

Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker Jan – Feb 2016

Corporate Plan – Scrutiny Committee 2 February 2016				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That the Corporate Plan is fact-checked in light of recent changes to local government finance and national policy before it is presented to Council.	Y	The draft Corporate Plan will be updated to reflect latest draft budget and any policy announcements before it is presented to Council.	Cllr Price & Caroline Green	Y
2. That consideration is given to whether and how the number of responses received to the public consultation on the Budget and Corporate Plan could be maximised in future years.	Y	<p>It is agreed that this should be considered.</p> <p>The consultation on the draft Budget and Corporate Plan 2016-20 opened on 18th December 2015 and closed on 24th January 2016. An invitation to take part in the consultation was sent to over 3,300 email addresses via the consultation portal and an invitation from the Assistant Chief Executive was sent to key stakeholders. An advert was placed in the Oxford Mail on 22nd December, 29th December and 5th January. Paper copies were available on request from the Consultation Officer in the Town Hall. Responses were tracked on a weekly basis and a reminder email was sent on 15th January 2016.</p> <p>The number of responses to public consultation on the Corporate Plan and Budget was lower than average in recent years (average 68). There are a number of factors to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan is developed with engagement of key partner organisations referenced in the plan so they may not feel the need to respond 2. Due to circumstances beyond our control, the 		Dec 2016

		<p>consultation period is squeezed into a four week period that includes the Christmas and New Year holidays.</p> <p>3. The Corporate Plan is the sum of many plans, strategies and policies that are developed on an on-going basis, and which the general public and key partners are consulted and invited to comment.</p> <p>4. Respondents may focus their response on the draft Budget</p>		
136	<p>3. That consideration is given to the following suggestions on the corporate success measures:</p> <p>a) That there should be a corporate success measure on tenant satisfaction given that the Council has special responsibilities as a landlord;</p> <p>b) That the corporate success measure for new homes granted permission in the city should better reflect the actual delivery of new homes.</p>	N	<p>3a) There are three success measures for each priority theme in the Corporate Plan which are designed to focus on the biggest challenges under each theme going forward. On this basis, the three proposed for the Housing Needs theme relate to housing delivery, limiting the use of temporary accommodation as a measure of preventing homelessness; and increasing the number of HMOs licensed in the city. In addition to the measures in the Corporate Plan we will continue to monitor progress on key indicators and report regularly to the Housing Panel. This will include satisfaction tenant satisfaction in recognition of the Councils' responsibilities as a landlord.</p> <p>3b). The corporate success measure using planning permissions reflects performance that is under the Council's control and that we can directly influence and measure. This is the measure by which we are judged by Government. Housing completions are also important to monitor, and the City Council does this annually in the Annual Monitoring Report. It is recognised that it is important that officers work</p>	N/A

		proactively with developers to resolve blocks or delays on schemes. However there are many factors, including market forces which influence the timeline of when housing developments are built out, that are beyond the Council's control, including market circumstances. These wider factors make it more difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Council's performance through assessment of the annual number of housing completions. There is also a significant timelag in the collection of data on completions which makes monitoring of progress in a timely manner problematic.		
Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-2019 – Housing Panel 1 February 2016				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That direct invitations to comment should be sent to Parish Councils and any leaseholders forums, in addition to the stakeholders listed in the report.	yes		Cllr Price & Ian Wright	June 2016
2. That the consultation should be promoted through channels such as the Your Oxford newsletter and that further consideration should be given to how the Council can best engage with private rented sector tenants, perhaps through an 'appreciative enquiry'.	yes			June 2016
3. That the Council should make fuller use of the powers available to it to enforce the removal of waste and bulky items left outside HMO properties.	yes	I would want to clarify with Direct Services whether they are finding difficulties in using their full powers and whether we have the resources to do this.		June 2016
4. That Council Officers are asked to provide an update on the feasibility of increasing the number of free bulky items collections available to tenants living in HMOs. This	yes			June 2016

