

Minutes of a meeting of the CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD on Monday 16 October 2017

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Committee members:

Councillor Price (Chair)

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Smith

Councillor Tidball

Councillor Brown

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Sinclair

Councillor Tanner

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Interim Chief Executive

Tim Sadler, Executive Director Sustainable City

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

Ian Wright, Service Manager Environmental Health

Sarah Chesshyre, Planner Apprentice

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant, Liberal Democrat Group Leader, Liberal Democrat shadow member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development, Customer and Corporate Services, Liberal Democrat Group Leader

None

None

Apologies:

Councillor Turner sent apologies.

77. Declarations of Interest

None received

78. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

Sarah Lasenby addressed the Board, expanding on her previously provided submission concerning the difficulties faced by those with mobility and related issues. She was grateful for the reply provided by Councillor Price. Both her submission and response are attached to this minute.

The question put by Alex Curtis relating to rough sleepers and the response provided by Councillor Rowley are attached to this minute

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

Cllrs Gant and Cook spoke in relation to item 13, Oxford Station SPD and their contributions are recorded under that item.

80. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None

81. Items raised by Board Members

None

82. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Councillor Gant was grateful to Board Members for their positive responses to Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

In relation to the report on Assessing Disability Impacts in Planning, this was a matter that needed to be kept under review and, also, although not referred to in the recommendations, planning should take account of cognitive disability.

In relation to the report on the Oxford Design Review Panel, it was clear that the Panel had a valuable role to play. He noted two changes to the recommendations as originally crafted by the Committee. First, that access to heritage expertise should be limited to projects in conservation areas, secondly the proposal that Councillors be alerted to pre-application proposals was constrained to some extent by the fact that such proposals are normally confidential.

83. Review of Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

The Executive Director for Organisational Development & Corporate Services submitted a report which sought approval for the maintenance of the existing Discretionary Housing Payment policy.

Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services spoke the report reminding members of the Board that this was an annual exercise. On this occasion the report was unremarkable as no changes to the present policy were proposed. In discussion it was noted that a combination of factors (notably the introduction of Universal Credit and the 6 week delay between its allocation and the time of application) were serving to drive poorer members of the community further into poverty, perpetuating the cycle of deprivation.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Approve the maintenance of the existing Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

84. Draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy 2018

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services submitted a report which sought approval to consult on proposed changes to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing spoke to the report and was pleased to report the increase in the Disability Facilities Grant (a subset of the Better Care Fund). The proposed amendments to the policy would make a significant contribution to helping residents avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and facilitate speedier discharge from hospital than would otherwise be the case.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

Approve the draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy for a City wide consultation.

85. Regulating the Private Rented Sector

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services submitted a report which set out the preferred option for changing the regulation of the private rented sector in Oxford.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report and noted his appreciation of the Scrutiny Committee's prior consideration of it.

The scope of the scheme was constrained to some extent by central government requirements but the recommendations would, nonetheless, represent an next important step in improving conditions in the private rented sector.

The overall objective of the scheme was to ensure that people living in the private rented sector can do so in a safe and healthy environment. The scheme was not intended to raise money (via civil penalties) or to penalise landlords for their own sakes. The money raised, would, however, be put to good use by meeting the costs of the scheme and creating a ring fenced account to fund further enforcement activity.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the option of establishing and pursuing a 5 year proactive inspection programme of unlicensed privately rented properties.
2. **Approve** the use of all the funds generated from Civil Penalties issued under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 for the purposes of enforcement in the private rented sector.
3. **Approve** the Civil Penalty Protocol and delegate authority to the Head of Service for Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services to review and update the protocol in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance and the Executive Director.

86. Lucy Faithfull House

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report which sought approval to demolish Lucy Faithfull House and to agree that officers investigate the viability of making the site available to the Council's housing company (OCHL) for development.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing introduced the report by referring back to the response given to Alex Curtis attached to these minutes. He was confident that with the support of the third sector there were sufficient beds available to meet the needs of rough sleepers in the City. He paid particular tribute to the support of the City centre churches in this. At the beginning of the next financial year 167 beds will be available which is likely to exceed the level of need at that point.

The number of rough sleepers in the City has increased in recent year as has the level of provision. A significant proportion of rough sleepers have mental and or addiction difficulties which require specialist support. It was clear that Lucy Faithfull House was neither suitable, in its present state, for rough sleepers nor necessary given provision elsewhere.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the demolition of Lucy Faithfull House.
2. **Authorise** officers to investigate the viability of undertaking the development of the site as outlined below with Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) as part of its overall development programme.

