

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 1 October 2018  
**Report of:** Chair of the Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Scrutiny briefing

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To update Council on the activities of the scrutiny function
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Strong and Active Communities; An Efficient and effective Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to:</b>	
1. The Council notes the update report.	

**Appendices:** Appendix 1: Scrutiny work plan – September 2018

## **Introduction**

1. Since my last update, I can report that the Scrutiny function has made good progress in implementing its Work Plan over the summer. Whilst some items have slipped to later in the year, the Committee continues to have full agendas with important issues and decisions to review.
2. I am pleased to note that Councillor Martyn Rush was earlier this year appointed by the Leader as the Oxford Living Wage Champion. This was a key recommendation from the Committee in last year's review of the Oxford Living Wage.
3. It is also worthwhile highlighting that the Committee is keen to ensure that the monitoring of Fusion Lifestyle's performance remains a cornerstone of its function, and it is positive to see an upturn in visitor numbers in the first quarter of 2018.

## **Work Plan 2018-19**

4. Since agreeing the Work Plan in June, many of the items agreed have already been allocated a meeting date. It is important to highlight that whilst the Committee agrees an annual work plan, it remains flexible and reactive to new suggestions. If councillors or members of the public have any suggestions, then please send these to the Scrutiny Officer for consideration at the next available meeting.

## **Scrutiny Committee**

5. Since my last regular Council update, the Scrutiny Committee has held four meetings on 17 May, 5 June, 3 July and 6 September. The following items were considered at these meetings:
    - Scrutiny Operating Principles and Panel Arrangements
    - Review of Discretionary Housing Payment Policy
    - Oxford Town Hall
    - Annual Work Plan Review
    - Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan
    - Safeguarding Annual Report
    - Modern Slavery and Transparency Statement
    - Establishing Scrutiny Review Groups
    - The Joint Statutory Spatial Plan
    - The Air Quality Annual Status Report
    - Quarter 4 2017/18 and Quarter 1 2018/19 Council Performance Reports
  6. The Committee made a number of recommendations relating to these issues concerning:
    - The effective monitoring of Fusion Lifestyle's performance in additional areas, as well as the marketing of its leisure centres.
    - Better understanding the reach of the Council's safeguarding work.
    - Considering topping up the Discretionary Housing Payment Grant to enable a broadening of the application criteria.
    - Reviewing the Town Hall charging schedule, with a specific focus on removing any charges that may disadvantage disabled users.
  7. The next Committee meeting will be held on 8 October where the Committee will undertake an important review of the Draft Local Plan, following public consultation on the preferred options. The Committee will also consider Staff Sickness Absence, following a rise in absence identified in a quarterly performance report. This is a good example of how the Committee has remained reactive and agile in its work planning.
  8. Looking further ahead, another highlight of the Committee's work will be its consideration of the Westgate Shopping Centre, and its impact on the local area since opening. A selection of external guests have been invited to contribute to this discussion, which will take place on 6 November. That same meeting will also consider the draft report of the No Local Connection Review Group.
- ### **No Local Connection Review Group**
9. The No Local Connection Review Group has met four times since it was established in July. This cross-party group has been set up to review the Council's Local Connection Policy in relation to homelessness services, and the affect it has on those without a local connection. Amongst other research activities, the Group has held two expert panel sessions to gather key insights from 10 external speakers, including a national policy expert from Crisis. The Group has also received evidence from 14 other local authorities on how they support people without a local connection, and evidence from academic experts in the field.
  10. The Review Group aims to present its draft report to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 November, with any recommendations being made to the City Executive Board on 14 November.

### **Housing Panel**

11. The Housing Panel, which now has eight members (including one tenant co-optee), met for its first meeting this year on 5 July to consider the following items:
  - Quarter 4 Housing performance
  - The Management of Vacant Garage Units
  - Annual Work Plan Review

The Housing Panel reviewed its Work Plan for 2018/19 and decided to review preparations for the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), having identified areas for improvement from last year. The Panel will receive a report in November 2018 on what plans have been made and a report in March 2019 to evaluate how successful SWEP has been. The Panel has also agreed to commission a report from the Head of Housing Services on options for a Council Owned Letting Agency, with reference to a 2016 Council motion which requested that this be considered. This item is expected to come forwards for consideration in March 2019.

12. The Panel's next meeting is on 11 October where it will consider the Quarterly Housing Performance Report, the Draft Local Plan and the Oxford Rent Guarantee Scheme Pilot Review.

### **Finance Panel**

13. The Finance Panel, which now has six members, met on 4 July to consider the Q4 finance report which was also presented to CEB. The Panel also received an update from the Head of Financial Services on the Brexit process, and its relationship with the local economy.
14. The Finance Panel also considered its annual Work Plan for the year. In addition to recurring and outstanding items from 2017/18, the Panel agreed to add Council Tax Exemption Monitoring to its Work Plan. The Finance Panel's next meeting is on 10 September where it will be considering income generation by Legal Services, Treasury Management performance and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20.

### **Companies Panel**

15. The Companies Panel also has six members, and it met on 7 June to consider a presentation on progress with the Housing Development Programme, and specifically in regards to eight development sites. At the time of the meeting, the projected completion dates of the development sites were as follows:
  - Harts Close – May 2019
  - Cumberledge Close – Oct 2019
  - Rose Hill sites – March 2020
  - Warren Crescent – January 2020
  - Elsfield Hall – April 2020
  - Between Towns Road – July 2020
  - Underhill Circus – late 2020
  - Lucy Faithfull House – not yet programmed
16. The Panel expressed dissatisfaction with the reduction in the number of deliverable units across these sites, but recognised that this was largely due to planning restrictions since the architect's first designs/projections were completed. The Panel relayed its comments to the Housing Group Shareholder meeting on 11 June 2018.

17. The Companies Panel also met on 31 July to consider matters relating to the Oxford Direct Services (ODS) Shareholder meeting on 2 September 2018. The Panel considered the ODS quarterly performance report which presented key performance indicators for the first time since the Company was formally established in April 2018.
18. The Panel were pleased to see the positive work being done in relation to health and safety, and noted that year 1 financial targets were on track. The Panel also passed recommendations to the Shareholder concerning championing ODS to undertake works relating to councillor Community Infrastructure Levy applications, and the need for a more comprehensive scorecard of financial indicators to monitor.

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