should include the feasibility of offering free bulky items collections on a 'per household' rather than 'per property' basis.				
5. That the facility to report suspected unlicensed HMOs should be promoted more widely, including through Tenants in Touch.	yes			June 2016
Budget Review 2016/17 – Finance Panel 28 January 2016				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That to improve the transparency and accessibility of the Council's budget proposals and in line with the increased reliance on external revenues and more uncertain Government support, the following should be provided in future years: a) Details of gross revenue income and other grants received by service and how these relate to the gross expenditures on these services (Budget Report); b) Staffing establishment (FTE) figures by service or team so that staffing changes can be seen in proportion to the size of the services or teams that are impacted (Appendix 3). c) Net budget allocations in the Detailed General Fund Budget Proposals, so that adjustments can be seen in proportion to the size of the budgets impacted (Appendix 3); d) Clearer explanation where	Y	The Council's Budget Book, which is available on the website, provides the information requested at b) and c). It is therefore suggested that the budget papers, which are already extensive are read in conjunction with the Budget Book going forward. a) Grant information will be provided for those services which it is significant as part of the budget process for 17/18. d) The narrative in Appendix three has been amended for the final budget to ensure that all lines that are reversing previous one off bids has been identified, and this will also be incorporated into future years papers. e) Capital funding is now included within the covering report f) Schemes within the Capital Programme have been grossed up and any capital receipts or other funding are listed separately within the funding statement	Cllr Turner & Nigel Kennedy	Dec 2016

<p>adjustments in new investments / bids budget lines are reversals of one-off investments that have already been made (Appendix 3); e) Details of how the Capital Programme as a whole and major individual capital schemes are expected to be funded (Appendix 6); f) The gross cost of capital schemes, indicating external funding, in addition to the City Council's contributions (Appendix 6); g) Indicative fees and charges rates where Service Managers have the discretion to set these (for example the typical hourly rate charged for a senior lawyer) (Appendix 8); h) More specific descriptions of what new fees and charges relate to in practice (Appendix 8).</p>		<p>g) In consultation with Heads of Service this will be considered for future year fees and charges documentation</p> <p>h)description of the fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis as part of the budget process</p>		
<p>2. That the Council should look to opt in to receiving a four-year Revenue Support Grant settlement from Government in order to obtain additional (but not absolute) funding certainty and stability in the coming years as this grant funding reduces to zero by 2019-20.</p>	Y	<p>Agreed Within the Final Budget Report to City Executive Board .there is a recommendation for the Council to opt into the four year settlement, to give the Council more certainty over its income. Further details are awaited on information required for the efficiency plan required by the Government and when the Council will need to submit.</p>		Y
<p>3. That Council Tax increases should be modelled at 1.75%, rather than 1.5%, in years two, three and four of the Medium Term Financial Plan and that if the Government's referendum threshold is set above 1.75% in those</p>	Y	<p>Agreed. In the updated Consultation Budget the Council have updated its forecast council tax rises from 1.5% to 1.75% in line with the Governments assumptions on average council tax rises. Should the referendum level in future years be maintained at 2% then the Council will</p>		Y

years, the Council should plan to increase Council Tax by the maximum amount permitted.		review its position.		
4. That annual assessments should continue to be made of the potential benefits and risks to the Council of entering into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement with other Oxfordshire Councils.	Y	Agreed		Y
5. That progress against new income targets expected to be achieved by trading 'white collar' services (e.g. legal, HR) should be particularly closely monitored given that this is a relatively new area of trading for the Council.	Y	Agreed All trading income targets are reported and monitored monthly		Y
6. That the Council should continue to maximise income from its commercial assets, including by actively exploring the feasibility of generating income by leasing spaces (so called 'air leases') above Council-owned car parks, for example for buildings or solar power generation.	Part	On the general point about maximising its income from commercial assets – this is a firm aim of the administration, provided other corporate aims of the council are not threatened. On the issue of "air leases", this has of course already been agreed in the case of St. Clements' car park, and is being explored in other cases. However, the potential should not be over-stated, particularly for residential accommodation, where there may well be severe concerns about the quality of such accommodation and living environment that could be provided, and the administration has no desire to build floating slums. Officers will explore this concept and where there is a proven business case plans will be brought forward for Members to consider.		Dec 2016
7. That Council Officers should explore whether there are	Y	Agreed Officers will continue to identify funding which assists in meeting the Councils objectives		Dec 2016

