

To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Van Coulter

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader and Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan 2015-19

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board notes the comments of the Scrutiny Committee set out in this report and states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations of the Inequality Panel.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Suggested CEB response to the Inequality recommendations provided by the Leader of the Council.

Introduction

1. The Inequality Panel was established by the Scrutiny Committee during the 2014/15 municipal year and reported to the City Executive Board in July 2015. CEB agreed to respond in writing to the Inequality Panel's 21 recommendations at its meeting on 6 October 2015.
2. The draft CEB response to the recommendations of the Inequality Panel was considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 6 October 2015 (see appendix 1). The Panel would like to thank Val Johnson for attending this discussion.

Summary of the discussion

3. The Chair of the Inequality Panel welcomed the positive response to the majority of the Panel's recommendations, noting that of the 29 draft responses to recommendations or sub-recommendations, 17 were agreed, 3 were agreed in part and 6 were not agreed. Comments had been received for the remaining 3 (14a, 18a and 18b) but it had not been clearly stated whether these were agreed or not agreed.
4. The Committee restated their support for all the recommendations and made the following comments on the draft responses to specific recommendations:
 - Recommendation 3 – A robust metric or series of objective measurements was necessary to ensure that proactive policies could be developed, better focused and more effectively scrutinised;
 - Recommendation 10d – Working with OCCG to simplify access to services would be mutually beneficial. In testing social prescribing, GPs were utilising an on-line tool to identify agencies to which patients could be referred to resolve the need, pressure and worry that caused illness; aspects of which include health, physical activity, housing and social care. Scrutiny would prefer that residents could access such a tool before becoming ill and requiring medical intervention;
 - Recommendation 13 – Approval had recently been given for a £10m bid to government to reduce food waste. If successful, this recommendation for greater collaboration and strategic leadership to address food poverty could potentially be achieved. There was a need for food poverty initiatives to be effective in all parts of the city with pressing need.
 - Recommendation 14a – Asylum Welcome had precarious funding. Without committing to increase the value of the support given, a commitment to provide support for three, rather than one year, would provide reassurance to this charity at a time when the need for the charity's services was clearly increasing;
 - Recommendation 16a – Although OCVA was charged with providing a directory, current practice illustrated that charities were unable to work with efficiency. For example, inappropriate applications were received by some charities that could have succeeded if made to the appropriate charity. A simple task of highlighting the aims, objectives and qualifying criteria for each charitable fund would save time and effort for the applicant, charity and sector advice agencies, with the outcome that appropriate aid would be provided timeously for those in need;
 - Recommendation 17a – The County Council grants were focused quite differently to the recommendation made by Scrutiny;
 - Recommendation 17b – This suggestion had no additional cost. Measures were required to identify families with children with underlying qualification for the pupil premium (a measure currently practiced by other district authorities);
 - Recommendation 19 – Poor and bad employment practices did exist in Oxford and could be illustrated by those establishments that assumed tips and reduced the wages of staff solely based on the assumption that

tips were received. Such malpractices needed to be addressed and the City Council had a role in upholding and promoting best practice;

- Recommendation 20 – When providing his evidence, Professor Dorling underlined that the most effective way to address current levels of inequality in Oxford was to actively promote a proper Living Wage appropriate to Oxford's very high living costs.

Further consideration

5. The Scrutiny Committee will monitor progress against agreed recommendations after 6 months.

Executive response

See appendix 1.

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List of background papers: None

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