

Scrutiny recommendation tracker 2016/17 – February 2017

Total recommendations (year to date):	119	
Agreed	99	83%
Agreed in part	7	6%
Not agreed	13	11%

9 FEBRUARY 2017 CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD

Budget 2017/2018

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. That future budget reports should provide current and past data alongside figures for the coming four years, and gross as well as net figures, in order to present them in context.	Y	Agreed – Happy to provide further clarity
2. That clarity is provided in future years as to which fees and charges are discretionary and which are restricted to a level based on cost recovery or set by other bodies.	Y	Agreed – Happy to provide further clarity
3. That opportunities to generate additional revenue from discretionary fees and charges within the Planning and Regulatory Service (e.g. by issuing more Street Trading Licences) should be kept under review, given that unmet income targets have been rebased.	Y	Agreed - We will continue to increase income from discretionary services
4. That consideration is given to charging a lower rate for Street Trading licences in areas outside the city centre, hence making compliance without the need for enforcement more likely and maximising income.	Y	<p>A new reduced fee of £350 was included in the 17/18 Fees & Charges Schedule and was approved by General Purposes Licensing Committee on 23rd January. The following is taken from the January 23 GPL committee report:</p> <p>A new fee of £350 is proposed to assist businesses in low footfall areas outside the city centre. This fee would apply to premises located in the existing Neighbourhood Shopping Centres (as listed in Appendix 9 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016).</p> <p>The introduction of a reduced fee is recommended in the interests of encouraging increased vitality in low footfall out of town areas where small businesses may struggle to establish</p>

		themselves. The level has been set to reflect the reduced impact, size and compliance risk of street cafes in these areas, whilst balancing the need to cover costs.
5. That additional income from car parking charges should be rated high risk (and therefore have a 30% contingency) given the significant increases in rail capacity in the city.	Y	Additional income arising from increasing the park and ride charges in April 2018 is classified as high risk and mitigated by a 30% contingency. Other increased income arising from volume changes on park and ride and increases in off street parking fees is considered to be a medium risk given the changes that are expected in vehicle movements arising from the opening of the Westgate. Car parking income this financial year is already exceeding budget.
6. That consideration is given to how 'Invest to save' items are classified and presented in future budgets given that there are few invest to save revenue items but numerous capital projects that generate revenue savings (e.g. homelessness property investments).	Y	The Council has a budgeted for a significant amount of capital expenditure which will give rise to savings in the revenue budget, including waste transfer station- £2.4 million, Seacourt park and ride extension -£3.9 million, purchased of properties for homeless families - £10million, Loan to Oxwed - £4.1 million and Loans to Housing Company -£60million. We are happy to consider ways to make such schemes more prominent in the Budget report if it is the view of Scrutiny that they were not clear.
7. That officers are encouraged to submit invest to save ideas, even if the savings are likely to be high risk, given there is still a significant transformation reserve that can be drawn on to fund these (c.£750k).	Y	Officers are encouraged to consider 'invest to save' proposals through the Budget Setting process. Most of those for this year's budget setting process are capital by nature as identified in recommendation 6 above. This will continue to be a key theme during budget setting going forward as balancing the budget becomes more challenging. It is to be noted that retaining a contingency against high risk savings can serve as encouragement to put these forward.
8. That further consideration is given to the allocation of contingencies against high risk efficiency savings (which are reducing from 40% to 30%), given the council's recent record of not drawing on contingencies and the fact that unachieved efficiencies can be covered in other ways (e.g. by making alternative savings), or reported as pressures the following year.	N	The Medium Term Financial Plan provides for around £3.5million of increased efficiencies and fees and charges by year four with contingencies relating to non-achievement of high risk areas of £340k. Whilst the Council has had a good track record of achieving all savings or replacing them with other savings, this will become more and more challenging. It is still considered prudent to make some contingency in order to protect the revenue account, and indeed to send a clear message to officers that such savings proposals are desirable, and some non-achievement will not result in budget shortfalls.

9. That the council's Audit and Governance Committee considers the long term risks, controls and governance issues associated with the establishment of fully or partly council-owned companies and other new delivery vehicles (e.g. trust models).	Y	Agree. A review of the Governance of companies established by the Council by the Councils internal auditors, BDO, is part of the draft internal audit work programme
10. That the council's capacity and skills to support the new companies should be closely monitored, the risk being that if these efforts are under-resourced then opportunities will not be maximised.	Y	Agree – as the Council's wholly owned companies grow they will become more complex and require more resource to service. The resources required to support these companies will be closely monitored and if appropriate will be increased
11. That consideration is given to using a property agent to improve the council's capacity and agility in the property market (e.g. for homelessness property purchases), as this could enable the council to move quickly to take better opportunities and potentially save money.	Y	Agree -The Council is currently making use of its internal staff resource to manage the purchase of these properties. If it is considered that more resource is required to accelerate the process then this will be procured.
12. That the next annual review of the Council Tax Support Scheme includes an assessment of the impacts of the scheme on reducing poverty in the city to provide assurance that this is the best way of targeting resources to improve outcomes.	Y	Agree – The Council is required to annually review the scheme and consult on any subsequent changes. To date the Council has decided not to change the scheme from that originally introduced. The scheme will be considered again in September 2017 for the year 2018-19. The administration is clear that any changes will be driven by a desire to maximise our ability to prevent financial hardship, rather than achieve savings.
13. That further discussions are held with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to explore how community facilities can be incorporated into the provision of health care services.	Y	We are confident that the space at Rose Hill will soon be taken by health users. The health authorities are interested in using community spaces to deliver some services, and we welcome this (especially since there may be synergies with other aspects of our community development work). The work at Rose Hill has, however, made it clear that leasing space is not a straightforward process for the health authorities, and this will need to be borne in mind when planning future occasion of our centres.
14. That a review of council spending on apprenticeships is undertaken that includes identifying how to maximise opportunities to claim back part of the levy to fund external training for apprentices.	Y	Agree -The Council is currently looking at the best way to mitigate the cost of the levy by the charging of appropriate apprenticeship training costs
15. That costs arising from uplifts in the Oxford Living Wage (OLW) should take account of the expected convergence of the OLW and the National Living Wage (which will rise to £9 per	Y	Agree- Whilst it is agreed that by 2020 the National Living Wage will overtake the Fusion contracted wage, the saving to the Council will be minimal in the context of the overall Council