opportunities to generate regular revenue income in Environmental Sustainability in order to reduce the net budget requirement of that service, which has a good record of achieving one-off funding.		and is financially beneficial		
8. That the Council should continue to engage constructively with Oxfordshire County Council in order to achieve common charging across all Oxford Park and Ride sites and protect planned additional income of £580k per annum from 2018/19.	Part	Agreed We will engage with the County Council to try to ensure a joined-up approach to park and ride charging. The additional income is based upon an estimate of likely policy changes.		Dec 2016
9. That Council Officers should explore whether there are opportunities to increase income by charging 'premium' and/or seasonal fees and charges, including specifically for the following: a) Commercial filming (including higher premiums for late notice requests); b) Householder services – such as bulky items collection; c) Pre-Christmas premiums for Town Hall bookings and commercial events in prime locations (e.g. Broad Street markets).	Part	Agreed. Fees and Charges are reviewed annually to ensure amongst other things they are in line with market rates. a) The Council only receive around £1200 per annum from filming and therefore charging a premium price may have negligible impact on the overall financial position of the Council b) Each household is currently entitled to 2 free collections per year of up to 3 items per visit, thereafter there is a charge. The Council believes it counterproductive to charge for all bulky waste collections since this will encourage fly tipping together with a costly clear up operation. c) The prices charged for events and town hall bookings are considered to be competitive in the market and it may be counterproductive to vary these significantly		Y

10. That the anonymised results of the new biennial Best Companies employee engagement survey should be made available to elected members.	Y	Agreed		Dec 2016
11. That in light of a possible underspend this year, consideration should be given to removing part of the residual £43k of educational attainment funding sooner than planned.	N	Not Agreed. It is anticipated that the funding for educational attainment will be fully spent. Officers are working with the Portfolio Holder for Young People Schools and Skills to review commitments and alternative proposals to ensure this occurs.		N/A
12. That the delivery of efficiency savings in Business Improvement and Financial Services that are expected to be achieved as a result Universal Credit roll-out, including the closure of Templar's Square Customer Service Centre (which has been put back two years to 2019/20), should be kept under review with the aim of realising these savings earlier if possible.	Y	Agreed. The timescale for the roll out of universal credit is still uncertain. The digital service is expected to roll out to job centres between May 2016 and May 2018 with the conversion of benefit claims to be rolled out on an individual authority basis between 2018 and 2021. The Council will adjust its service delivery and budget when the timetable is known.		Dec 2016
13. That the Council should continue to look for further opportunities to use IT to reduce the transactional costs of service delivery, whilst continuing to ensure that services are accessible to all customer groups.	Y	Agreed. There is a detailed and comprehensive ICT workplan over the next few years which include replacement and upgrading of many key systems. Additionally there are a number of work streams such as the roll out of the tenants' portal, filing of electronic planning applications and e-benefit claims which are all aimed at increasing efficiency and reducing transactional costs.		Dec 2016
14. That Council Officers should be encouraged to look again at what potential there is to develop new invest to save initiatives.	Y	Agreed. There are a number of good examples of invest to save initiatives which have been implemented such as ICT rationalisation, heavy goods vehicle testing, bin washing service,		Dec 2016

