

Minutes of a meeting of the CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD on Thursday 19 January 2017



Committee members:

Councillor Price (Chair)	Councillor Brown
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Kennedy
Councillor Rowley	Councillor Sinclair
Councillor Smith	Councillor Tanner

Officers:

Jackie Yates, Executive Director Organisational Development and Corporate Services
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Lindsay Cane, Acting Head of Law and Governance
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Peter McQuitty, Corporate Lead - Culture & the Arts
Paul Wilding, Programme Manager Revenue & Benefits
Sarah Claridge, Committee Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Marie Tidball, Chair, Scrutiny Devolution Review Group
Councillor Andrew Gant, Liberal Democrat Group Leader, Liberal Democrat shadow member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development, Chair, Scrutiny Committee

111. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Simm and the Chief Executive.

112. Declarations of Interest

None

113. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None received

114. Councillors Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda

None

115. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None

116. Items raised by Board Members

None

117. Commissioned Advice Strategy 2018-2021

The Executive Director for Organisational Development & Corporate Services submitted a report which proposed that a new model for funding advice services in Oxford is investigated in time to replace the current programme which ends on 31 March 2018.

Cllr Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services presented the report. She explained that the report had been rewritten after advice from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Council highly values the work of the advice agencies in the city and pays them a combined grant of £500k each year. However the government's austerity programme and cuts to local government have put pressure on our community grants.

Council proposes moving to a commissioned advice system that fits with the objectives of our Financial Inclusion Strategy. We value the work of the advice centres but need to provide services fit for the future and are geographically equitable across the city. The review will consider how we could change services to make them more efficient. This does not necessarily mean having new advice providers.

A progress report will go to CEB in September.

Cllr Price asked what kind of bodies/cost will be involved in the review. The Benefits Manager said he didn't have a fixed idea of who the reviewer would be but they would have advice services expertise and local knowledge about the sector. The review should cost less than £10k.

Cllr Tanner said that a review would be useful for determining value for money of advice centres. Centres often provide service cheaper than if the Council provided it in-house as they rely on volunteers.

Cllr Rowley said that advice centres needed to be accessible to everyone in Oxford but they also needed to retail hubs in areas of deprivation.

The County Council's approach provides an example of how not to do it. Their single provider has led to a drop in the number of people being helped. He was glad officers

were meeting with all advice centres as he felt a single tender with a single provider was unlikely to work. He felt there was a lots of potential if advice centres worked together to make improvements ie sharing volunteers, etc.

Cllr Price asked what the next step was and would other Members be involved in deciding the choice and management structure of advice services. Cllr Brown said she would know more in the next few months and would involve other board members when needed. The Executive Director of Organisational Change and Corporate Services said that other members could be briefed on developments at the Members' financial Inclusion meeting.

The City Executive Board resolves to:

1. **Agree** that work is undertaken early in 2017 to evaluate the current provision of advice services in Oxford, and to compare this with different models of provision in other parts of the country.
2. **Agree** to commission an independent evaluation of services which proposes a new funding model which ensures that the outcomes of the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy are delivered.
3. **Agree** that all funding models should be considered in investigating the new approach, including competitive tendering, and retaining the current model.

118. Establishment of Trust arrangements to support the redevelopment of the Museum of Oxford.

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which sought to establish of a development trust to support the redevelopment of the Museum of Oxford.

Cllr Price, Board member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development presented the report. He explained that the museum had secured a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant and had pledged to raise £300,000 from other sources. The second round of funding from HLF is dependent on the museum having secured funding for 80% of its pledge. Creating a development trust is one way the museum can raise this money through donations. This trust will have board members on the board.

Officers are also going to explore creating a charity trust to run the museum. A report will go to CEB later in the year outlining the development trust's fundraising progress and whether a charity trust is a suitable model for the museum.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the establishment of a Development Trust as a vehicle to raise funds to support the redevelopment of the Museum of Oxford.
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Community Services to commit up to £5,000 from existing resources in order to register the fund-raising vehicle with the Charity Commission.

3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Community Services to agree detailed arrangements relating to the Development Trust.
4. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Community Services to explore the future establishment of a full Charitable Trust to manage the long-term development of the Museum of Oxford.
5. **Instruct** the Head of Community Services to report back to City Executive Board at a future date on progress in relation to the establishment of a full Charitable Trust. The report should include the Trust remit, revised charitable aims (objects), and a draft business plan outlining proposals for staffing, financial management and other aspects of the Trust's future development.

119. Scrutiny Committee Reports

a) Scrutiny Report: Devolution Plans for Oxfordshire

Cllr Tidball, Chair of the Scrutiny Devolution Review Group presented the report. She explained the task of the review group and outlined the methodology and findings of the group. She explained that devolution was important to local government as the UK is the most centralised country in the world and devolution deals bring some of that power to the local level. Achieving a deal could release significant government money to the county but the timeframe to agree a deal is small.