hour by 2020 for over 25s), which may release some small savings over the plan period.		budget. We will review the position annually
16. That the following areas should be priorities for further spending if additional revenue resources become available: a) The Fraud Team, given its potential to raise revenue; b) An Occupational Therapist to work within existing governance structures, which could prevent unspent Disabled Facilities Grant funding being returned to Government; c) One-off funding to protect archived documents in the Town Hall basement from flooding (e.g. waterproof filing systems); d) An additional Streetscene operative;	Y	CEB note the above priorities suggested by the Panel and will consider these alongside other competing priorities if and when available financial resources allow.

Update on the Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
1. That the report makes it clearer where the council's key achievements have been funded or delivered in partnership with voluntary groups and other organisations.	Y	The final published text will refer to partnership funding for the projects concerned.

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Carbon Management Plan: 2017 - 2022

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
1. That consideration is given to releasing revenue from the transformation budget and prudential borrowing in order to fund carbon reduction schemes, subject to robust business cases.	Y	
2. That guidance and best practice in relation to carbon reduction measures are taken into account during the Local Plan review and influence future planning conditions on new developments.	Y	

Grant allocations to community and voluntary organisations 2017/2018

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
1. That the unallocated funding for the Advice and Money Management commissioning theme is kept under review with a view to ensuring that all available funding is allocated during the year.	Y	
2. That workshops aimed at encouraging and supporting under-represented groups to bid for small grants are offered in a wider range of locations across the city.	Y	With a specific focus on reaching regeneration areas which grants target, yes.
3. That details of the criteria used to assess applications received through the Annual Open Bidding programme are made available to applicants (e.g. on the application forms).	Y	Details are already made available. The proposal to include on application forms and perhaps give a sense of weightings, would be particularly useful. We have also committed to start providing feedback on any trends amongst the quality of applications assessed to OCVA after each grant round. This will allow attendees at workshops to benefit from focused support in any areas of potential weakness
4. That in future grant allocation reports a consistently transparent approach is taken to explaining the rationale for the levels of grants awarded through the Annual Open Bidding programme.	Y	

Cycling – progress update

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
1. That guidance is provided to elected members on the use of CIL funding allocated to ward budgets to fund cycling improvement schemes, including guidance on the pooling of these resources.	Yes	Yes, this can be done. As Portfolio Holder I will work with planning officers to draft some simple guidelines on how to approach schemes of this sort, and circulate it.
2. That the replacing of cycle symbols on the Cowley Road is the priority for any unspent capital funding for cycling improvement schemes in 2016/17, subject to County Council approval.	No	The County Council has previously been asked to carry out this work by local councillors, and informed them that it is contrary to the provisions of the Regulations governing the use of traffic markings. The County Council contacted the Department for Transport to ask if an exemption would be granted, and were told in no uncertain terms that it would not be. This too was conveyed to local councillors. The City Council is unable to do works on the highway without the County

		Council's permission, and the County Council cannot do works that are contrary to the Regulation for road markings without the permission of the Department for Transport. That permission will not be forthcoming. This example makes the case for continuing our current policy of focussing on projects that can proceed immediately without the need for third party authorisation.
3. That the City Council contacts the Vice-Chancellors of both universities to request their intervention to achieve the delegation of the power to remove abandoned bicycles on University or College-owned land to the City Council.	Yes	The Council will contact the two universities to see whether this delegation can be achieved, and under what terms.

Safeguarding Language School Students

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
That the City Council lobbies for a strengthening of the legislation to require that local authorities are informed by language schools when minors are temporarily placed in a private home for more than a few days.	Y	I agree the recommendation. Portfolio Holder suggests CEB to write to relevant ministers and the LGA setting out our concerns and urging prompt action

Recycling

Recommendation	Agreed?	Comment
1. That every effort is made to fund recycling incentive campaigns beyond October 2018, when grant funding for the Blue Bin Recycling League comes to an end.	Y	The Blue Bin Recycling League is doing excellent work in encouraging recycling in Oxford. I'd like to put on record my thanks to the staff team running the scheme. It is too early to say whether or not the City Council will be able to continue this project when Government funding ends. "But I would expect recycling incentive schemes to be part of the mix in the refuse and recycling services the City Council provides. But we need to learn the lessons by a careful appraisal of the Blue Bin League's successes and any failures. "We will then have to determine what money might be available and how best it could be used. The City Council should be guided in that by our continued determination to increase recycling and reduce waste.