		employment of court officer, Seacourt park and ride extension and a number of other ICT related projects in the benefit service, council tax and business rates. Officers will continue to look for these initiatives.		
15. That the Council should look to maximise revenues from the planned new waste transfer station, both by opening up the facility to others and by the local reuse of materials, if such outlets exist.	Y	Agreed. The Council will look to examine all opportunities which generate additional income in the business case that will be presented to City Executive Board.		Dec 2016
16. That given the pressures on homelessness and the risks around County Council cuts, it would be prudent to redirect £200k of revenue contributions to capital and instead use this to top up the homelessness reserve, which is expected to be reduced from £1m to £800k.	N	Not Agreed. Redirecting £200k of capital contributions to top up the homelessness reserve in the manner suggested would only leave a shortfall in the funding of the capital programme and is not recommended. The Council has increased the revenue budget by £200k per annum and recently used £5 million of its capital funds which is match funded to provide an additional 50 homes for homeless families. The Council will continue to review the level of reserves that are required for homelessness support.		N/A
17. That the Council's reserves and balances should continue to be reviewed at appropriate intervals with a view to investing any suitable funds, such as those held against a risk or item of expenditure occurring in a future year.	Y	Agreed. As part of the budget setting process reserves and balances are reviewed annually and the Councils Section 151 has a statutory duty to report to Council for Members to consider them alongside the Budget. Pending their use reserves and balances are either invested in banks, building societies or longer term higher interest instruments such as property funds or used to mitigate the need to externally borrow to fund capital schemes, hence lowering the cost to the council.		Y

18. That the Capital Programme and capital scheme reserve list should be revised in light of recent capital movements, grant income and the need to re-profile some schemes.	Y	Agreed. This has been done and all of the schemes previously on the reserve list have now been funded by the estimated additional resources.		Y
19. That the Council should seek to contract large capital schemes as soon as possible to minimise price inflation and uncertainty, and consider the case for taking a more programme-based approach to contracting capital works.	N	Not Agreed. The Council has a significant capital programme over the next four years in excess of £130 million. A large proportion of the Programme is funded by in year revenue and therefore the ability to bring forward schemes whilst mitigating inflationary pressures would create cash flow difficulties. Schemes do have a contingency built into the budgeted cost and officers review the Capital Programme annually to confirm that the budgeted cost is still sufficient. Where required the Council does make use of external suppliers such as project managers and cost consultants to ensure that projects are delivered on time in accordance with the Programme.		N/A
20. That the Council should keep the local impacts of the forced sale of high value council housing (HVCH) policy under review and consider any opportunities or mechanisms to free up funds from the new £20.1m contingency without affecting the Council's ability to retain HVCH.	Y	Agreed. The £20million is a contingency to mitigate the need to sell Council Housing to fund the HVCH levy. The Council will adapt its budget plans as appropriate when the potential cost to the Council is clarified.		Dec 2016
21. That in the light of recent housing policy and budgetary changes, it would be prudent to keep the decision taken last year to defer a £20m debt repayment due in 2021 under review to ensure that it is still in the best long-term interests of the	Y	Agreed. There are still a number of uncertainties around the Housing Agenda which the Government have yet to clarify. As Government policy becomes clearer the Council will look to adapt its Budget Plans and Debt Strategy as appropriate to ensure financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account.		Dec 2016

Council and Council tenants.		.		
22. That clarity should be provided on whether the renewable element of the HRA Energy Efficiency programme could be delivered in partnership with the Low Carbon Hub.	Y	Agreed. Further reduction of FIT by the Government makes this increasingly unlikely although we await confirmation from LCH that this is indeed the case.		Dec 2016
23. That HRA capital spending on adaptations for the disabled should be reviewed to ensure that best value is being achieved. An audit should be undertaken and updated regularly of the number of tenants living in adapted properties to ensure that they are used to house people who need them.	Y	Agreed. This service area was the subject of a review in 2014. The recent older persons housing review due to report to CEB in March confirms the need to maintain budgets to support independent living. The policy relating to the adaptation of properties will be re-examined in 2016/17.		Dec 2016
24. That 'sinking funds' should be instituted into new build leasehold arrangements where appropriate (e.g. blocks of flats) to prevent potentially high bills for leaseholders when these properties require capital works.	Y	Agreed. The Council already operates a sinking fund for major repairs for its development at Singletree Rosehill and is exploring this for the new Council homes at Barton		Dec 2016
Capital Strategy – 28 January Finance Panel				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
That an evaluation should be undertaken of how the Council can make best use of its grant funding for infrastructure at Oxpens. This should include evaluating the risks and benefits of using all or part of the grant in the interim in	N	The Council and its partner Nuffield college have only just exchanged contracts on the land purchase from LCR. The grant from the Local Enterprise Partnership is conditional on the Council providing the infrastructure for the development and consequently the Council will either have to fund this itself or ensure it is carried out by the developer to meet the requirement of the grant. There is a long stop date when the infrastructure needs to be in place of 31/12/2027 or the grant repaid to the Local Enterprise	Cllr Turner & Nigel Kennedy	Y

