

MINUTES OF THE CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 14 July 2016



COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Price (Leader), Turner (Deputy Leader), Brown, Hollingsworth, Kennedy, Rowley, Simm, Smith, Sinclair and Tanner.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Henwood (Chair of the Scrutiny Housing Panel), Wade

OFFICERS PRESENT: Peter Sloman (Chief Executive), Caroline Green (Assistant Chief Executive), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Lindsay Cane (Legal Services Manager), Ian Brooke (Head of Community Services), Julia Tomkins (Grants & External Funding Officer), Dave Scholes (Housing Strategy & Needs Manager), David Rundle (Private Rented Team Leader), Ian Wright (Service Manager Environmental Health), Michael Browning (Private Sector Safety Team Leader) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr Gant, Chair of Scrutiny Committee.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Simm declared an interest in item 9 Grant Allocations (minute 31) as she is a trustee on the Donnington Doorsteps Association.

25. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Public questions on Item 8 - Fusion Lifestyle Annual Plan 2016/17 were received by Mr Nigel Gibson.

The City Executive Board noted the questions and responses.

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

Cllr Wade spoke to the Board.

Item 7: Private Sector Housing Policy (refer minute 30)

Cllr Wade was concerned the policy could make life difficult for good landlords and felt the lack of responses from the consultation process did not provide a clear mandate for the Board to base its decision on.

Item 8: Fusion Lifestyle Annual Plan 2016/17 (refer minute 29)

Cllr Wade felt more scrutiny was needed to challenge the falling numbers in the over 60s swimming group. She would like to see Fusion commission a report on why there was a decline.

The Fusion's Divisional Manager said that the decline in swimming was a national trend and it could be that people are just doing other forms of exercise. He highlighted that participation in group exercise classes was up and that the decline in swimming was a challenge for Fusion to reverse.

27. COUNCILLOR ADDRESSES ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES

There were no addresses on neighbourhood issues.

28. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS**Private Sector Housing Policy (post-consultation)**

Cllr Henwood, Chair of the Scrutiny Housing Panel presented the report and noted the Board's positive responses to the recommendations. He had reservations about the consultation process and suggested that future consultation be advertised in places with a higher footfall eg Templar Square shopping centre, events and community centres.

Fusion Lifestyle's 2016/17 Annual Service Plan

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report and thanked the Board for their responses. All recommendation had been agreed except recommendation 7.

Grant Allocations – Monitoring Report

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Committee had looked at the overarching view of the monitoring report rather than the grants themselves. He appreciated the positive responses to the Committee's two recommendations.

Cllr Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities explained the increasing importance of measuring social value (recommendation 1). She explained that there were tools available but they required the co-operation of organisations and users of the services. She said she would look into how the Council could measure social value with the community grant recipients; however she did not want officers to spend too much time measuring social value when they could be spending time improving it.

In regards to linking the grants programme with service delivery, Cllr Simm explained she would look into what good practice existed and would duplicate them if appropriate.

Review of the Lord Mayor's Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

Cllr Henwood, thanked the Board for the accepted recommendation. He stated he'd like to review the scheme after the pilot year.

Cllr Rowley, Board member for Housing agreed that the scrutiny recommendation was very sensible. A report reviewing the scheme will come back to CEB in a year.

Report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report and explained that this review was unique as it had a wholly internal focus.

The report was made up of two parts:

1. Analysis of council workforce with minority groups underrepresented in council workforce
2. Ideas to reduce barriers to minority groups.

He explained that further information had been received regarding recommendation 15 and he wished to withdraw it so the Scrutiny Committee could re-consider it. The Board agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would review the new information and the recommendation would return to the Board at a later date.

Cllr Brown, Board member for Customer Services and Corporate Services thanked the review group for their work. She said workplace diversity was monitored regularly and she was constantly looking for ways to improve it.

Apprentices

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report and outlined the recommendations.

Cllr Brown, Board member for Customer Services and Corporate Services outlined the Human Resources risks of council not getting mitigation of the apprenticeship levy right. She was seeking assurances before increasing apprenticeship numbers.

Cllr Kennedy explained that the Council's apprentice wage rates were about mid-range compared to other councils. Good work was being done to advertise the scheme with local businesses and with schools.

Cllr Price mentioned the need to look into the effect of increasing apprenticeship numbers due to the government's apprenticeship levy. As only training costs can be charged against the levy not wages.

29. FUSION LIFESTYLE'S 2016/ 2017 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which outlined Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan for the management of the Council's leisure facilities for 2016/17.

Cllr Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport presented the report. She highlighted the accessible and affordable leisure being offered, value for money and improved energy efficiency in the plan. The Council's subsidy was due to be zero in 2017 and she hoped to agree a profit share arrangement with Fusion when it did reach zero. Monthly client performance meetings and the Scrutiny Committee's involvement were really important in maintaining leisure standards.

The Head of Community Services said that usage has increased 54% since Fusion took the contract in 2009 and there were around 1.3M visits per year to the Council's leisure centres in 2015/16. He suspected swimming numbers are down because people are doing other forms of exercise as overall participation had increased.

The Fusion Divisional Manager said that Fusion had a strong relationship with the Council. Future plans included a new website and user monitoring system to record service and participation.

Cllr Price asked if there were any plans to extend the range of activities available. The Head of Community Services said the Council was constantly looking at what they offered people. Group exercises classes are really popular and the Council is always looking to increase the range.