The government has specified the need for an elected mayor to provide strong accountable governance. The review group's preferred model is to keep the current Oxfordshire councils but to also have a mayoral combined authority, which would be responsible for the additional powers and money released from government.

She thanked the Scrutiny Officer and the Assistant Chief Executive for their hard work.

Cllr Tidball listed the benefits of securing a devolution deal, these included simplifying transportation infrastructure, building a new relationship with government and creating an employer led skills model.

She explained that the secured Cambridge-Peterborough devolution deal included significant money for social housing.

Recommendation 9 of the report suggests how the governance of a combined authority could work, including details of decision-making/voting and the ability of the combined authority to overrule a mayor. It also recommends devolving from the combined authority to the county and district councils the power to discharge functions where appropriate.

The report discusses possible local government re-organisation in Oxfordshire and outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the different models in Appendix 2. It is recommended this list be used to build consensus between Oxfordshire authorities.

A mayor would provide strong accountable decision making and could speed up decision-making by removing loggerheads.

She explained that the City is an economic hub in the county and the demographic makeup of the city needs to be shown in the decision making structure of either re-organisation model

Cllr Price thanked Cllr Tidball, Cllr Gant, and the Scrutiny Officer for the report.

The Assistant Chief Executive updated the board on the progress made in drafting a devolution deal. She explained that the Review Group's report had been very helpful to assist the decision making of the working group (made up of representatives from all Oxfordshire local authorities and LEP).

Following on from CEB agreeing the Statement of intent, to support a devolution deal with a combined authority in December, the working group has been revising its proposal. It has three objectives:

1. Housing, planning , infrastructure and transport - and has updated details on how devolved money would work for these
2. Skills; and
3. Governance arrangements – to review the government's requirements needed to secure a devolution deal, and learn from authorities that have secured deals in the last year.

The County Council launched its one council model today. It is out for public consultation until 14 March. The working group need to make sure work is progressed before the County considers their one council proposal.

The Assistant Chief Executive will update the Growth Board at the end of month.

Cllr Tanner asked what the likelihood of either proposal going ahead was. Cllr Price said that the message from the autumn statement was that government had two priorities, housing and economic growth. Devolution is seen as a way of achieving both of these. The government is pressing ahead to agree further devolution deals in Cambridgeshire, and Teeside, which suggests that devolution is the mechanism they wish to use.

The County Council's refusal to accept that there is not a consensus on re-organisation risks working against the combined authority proposal. The combined authority might fall at the democratic fence if authorities don't agree to take part.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted the emphasis on the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor and questioned whether the Review Group had considered the possibility of a devolution deal based on a wider geographical footprint (e.g. including parts of Buckinghamshire), given that the county borders broadly date back to Saxon times.

Cllr Tidball said that the Group had considered this but felt that Oxfordshire could be identified as being city region (covered by one LEP) and that a wider geography would be too unwieldy and risk diluting democratic accountability. However, an Oxfordshire combined authority would provide a mechanism for joint working with other combined

authority areas (e.g. the West Midlands) in the form of joint committees covering a wider geography.

Cllr Gant said that the review group had considered different models of re-organisation. The report didn't rule out re-organisation, but outlined concerns in terms of strong accountable governance, and high quality service delivery with all unitary models.

Cllr Tidball said that any net savings of re-organisation would need to be reconsidered in light of changes to the financial settlement and business rate retention, and a unitary authority's ability to generate revenue and efficiencies

Cllr Brown said the opportunity of securing a devolution deal is very important. Having it held out to us and not trying to grasp it is wrong. Oxfordshire's economy will suffer if we don't secure a deal and we need to do everything we can to secure one.

The Assistant Chief Executive explained the report had been circulated to all Oxfordshire councils and the working group. She said she would send it to the media as well.

The Review Group's work on governance structures and the tests involved are very helpful in assisting how a combined authority could operate.

Cllr Price said that getting a devolution deal is only the beginning. Cambridge and Peterborough are already onto their second round of devolution which included social care. There is danger that people around the table might not want the deal to work.

Cllr Rowley said the Council's short to medium term priority must be to gain the benefits of devolution.

Cllr Brown said it was important the Council reached out to our partners, the LEP and key businesses in Oxfordshire and explain to them the benefits of our proposal and why the County Council's unitary option isn't the best. We must work collaboratively with the other district councils to spread the message that a 'no mayor deal' won't work and by pursuing it the County risks derailing the combined authority devolution bid.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that ultimately the decision maker is government.

The City Executive Board agreed all the recommendations listed in the Devolution Review Group report.

120.Minutes

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2016 as a true and accurate record.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.00 pm