

Minutes of a meeting of the CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD on Tuesday 19 September 2017

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Committee members:

Councillor Price (Chair)

Councillor Turner (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Brown

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Sinclair

Councillor Smith

Councillor Tanner

Councillor Tidball

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Interim Chief Executive

Jackie Yates, Executive Director Organisational Development and Corporate Services

Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive

Fiona Piercy, Interim Assistant Chief Executive, Regeneration and Economy

Lindsay Cane, Acting Head of Law and Governance

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jason Munro, Parking & Shopmobility Manager

Nerys Parry, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager

David Growcott, Acting Communities Manager

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant, Liberal Democrat Group Leader,

Councillor David Henwood

Councillor James Fry

Councillor Elizabeth Wade

57. Apologies for Absence

None received

58. Declarations of Interest

None

59. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None received

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

Cllr Gant spoke in relation to item 17(Alignment of Oxpens Car Park Tarrif with Westgate Shopping Centre). He expressed concern that the report's recommendations were based on insufficient evidence and that comparison between the two car parks' fees was compromised by the fact that they were presented as separate appendices. He was concerned that such a significant parking facility at the centre of the city had been given over to a private concern. He asked that the report be deferred or a further report requested.

Cllr Wade spoke in relation to item 9 (Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy). She was pleased to note the good work undertaken in this area but disappointed at the fact of (and negative publicity surrounding) the use of dispersal orders against some of the most vulnerable members of the community. Stakeholder consultation was welcome but steps should be taken to ensure that it was meaningful and engaged with sufficient numbers of a relevant cross section of the community.

The Leader of the Council noted that good use was made of stakeholder groups and that would continue. The report to hand focused on providing support.

61. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None

62. Items raised by Board Members

None received

63. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Cllr Gant, as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, spoke to item 14 (Monitoring Grant report). He said there had been a good discussion at the Committee and was grateful to Cllr Sinclair, as the Board Member, for having contributed to that discussion and her responses to it.

Cllr Henwood, as Chair of the Housing Panel, spoke to item 9 (Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy). He complimented the Board member and officers for their work in bringing the three previous strategies together and commended the Panel's recommendations to the CEB.

Cllr Fry, as Chair of the Finance Panel, spoke to the Panel's report on the implications of Brexit. He noted the widely shared anxiety that Brexit would serve to diminish the appeal of Oxford to academics from overseas and the knock on consequences of that for the City and wider community. The Leader of the Council noted that the County's MPs, the LEP and Growth Board were all seized of these and other risks associated with Brexit and were doing what they could to raise awareness.

64. Minutes

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2017 as a true and accurate record.

65. Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report which requested that the City Executive Board approve the Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 (and its associated appendices) to be published as a draft strategy for a period of public consultation.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing, spoke to the report. The draft strategy which brought together three previous strategies, sought to address the City's housing crisis. He was grateful to Scrutiny for its recommendations which were accepted.

He had not been aware of Cllr Wade's concerns until she had expressed them earlier in the meeting. He noted however that some of the press reports alluded to had been inaccurate. The Council had, rather, made several hundred successful interventions with rough sleepers. He pointed out that the Council's role was simply to issue legal notices to those sleeping in inappropriate places (eg fire exits), giving them the opportunity to remove their belongings rather than having them removed. There was no intention on the Council's part to persecute or prosecute such vulnerable members of the community but, rather, to support them by whatever means were open to it.

After consultation and stakeholder events the strategy would come back to the Board for final approval.

In relation to other organisations providing support such as charity groups and Churches, officers confirmed that appropriate steps were taken to advise about property assessments, safety etc for a client group which sometimes had high levels of need.

There was recognition that the present challenges in relation to housing were exacerbated to a great extent by the collective consequences of government policies. Members were very appreciative of the work done by officers to address these challenges. Cllr Rowley said that the strategy set out what the Council could and would do but that, inevitably, was not everything. Changes at a national level were needed.