A list of concerns were raised by Councillors for the Fusion Manager to feedback to his staff, these included:

- Increasing the parking at the Leys leisure centre
- Strengthening enforcement and signage of shoe-free area in swimming zone.
- Fixing repairs in a timely manner
- Timetabling different sessions for different groups at Hinksey Pool
- Considering the introduction of an under 16 participation card.
- Extending the healthy food trial to all leisure centres.

The Fusion Divisional Manager said that all programmes were reviewed quarterly.

The City Executive Board resolves to ENDORSE the Fusion Lifestyle Annual Service Plan for 2016/17.

30. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICY (POST-CONSULTATION)

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services submitted a report which detailed the results from the consultation exercise carried out for the draft Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-2019 and sought approval of the policy. The policy sets out the present baseline conditions of Oxford's private rented sector housing and how Council services have been working to improve those conditions. It then sets out how the Council will address the complex issues that affect the sector from 2016-2019.

Cllr Hollingsworth Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report. He explained that the policy set out the potential extension of a licensing scheme. But reiterated that there are many elements to overcome first ie legal matters, regulations, statement of intent and resource implications before the Council could consider an extension. Any future licensing scheme might be sector focus rather than a blanket approach.

Cllr Turner pointed out the issues with the bottom end of the private rental sector where tenants don't have the option to pick and choose their homes as there are so few available.

The Environmental Health Services Manager said that the consultation plan was broadly similar to the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licencing scheme's one. The poor response reflected the Council's budget not that officers did not try hard to get the public to engage.

Cllr Brown said that many tenants were scared of raising housing issues for fear of being issued an eviction notice. The Council does not want to see the private rental sector shrink just better homes and landlords.

Cllr Sinclair asked whether there had been an increase in the rental sector in neighbouring authorities due to the City's HMO licencing scheme.

The Environmental Health Services Manager said he had asked the district councils whether they had seen a change and had found it surprising that the councils had reported no significant increase in the private rental market.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. CONSIDER the report of the consultation on the Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-2019 and NOTE the findings attached at Appendix 2;
2. APPROVE the Private Sector Housing Policy 2016 – 2019 attached at Appendix 1.

31. MONITORING THE GRANT ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS - REPORTED ACHIEVEMENTS 2015/2016

The Head of Community Services submitted a report that informed members of the monitoring findings of the 2015/16 grants programme.

Cllr Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities presented the report. She explained that we currently have an increased demand for community grants but a shrinking grants budget. People are aware that there is less money available and are collaborating ie joint bidding. She said that people in Oxford were very good at responding to need and there were lots of people across the city wanting to help which the Council needed to support.

The social and economic geography of Oxford is changing with the County Council cutting services ie children centres closing have increased need in that area.

Cllr Simms explained that recommendation 2 was aspiration at the moment but officers are doing a lot of partnership work. However we need to get more strategic about it.

Cllr Brown asked what would be the impact on the city of lost EU funding? The Board agreed the need to record the organisations who receive EU funding and to remind the government of their promise to maintain funding.

Cllr Tanner said it was important for Oxford to retain its international links and money should be put into twinning associations and European groups. The Council should look at creating an Eastern European twin.

Cllr Simm replied that the Communities team was actively engaging with the polish community and making sure they had the services they need.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. NOTE the results of the grant monitoring, the positive impact the community and voluntary sector is making in the city.
2. WORK with partners to understand the issues facing the community and voluntary sector in greater depth so we are better able to target our support where it is most needed and will have the greatest impact.

32. REVIEW OF LORD MAYORS DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report which detailed changes to the Lord Mayor's Deposit Guarantee Scheme in anticipation of legislative changes and to boost positive outcomes for vulnerable persons.

Cllr Rowley, Executive Member for Housing presented the report. He said the scheme had been declining in effectiveness because of the increasing cost of housing. The deposit scheme is autonomous from the housing budget and has been increased so it can sustain itself. Loans are charged at 0% interest. The scheme will be advertised at Shelter but he encouraged members to let people know about it.

The Private Rented Sector Team Leader said the pilot would show how the scheme goes, he had spoken to Premier estate agents and had been told that some landlords might take it but because of the housing demand, they do not need housing need tenants.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. AGREE the enhanced one year pilot offer to landlords, as set out in this report, to help increase the number of low income non-statutory homeless households to find property in the private rented sector.
2. DELEGATE any further minor changes to the scheme to the Head of Housing and Property, including whether to adopt the approach piloted in future, following an evaluation of the pilot.

33. AWARD OF GOODS AND SERVICE CONTRACT: TO DELIVER CIVIL ENGINEERING PLANT & NRSWA QUALIFIED LABOUR HIRE

The Head of Direct Services has submitted a report which detailed that the City Executive Board delegated responsibility to the Executive Director, Community Services, to the award a new contract for the Civil Engineering Plant and NRSWA (New Roads and Streetworks Act) qualified labour hire to the Council.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health presented the report. He explained that the Council had found local contractors with the flexibility to cope with peaks and low periods.

The Board asked for a report once the contract had been agreed

The City Executive Board resolved to GRANT delegated authority to the Executive Director, Community Service to award a new contract for the provision of Civil Engineering Plant and NRSWA qualified labour hire to the Council following the completion of a tender process.

34. ITEMS RAISED BY BOARD MEMBER

None

35. MINUTES

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016 as a true and accurate record.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm