower blocks additional expenditure the Head of Finance advised that:

The Council held in excess of £700,000 Section 106 contributions that were required to be used for the financing of affordable homes, which it had not currently allocated to fund capital expenditure. These monies could be used to fund the New Build Programme currently included in the HRA Business Plan and HRA revenue resources currently used to fund the New Build Programme could be switched to fund the tower block expenditure.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. RECOMMEND that full Council approve an additional budgetary provision within the HRA Capital Programme of £1.750m, funded as detailed at paragraph 19, so that the revised total project budget envelope for the Tower Block Refurbishment Scheme is £20.108m:
2. RECONFIRM the authority delegated to the Executive Director, previously City Regeneration now Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the s151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to appoint and award the contract to the preferred principal contractor in accordance with the competitive tender process undertaken.

### **23. BLACKBIRD LEYS DISTRICT CENTRE REGENERATION**

The Executive Director for Housing and Regeneration submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought approval to procure a development partner for the regeneration of Blackbird Leys District Centre.

Cllr Seamons, Executive Board Member for Housing presented the report. He said that this was an extensive plan for change that was affordable and deliverable and would lead to significant benefits for Blackbird Leys District Centre.

The Board thanked the Partnership and Regeneration Manager for her hard work and commitment to the success of this important project.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. NOTE the contents of the report.
2. COMMISSION officers to undertake an OJEU compliant marketing process to seek a joint venture partner for redevelopment and regeneration.
3. DELEGATE to the Director of Regeneration and Housing the authority to prepare and issue draft Heads of Terms to accompany the Invitation to Tender.
4. GRANT project approval for the Blackbird Leys delivery project as set out in this report, based on Option B.

5. APPROVE expenditure of up to £300,000 to be funded from the HRA capital programme in order to procure and, subject to future CEB approval, make the appointment of the development partner.

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

No items were raised by Board Members.

#### **25. MINUTES**

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meetings held on 14 May and 26 May 2015 as a true and accurate record.

#### **26. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION**

The City Executive Board resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the item in the exempt from publication part of the agenda in accordance with the provisions in Paragraph 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2000 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

#### **27. NOT FOR PUBLICATION - APPENDICES - TOWER BLOCKS REFURBISHMENT PROJECT**

The Board received and noted the contents of the confidential appendices to the report at minute 22.

#### **28. NOT FOR PUBLICATION - APPENDIX 6 - BLACKBIRD LEYS DISTRICT CENTRE REGENERATION**

The Board received and noted the contents of the confidential appendix to the report at minute 23.

#### **29. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES 26/05/15**

The Board resolved to APPROVE the confidential minutes of the meetings held on 14 May and 26 May 2015 as a true and accurate record.

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.25 pm**

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