There would be briefings for Members as part of the consultation process in October with a further session once guidance on the Homelessness Reduction Act had been received.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Note** acceptance of Scrutiny Committee's recommendations
2. **Approve** the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 as a draft for public consultation in line with requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.
3. **Approve** that, as part of the consultation process, a meeting of key stakeholders is convened to assess the causes and potential remedies for the rising levels of street homelessness.

66. Options paper on additional homelessness provision for the City

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report to seek authority to award three different contracts to provide accommodation and support services for homeless clients with complex needs as part of the adult homeless pathway in Oxford City.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing, explained that this was the latest part of the Council's response to the closure of Simon House in March 2018. Agreement had been reached with A2 Dominion to make high quality support available for clients with complex needs and a smooth transition while the new hostel is being provided.

It was explained that the recommendation to double the number of Acacia housing units to 10 was a response to a shortfall in provision for those with a particularly high level of need. It was estimated that this would meet about 80% of that need in the City.

It was confirmed that the City Council's provision in this area exceeded its legal obligations. The report had noted the County Council's reduced funding in this area and the consequent reduction in provision. Agreed that the County should be asked to reconsider its position.

Understanding by Members of the many and various pathways to support those who were homeless was inconsistent and a briefing note/ flow chart to clarify would be helpful.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Agree** for the Council to secure a one year contract with A2 Dominion from April 2018 to March 2019 to fund support for circa 20-25 units of complex needs housing at the current Simon House site, to a maximum value of £200k, to be identified from within the Homelessness Prevention Funds budget 2018-2019.
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Housing to determine the details of the contract and operationalise the scheme.
3. **Agree** for the Council to enter into a five year contract with A2 Dominion from April 2019 to March 2024, on a new site, at a maximum value of £225k per annum, to be funded from within the agreed Homelessness Prevention Funds budget envelope.
4. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Housing to determine the details of the contract and operationalise the scheme.
5. **Agree** for the Council to enter into a two year contract with Response to double the number of Acacia housing units in the City to 10 from October 2017 to be funded from within the agreed Homelessness Prevention Funds budget envelope.
6. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Housing to determine the details of the contract and operationalise the scheme.
7. **Ask** the County Council, via the next bilateral meeting, to reconsider its position in relation to funding in this area.

67. The Use of Empty Buildings as Temporary accommodation for homeless people

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report to respond to Council's motion requesting officers to investigate "the processes or procedures that could be used to make empty properties available for use as temporary shelters."

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing, said that while no buildings had been identified for this purpose at the time of writing the Council was committed to working with partners and to developing this area further.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Agree** to continue working with partners to make the best use of new and existing premises for Severe Weather Emergency Provision.
2. **Agree** to continue to investigate the possibility of the other matters covered in this report, with particular reference to effectiveness in meeting a defined need, and financial sustainability.
3. **Note** that should additional expenditure be required to further the above objectives, a report outlining the proposed expenditure will be presented to CEB.
4. **Delegate** to the Head of Housing Services the discretion to organise a conference of stakeholders with a view to exploring possible interventions and ways of working together to find accommodation and support services for rough sleepers

68. The Transfer of 10 flats purchased in Great Western Park, Didcot under the Temporary Accommodation purchase scheme from the General Fund (into Housing Revenue Account)

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report to recommend to Council to make suitable budgetary provision for the Housing Revenue Account to acquire 10 flats due to be purchased by the General Fund at Great Western Park, Didcot in September 2017 for use as social housing.

Cllr Rowley, Board Member for Housing, spoke to the report.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Request** Council approve the introduction of an additional 2017/18 HRA capital budget, namely £2.362m, funded by HRA borrowing for "Property Acquisitions", in order to transfer 10 units from the General Fund into the HRA.

2. **Note** that all 10 flats to be transferred (8 two-bedroom and 2 one-bedroom flats) are to be used as social rented housing and let to housing applicants in housing need on the Housing Register in Oxford.