order to fund other things or generate a return, potentially substituting this grant funding with prudential borrowing at a later date in the event that it was needed to fund infrastructure at Oxpens.		Partnership. It is too early to say at this point whether the Council can secure external funding to pay for the infrastructure and therefore at this stage it is safer to put the grant into an earmarked reserve backed by a long term investment to attract a higher rate of return. This would at least improve the Council's revenue position as opposed to spending the money, only to find that it was required for the infrastructure at a later date. The position will be reviewed as the project develops and as the risk of the council having to fund the infrastructure is lowered then it can be released into the capital programme to fund other projects which meet the council's objectives.		
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Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Report and Performance 2016/17 – 28 January Finance Panel

Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That clarity should be provided as to whether the Council's 'real asset lettings' homelessness property investments should be included on its asset register and how a provision would be made in the event that the value of these 'assets' was to fall.	Yes	The Council will make an investment of £5million and in exchange will receive a number of units in the Fund. The investment will constitute capital expenditure in accounting terms to be financed by Prudential Borrowing. Although the Councils investment is guaranteed against the houses purchased the houses themselves are not owned by the council and therefore do not appear on the local authority balance sheet. The Section 151 Officer considers that it is prudent not to make a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charge for repayment of the debt against its revenue account as the debt would be due for repayment with the closure of the Fund after the initial period and the proceeds used to repay the investment. The Assets will be valued on an annual basis and the value reflected in the price of the units in the fund. Any fall or increase in the value of the assets and	Cllr Turner & Nigel Kennedy	Y

		hence the value of the units would be held in an unusable reserve on the balance sheet until the investment matures at which point the loss or surplus is realised. Should the value of the asset reduce over time then the Council will need to consider making a Minimum Revenue Provision since the amount received on maturity of the investment may be insufficient to repay the amount.		
2. That the Council should continue to maintain a watching brief on the progress of the Municipal Bonds Agency (Local Capital Financing Company), as well as other relevant financial borrowing instruments.	Yes	Agreed. The council will maintain a watching and will consider the Municipal Bond Agency alongside other financial institutions when it has a need to borrow to finance capital expenditure		Y
Energy and Water Supply Procurement 2016 – 2020 – 28 January Finance Panel				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That annual decisions on the proportion of renewable energy purchased through the LASER Public Buying Organisation should be informed by evaluations of the costs and benefits of this spend compared to other potential carbon reduction projects.	Y	Yes happy to agree both.	Cllr Tanner & Jo Colwell	July 2016
2. That notes or action points of meetings of the Council's Carbon and Natural Resources Board should be made available to all elected Members.	Y			July 2016
Oxpens Revised Delivery Strategy – 12 January Scrutiny Committee				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That a VEAT notice should be issued by the Council in regards to the proposed collaboration	Y	This would protect against a procurement challenge but not a	Cllrs Price, Turner &	TBC

with Nuffield College.		State Aid challenge.	Hollingsworth	
2. That the Council should make every effort within its negotiating power to deliver its 50% affordable housing policy at Oxpens.	Y	This is a helpful recommendation. It's also about maximising the number of affordable housing units.		TBC
3. That the City Executive Board resolves to authorise the disposal of the City Council's land holdings at Oxpens to the new joint venture company on the terms set out in the report, and delegate authority to the Executive Director, Regeneration and Housing to agree the detailed arrangements of this disposal.	Y	Agreed.		Y
4. That Council Officers should be instructed to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny of any likely key executive decisions delegated to officers that relate to the Oxpens development, including by notifying the Committee in good time before any such decisions are taken.	Y	Agreed.		TBC