

## Progress update on the recommendations of the Local Economy Review Group

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Executive response</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>
<p>1. We recommend that the City Council:</p> <p>a) 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.</p> <p>b) 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 rate</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>There is no doubt that business rate reform and/or local capacity to benefit from business rate growth on a more generous basis are major issues for local government. The devolution agenda will also have a bearing on these issues.</p>	<p>Matt Peachey</p>	<p>a) <u>Business rate appeals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on VOA appeals made available on <a href="http://www.oxford.gov.uk">www.oxford.gov.uk</a></li> <li>Traders adjacent to areas of major redevelopment given opportunity to appeal rates bills (e.g. Frideswide Square works) via the City Centre Manager</li> </ul> <p>b) <u>Increased local control on business rates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses have been updated on Rates Reform as part of the annual business forum/consultation of rate payers. A consultation event was held in Nov 15 with City, County and LEP highlighting the LA financial landscape, budgetary plans, and devolution agenda</li> <li>Business rates growth to be devolved by 2020 for all Councils. Officers are seeking greater clarity on how this will work in practice.</li> <li>City Council are working with LEP and LA partners to ensure devolution of a wider set of powers that will supplement local control over setting rates, if agreed, by late summer 2016.</li> <li>City officers are working with a group of similarly sized, comparable cities to collectively lobby Government on issues of local control of powers and spend.</li> </ul>

<p>2. We recommend 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.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The setting up of a single channel of regular communications would be a significant piece of work</p>	<p>Laurie Taylor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a communications protocol between the City and County Councils-and regular engagement between officers to co-ordinate information.</li> <li>• The Town Team continues to produce a newsletter for city centre businesses which includes travel information and a link to the County's live feed of travel information.</li> <li>• The County Council are in the process of launching a travel app of which details will be shared amongst city centre businesses.</li> <li>• The Town Team are hosting a series of forums for the City Centre Traders called 'Talk of the Town'. The businesses set the main agenda items and will have key data such as city centre footfall, events and planned work on highways provided to them.</li> </ul>
<p>3. We recommend that the City Council develops a more corporate approach to communicating with businesses, including guidance for all departments whose work has an impact or involvement with businesses. This could take the form of defining a central point of contact within the City Council, which can identify the appropriate unit to respond on specific issues, including the County Council as appropriate.</p>	<p>Not Agreed.</p> <p>The Communications team will examine this recommendation and consider what elements of it will be feasible and useful to take forward</p>	<p>Gerry McIlwaine</p>	

<p>4. We recommend 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.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Town Team should also work closely with the Chief exec of Experience Oxfordshire on marketing and publicity for the city</p>	<p>Laurie Taylor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chief Exec of Experience Oxfordshire sits on the Town Team's Steering group and meets regularly with the City Centre Manager to ensure co-ordination and synergy with any publicity campaigns.</li> <li>• The City Centre Manager's City Centre Strategy discussion paper highlights the need for a co-ordinated marketing and PR campaign for the city centre to be funded.</li> <li>• The City Centre Manager and Comms Team are undertaking a series of social media campaigns to promote the city centre. The first, #LoveinOxford was very successful and the campaign was seen by people over 500,000 times with 625 votes cast to decide the winner.</li> </ul>
<p>5. We recommend that the City Council develops a one stop shop function for events. This exercise should include a review of the costs and processes associated with aspects such as permission for road closures, stall licences and permits for distributing leaflets.</p>	<p>Possibly.</p> <p>The Events Team already provides a pretty comprehensive one stop shop function within the City Council but they have to work alongside County Council officers on highways issues, which inevitably results in a less than fully comprehensive service. Worth exploring the scope for greater integration</p>	<p>Peter McQuitty / Alison Drummond</p>	
<p>6. We recommend that the City Council produces a simple analysis of the costs and benefits</p>	<p>Not agreed.</p> <p>The costs and benefits will</p>		<p>N/A</p>

of pop up shops to landlords and the City Council.	vary so widely that this is likely to be a nugatory exercise.		
7. We recommend 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.	Agreed.  This is a worthwhile initiative and worth trying, although there is an obvious danger that it would simply replicate the Town Team's work. The TOR would have to be very carefully written.	Jane Winfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This initiative would overlap with existing arrangements and is unlikely to be supported by the private sector.</li> <li>• Tenants rather than landlords are more directly engaged in the city's economy. Many landlords are investment institutions who are not directly engaged in the city centre.</li> <li>• The vacancy rate in the city centre is one of the lowest in the country and reflects turnover and development. It is unlikely to reduce voids or letting times.</li> <li>• We already have a successful Town Team and the private sector is looking to establish a BID</li> <li>• There is a Local Plan review which will engage all aspects of the city centre economy.</li> <li>• There is already close liaison with major landlords, such as Land Sec and the owners of the Clarendon Centre.</li> </ul>
8. We recommend 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	Agreed.  Work is already under way in the Planning Policy team on a city centre strategy.	Rachel Williams	Rachel Williams produced a note on options for the status of the city centre strategy. Please refer to recommendation 9 for a further update.

<p>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.</p>			
<p>9. We recommend that dedicated officer time is allocated to the development and delivery of this city centre strategy. This could be funded wholly or in part via a BID and by additional business rates income that the role will generate, via reduced voids in commercial properties.</p>	<p>Premature.</p> <p>When we have an agreed strategy, the resource implications will be assessed. The Town Team will be continuing their consideration of a BID over the next few months. The initiative lies with the business community.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City Centre Manager has drafted a discussion paper for a non-planning City Centre Strategy that can feed into the Local Plan, this is with David Edwards currently.</li> <li>• Based on early business consultation the Town Team have advised a BID campaign should be developed with a view to get to ballot in 2018.</li> </ul>
<p>10. We recommend that the City Council's next Asset Strategy (2016-2020) builds upon the aim (not always presently achieved) of utilising City Council assets in ways that can provide wider strategic benefits to the city centre. The Asset Strategy could provide clear guidelines on the use of City Council-owned commercial premises to ensure the diversity and vitality of the city's wider retail offer.</p>	<p>Not agreed.</p> <p>This recommendation will be remitted to the Asset management team for consideration with the portfolio holder and key officers when work on the 2016-20 strategy is started.</p>	<p>David Edwards / Jane Winfield</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council officers' advice on assets does include consideration of the wider strategic benefits to the city centre.</li> <li>• Whilst the Asset Strategy can set out the considerations, the guidance cannot be prescriptive as its application depends on individual circumstances.</li> </ul>

This page is intentionally left blank