69. Investment in Existing Property Portfolio

The Interim Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration & Economy submitted a report to provide an update on the progress of a number of identified opportunities to maintain or improve the income stream from the Council's property investment portfolio. To seek approval for an increased budget requirement of £4,635,000 in addition to the existing approved budget of £10,300,000 to include the undertaking of additional projects.

Cllr Turner, Board Member for Finance and Asset Management, spoke to the report. The risks associated with the proposed investments were outweighed by the potential benefits given the market for leases for the types of property in question.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Note** the progress on the various schemes that had been identified and had budget approval to the value of £10,300,000.
2. **Recommend** to Council an increase of £4,635,000 to the allocated budget of £10,300,000 to deliver the development opportunities at 1-5 George Street, Standingford House, Cave Street and add the new project of refurbishing 2 flats at 11 New Road and houses at 9 and 10 Ship Street.
3. **Authorise** entering into exclusive negotiations to seek financially viable agreements to lease with two identified commercial tenants at 1-5 George Street in line with the Not For Publication Appendix 7, subject to Council budgetary approval.
4. **Enter** into the above agreements for lease at rental levels above the threshold of £125,000 per annum in line with the constitution.
5. **Delegate** to the Interim Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration and Economy, in consultation with the Head of Finance, the authority to alter the terms of the agreements to lease on the basis that they continue to represent best value during negotiations.

70. Monitoring - Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations reported achievements 2016/17

The Head of Service for Community Services submitted a report to inform members of the monitoring findings of the 2016/17 grants programme.

Cllr Sinclair, Board Member for Culture and Communities, spoke to the report noting in particular the high proportion of grants used to support those who were homeless and those experiencing financial difficulties.

In discussion it was agreed that it would be helpful if future monitoring reports had a greater focus on qualitative outcomes of grant provision, tying that analysis back to the Council's priorities etc.

The Acting Communities Manager said that steps were being taken to simplify unnecessarily burdensome returns from those in receipt of grants as well as simplifying the process of application. In determining grant allocations the importance of weighting areas of need (which often lay within wider areas not considered to be so needy) was recognised.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Note the results of the grant monitoring and the positive impact the community and voluntary sector is making in the city.

Ask officers to ensure that future grant monitoring reflects the extent to which their use supports Council priorities.

71. Quarterly Integrated Performance 2017/18 - Q1

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to update Members on Finance, Risk and Performance as at 30th June 2017 and spoke to the report which reflected a good position overall. The vast majority of targets were being met. The use of Leisure Centres was a little below target and may be the consequence of the opening of some other affordable gyms in the City and, perhaps, the use of outdoor City park gyms.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Note the projected financial outturn, the current position on risk and performance as at the 30th June 2017.

72. Treasury Management Performance: Annual Report and Performance 2016/17

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report which set out the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the financial year 2016/2017. He spoke to the report which reflected a positive picture of the Council's investments.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Note the report.

73. To align Oxpens Car Park tariff with Westgate Shopping Centre.

The Head of Direct Services submitted a report seeking to align the Oxpens Car Park tariff with that of the Westgate Shopping centre

Cllr Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services spoke to the report, observing that any traffic consequences of the alignment of charges would dwarfed by the scale of new traffic volumes once the Westgate Centre is open.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Align** Oxpens parking tariff with that of the Westgate car park.
2. **Retain** the Council's tariff structure in Worcester St and Gloucester Green car parks.
3. **Note** that the financial implication of adopting this recommendation is expected to be cost neutral.

Note: This decision will be referred to Council at its meeting on 02 October in respect of changes to Council fees and charges.

74. Dates of Future Meetings

17 October 2017
21 November 2017
19 December 2017

75. Matters Exempt from Publication

If the Board wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it

will be necessary for the Board to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Board may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

76. Investment in Existing Property Portfolio - Exempt Appendices 5,7,8 and 9

These appendices were not discussed at the meeting.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.25 pm

Chair

Date: Monday 16 October 2017