

To:	Council
Date:	20 July 2017
Report of:	Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report:	Scrutiny briefing
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the scrutiny function

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Scrutiny work plan – July 2017

Appendix 2 - Scrutiny recommendation tracker – May 2017 to July 2017

Introduction

1. I would like to start my thanking my committee colleagues for re-electing me as chair for the coming year and by welcoming Cllr Nigel Chapman to the role of Vice Chair.
2. I would like to thank outgoing scrutiny members Councillor Sian Taylor and Councillor Ruth Wilkinson for their contributions to the work of the Committee over the last year or more.
3. Councillor Tom Hayes has left the Committee and joined the City Executive Board, although he has already been back to Scrutiny in his new role as a board member. I'd like to thank Tom for his many contributions as Vice Chair of Scrutiny over the last three years and particular for his support over the last 12 months.
4. Councillor Marie Tidball has also joined the board after a very productive year on Scrutiny where she very skilfully led the Devolution Review Group.
5. Councillor Craig Simmons has stepped back from the Committee but remains a member of Finance Panel. Craig excelled as Chair of Scrutiny for two years and has also chaired Finance Panel with distinction for the last three years, where he led the important annual reviews of the Council's spending plans.

6. I would also like to welcome the six members who are joining or re-joining Scrutiny this year; Councillors Mohammed Altaf-Khan, Steve Curran, Mark Ladbrooke, Ben Lloyd Shogbesan, Mark Lygo and David Thomas. I look forward to working with you over the year ahead.
7. We have already held our first three meetings of the year, which included a special meeting to scrutinise the Local Plan Preferred Options decision. The Committee has agreed a work plan and decided to continue with the Housing and Finance Panels. We have also added a third standing panel which will meet as required to look at CEB and Shareholder Group decisions relating to the new Council companies. The Committee has also decided to commission an Oxford Living Wage review group which will be led by Councillor Mark Ladbrooke.

Work plan

8. The Committee has agreed a new Scrutiny work plan which lists decisions and issues that Scrutiny plans to look at over the coming year (Appendix 1). This workload is similar to previous years and was informed by suggestions from members and senior officers, which were prioritised based on criteria agreed by the Committee. Scrutiny has tried to focus its time and resources effectively and so some ideas have not been included in the work plan on the basis that Scrutiny has limited ability to influence and add value in those areas.

Recent and planned activity

The Scrutiny Committee

9. Since my last update to Council Scrutiny Committee meetings have been held on 12 June, 14 June and 4 July and the following items were considered:
 - Fusion Lifestyle performance 2016/17
 - Planning and Regulatory Services Improvement Plan
 - Oxford Railway Station Supplementary Planning Document
 - Community Leases
 - Safeguarding Report 2017/18
 - Performance Monitoring – quarter 4
 - Local Plan Preferred Options
10. The next Committee meeting will be held on 7 September. Members will consider reports on disabled impacts in planning and the work of the Oxford Design Review Panel, as well as CEB decisions that have been earmarked for pre-decision scrutiny. Other items coming to the Committee during the year are listed in the attached work plan.

Housing Panel

11. The Housing Panel met on 26 April 2017 to consider reports from officers on the following housing issues:
 - Empty properties
 - Great Estates
 - Empty garages and former garage sites

12. This year Housing Panel will be considering a number of housing related CEB decisions including the Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the Council's Tenancy Strategy and Policy Statement. Other items prioritised by members include fire safety in tower blocks, leaseholder relationships and the issue of absent owners. There are no changes to the membership of the Housing Panel this year. The Panel will meet on 27 July to elect a chair and receive a verbal briefing on the Council's response to the Grenfell disaster.

Finance Panel

13. The Finance Panel met on 6 July and elected Councillor James Fry as Chair for the year. The Panel considered the following items:

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19
- Budget monitoring – quarter 4

14. The Panel will continue to monitor the impacts of Brexit on the Council's finances and the wider local economy and will undertake an annual detailed review of the Council's budget proposals and associated decisions. Councillor Tom Landell Mills has joined the Panel this year, replacing Councillor Jean Fooks the new Lord Mayor.

Scrutiny Shareholder Panel

15. The new panel meets on 17 July 2017 to consider the trading company progress report before it is presented to CEB the following day. The Panel are expecting to meet again in autumn to receive a sensitivity analysis of the housing company business plan and may decide to consider other CEB and Shareholder Group decisions as they arise.

Oxford Living Wage Review Group

16. The Committee have commissioned a new review group which will meet over the summer before presenting a scope to the Committee in September for approval. The Committee have asked Councillor Ladbrooke and his review group to investigate the issue of low pay in the city and to consider including the following lines of inquiry within the scope of their review:

- *Is there a case for the City Council to extend obligations to pay the OLW to subcontractors?*
- *What more can be done to promote wider take up of the OLW and make it unacceptable for employers in the city to pay staff less than the OLW?*

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