87. Review of Financial Inclusion Strategy 2014-2017

The Executive Director for Organisational Development & Corporate Services submitted a report seeking approval of the Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2017-2020 and requesting approval of £50,000 to fund emergency support for residents migrating to Universal Credit in the remainder of 2017/18.

Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services, introduced the report noting that this second iteration of the policy was the product of a recent and helpful round of consultation.

It was important to remember that the City Council already had in place many and various strategies to support vulnerable members of the community and this strategy did not seek to replace those strategies. The strategy focussed on those areas where the Council was in a position to make a difference.

Discussion made further reference to the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and its potentially profound consequences for some members of the community over the next few months. UC applicants were able to apply for a loan to cover the gap between application and receipt but that was limited to 50% of entitlement and had to be paid back over a very short period of time.

There was confidence that the £50k sought by the report, when made available to assist residents, could not subsequently be clawed back from them.

Applications for UC were heavily dependent on being able to do so digitally and help was available from Council officers to those for whom this presented a difficulty. A significant publicity campaign, via a variety of media, was underway to alert residents to the introduction of UC, of the need to apply and of the availability of help to do so.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the adoption of the revised Financial Inclusion Strategy for the period 2017-2020 attached at Appendix 1;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director Organisational Development & Corporate Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services to review and update the Strategy's action plan.
3. **Utilise** £50,000 of the 2016/17 Council underspend to provide an emergency support scheme to cover essential living costs for people migrating to Universal Credit within the current financial year, and to delegate authority to the Executive Director Organisational Development & Corporate Services to develop the scheme in consultation with the Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services.
4. **Approve** the necessary virement of the £50,000 for this purpose

88. Oxford Station SPD

The Interim Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration and Economy and Executive Director for Sustainable City, submitted a report to consider the public consultation responses and then, subject to the proposed changes, to adopt the Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Councillor Cook (speaking as a Councillor with an interest in the item) thanked officers for the report and drew attention to representations (copies of which are attached to

these minutes) made by the Abbey Cripsey Road Residents' Association (ACRA) making particular reference to:

- 1) A recognition that all of Cripsey Road should be considered a 'sensitive edge'
- 2) The desirability of having a maximum of one access point from Cripsey Road onto Roger Dudman way
- 3) Access to the station from the western side should not be encouraged and the traffic generated properly managed
- 4) Tree Preservation Orders should be granted for "better quality" trees and where replacement trees are required then they should be of "significant species"
- 5) The current proposal for 54 staff car park spaces should be resisted
- 6) The need to update local residents about the proposed mitigation measures.

He concluded by noting that there is sufficient time to ensure that these and other issues are properly addressed.

The Interim Assistant Chief Executive - Regeneration & Economy said that most of ACRA's comments could be reflected in proposed minor amendments to the SPD. With regard to the staff parking issue, while the City Council might wish to see a reduction in the number of spaces due to existing franchise agreements made between Network Rail and the train operating companies it was considered to be difficult in practise to seek a reduction in these exceptional circumstances.

Councillor Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development, said he would propose that the recommendations were amended so as to authorise the Head of Planning Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services to make such minor editorial adjustments as necessary to address ACRA's comments with particular reference to the access onto Roger Dudman way.

Cllr Price went on to refer to representation which had been made recently by the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) which was concerned that the SPD was silent on the matter of retaining YHA provision in the new development. He explained that the decision about whether or not to include such provision was for the developer and could be included in their planning submission if they were minded to do so. He hoped however that the YHA would continue to be actively involved in discussions and suggested that the recommendations be amended to make reference to the possibility for inclusion of the YHA as a use within the SPD, providing this can be accommodated by the landowner and developer.

The scheme is an important economic priority for the City and is at its commercial heart. There is a recognition of the importance of commercial viability which has always been central to the scheme and the Council had been working closely with stakeholders for some time to develop a shared vision. It had been very disappointing

to learn that Network Rail, as a key stakeholder, had recently expressed objections to particular aspects of the SPD which it had, hitherto, been supportive of.

Cllr Gant (speaking as a Councillor with an interest in the item) welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the discussion since it was evident that there were some issues which still needed to be addressed. The design principles were considered to be key to the success of this development and needed to promote a high standard of design. He suggested that the proposals for the taxi rank as currently conceived might encourage others to use it too. He was concerned that insufficient attention was being paid to protect the church of St Thomas and its immediate environs (which provided one of the City's important oases of quiet space). He noted the importance of ensuring that the scheme was as self-sustainable in terms of energy and resources as possible.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, said that the SPD did not (and could not) usurp or change underlying planning policies. Similarly it should be recognised that the detailed design of the railway station itself was not proper to the SPD.

As recently as August Network Rail expressed concern with the SPD. Since then it had raised a number of concerns relating to among others: Viability of the scheme; issues to do with the need to maximise land values, the bus station could constrain potential development opportunities; the future capacity of the proposed track layout; and pedestrian flow assessment. Their view was that the SPD does not allow sufficient flexibility.

There was considered to be sufficient flexibility in the SPD as proposed for it to be financially viable. To deliver the whole project successfully will require flexibility in all areas including delivery strategy, phasing, funding and financing and the City Council is committed to continued close co-operation with all stakeholders including Oxfordshire County Council and Network Rail

The location of the bus station and its design as set out in the SPD is merely illustrative and is in accordance with the identified use for the site. The present proposal had been the subject of extensive prior discussion. If its location was to be changed however full account would have to be taken of the knock on consequences of a new location and the agreement of the County Council as Local Highway Authority would need to be sought given its responsibility for road and transport matters. Concerns about the track layout were a surprise given that they were based on what had been asked for by Network Rail at the outset. Pedestrian flow assessment would depend, ultimately on the final scheme being put forward by the developer and was in any case not proper to the SPD. Capacity and track enhancements are under control of Network Rail.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as modified in the form set out in (Appendix 5), subject to the additional changes required in recommendation 4.
2. **Approve** the Oxford Station SPD as a material consideration in determining planning applications
3. **Endorse** the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Combined Screening and Scoping Report (Appendix 3)
4. **Authorise** the Head of Planning Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor and editorial corrections to the document prior to publication, in consultation with the Interim assistant Chief Executive for Regeneration & Economy, and Board Members for Planning and Economy and that this should be extended to include such minor editorial adjustments as necessary to
 - I. Address ACRA's comments with the exception of the reduction in parking spaces.
 - II. Note the possibility for inclusion of the YHA as a use within the SPD, providing this can be accommodated by the landowner and developer.
 - III. Confirm Network Rails control over track layout and flexibility for delivery and viability.

89. North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area Appraisal-Final

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services submitted a report to present the conservation area appraisal for North Oxford Victorian Suburb to the Board for approval.

Sarah Chesshyre, Graduate Apprentice Planner, introduced the report which followed on from the draft considered by the CEB in February 2017 and which had since been subject to consultation. The report sought to protect an important area of the City. Consideration had been given to extending the area to include adjacent Walton Manor but on balance it had been decided not to do so for the time being.

Cllr Price thanked Sarah Chesshyre and her colleagues for a good report.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area appraisal and endorse it for use in informing development management and planning policy decisions
2. **Endorse** the conservation principles it promotes and its key conclusions.

90. Annual Monitoring Report 2016-17

The Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services submitted a report to seek approval of the Annual Monitoring Report for publication.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report which detailed a considerable number of indicators. He drew particular attention to the data in relation to student numbers which were of particular relevance in the context of the City. Members of Board were pleased to note the data relation to planning permissions for affordable housing (paragraph 10) and progress with the developments at Barton Park (paragraph17).

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Monitoring Report 2016/17 for publication.
2. **Authorise** the Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services to make any necessary additional minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.

91. Insurance Tender

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to seek delegated authority for the Head of Financial Services to award contracts for the supply of insurance services.

The Head of Financial Services spoke to the report and said tenders had been received and were being evaluated.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

- 1 **Delegate** authority to the Head of Financial Services to award a contract for the provision of insurance services to Oxford City Council from 1st January 2018 for a period of 3 years with an option to extend for up to 2 years.
- 2 **Delegate** authority to the Head of Financial Services to negotiate the extension of insurance cover to the Council in respect of the functions to be undertaken by the Oxford Direct Services companies in the event of the companies not being operational by 1st January 2018.

92. Request to fly a flag annually on International Women's day - 8 March

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report to consider a request to add International Women's Day, 8 March, as an annual event to Flag Flying Protocol.

Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development commended the report to the Board.

The City Executive Board resolved to:

1. **Approve** the inclusion of International Women's Day, 8 March, as an annual event in the Flag Flying Protocol.
2. **Approve** the flying of the flag, to be designed in suffragette colours, during the period 24 February 2018 and 11 March 2018 to coincide with the festival to mark the centenary of the passing of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1918.

93. Minutes

The Board resolved to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2017 as a true and accurate record.

94. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

21 November

19 December

23 January

13 February

20 March

17 April

All meetings start at 5pm.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.45 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 21 November 2017