

Appendix 2: Cabinet Responses to Scrutiny and Panel Recommendations

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) made on 25/02/2020 concerning The Social Value Act 2012 and Social Responsibility in Procurement

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council benchmarks its spending with SMEs against other similar councils nationally	Yes	We have already done some of this work informally and we would like to take this forward as far as data permits.
2) That the Council underwrites an event for social value similar to that run by Fraud Prevention, which brings neighbouring Councils, support service providers and experts together to improve overall standards. The Council should also seek to understand better from SMEs the barriers faced and seek to reduce them.	Yes	We will try to take forward an appropriate event (whether in person or virtual) as part of our new procurement strategy.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 06/07/2020 concerning the Local Growth Funded Projects report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
That the Council confirms that the brief for the development at Standingford House, Cave St includes the adjacent Council-owned land and that it is registered as being for mixed business/residential use.	Partially	The Council's plans do include the land adjacent to the Standingford House site. The land is, at present, registered as commercial (not mixed use). A change to mixed residential/commercial use is being considered as one option. It is contingent upon a full appraisal of the options and subject to planning permission, and would include no loss of commercial space.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 07/07/2020 concerning the Integrated Performance Report 2019/20 Q4 report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council reviews the service charges it makes to Council housing tenants to ensure current levels reflect actual costs.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council takes its responsibilities towards tackling poverty and extremely seriously and recognises that now is a particularly sensitive time financially for many. To ensure that tenants are not overcharged a selection of the charges made to tenants are reviewed each year. This has proven to be a cost-effective means of monitoring charging levels. It is worth noting that previous reviews have indicated minimal differences between the charges levied by the Council and its actual expenditure (between five and ten pence per week).</p> <p>When we reconcile the actual charges for leaseholders each year, we compare those costs against the tenant service charges in the blocks and then make any changes to tenant service charges ahead of budget setting for the following year. It should be noted that the accounting periods for tenants and leaseholders are different so the charges won't be completely identical but they are usually very similar.</p> <p>Where the Council has found discrepancies it has made changes, previously removing the window cleaning charges when the service was not fully delivered. It is the intention of the Council to continue to review the suitability its charging schedule and make any adjustments as required. This will obviously be especially important this year in view of the circumstances.</p>

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 03/08/2020 concerning the Housing Delivery Plan

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council updates its programme of engagement and progress to date to include dates for recommencement of paused activities	Yes	Previously paused workstreams are restarting over the next few weeks, and the updated information on these will be added to the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan before submitting to MHCLG

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 03/08/2020 concerning a presentation made by Oxford Tenants Union regarding the Impact of Covid-19 on the Private Rented Sector

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council uses its existing channels of communication, particularly social media, to share information on tenants' rights and advice relevant to the pandemic and seeks to use its existing links with local community groups to improve access to that information amongst non-English speaking groups or those with English as a second language	Agree	Social media and press releases will continue to be used as a vehicle to promote the rights of tenants in the private rented sector in the pandemic. Community engagement is a key part of the consultation exercise underway for Additional and Selective Licensing and will be used to improve communication regarding
2) That the Council develops a plan for how it could increase homelessness prevention capacity at short notice in the event of an eviction spike, and reviews the effectiveness of its current provision in light of Covid-enforced changes to ways of working.	Agree	In early Summer a new Covid-19 Homelessness taskforce was put together made up of council staff from a range of departments, in order to plan for any future wave of homelessness brought on by the pandemic and rising unemployment. This group continues to consider the emerging evidence and make changes to services to maximise homelessness prevention.
3) That the Council takes whatever measures it has at its disposal, including environmental health enforcement powers, to reduce the number of	Agree	This work is underway with checks on suspected unlicensed HMOs, compliance inspections for licence conditions and visits to non-HMOs having recommenced.

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<p>unsafe homes being let out to tenants before winter arrives.</p>		<p>However, all visits requiring entry are now planned and booked in advance, which has restricted the ability to pursue enforcement action to secure improvements. The changes in working practices have been necessary to protect the health of officers and members of the public.</p>
<p>4) That the Council gathers information from landlords and tenants on the pressures and challenges arising from Covid, and in its existing communications with landlords promotes good practice in the Covid-environment, highlighting the risks of failing to follow good practice.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Officers are in regular dialogue with landlords, agents and tenants about the issues they are facing through Covid. This is through tenants and landlords contacting the enforcement teams and the tenancy relations officer. A letter is being sent out to every HMO in Oxford in the week commencing 12th October regarding Covid. This will promote best practice and advice on legal compliance. It will also be promoted by emailing it to letting agents and landlords and asking them to circulate it to tenants in their properties.</p> <p>We will be continually keeping the situation under review, particularly in light of announcements from the government or the Director of Public Health.</p>
<p>5) That the Council works with local housing support and advice organisations to draft a letter on the need for government to introduce practical policy changes to increase protection for renters, to include consideration of ending section 21 evictions and the need for a rent-freeze policy, and for the Leader to send the agreed letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>We have already sent such a letter to Government regarding these issues, in particular when we responded to the consultation on Section 21 evictions. As such it is considered too soon to write to the Government again. We will however continue to look for ways to lobby the Government on our own and with partner organisations to make the maximum impact.</p>

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 01/09/2020 concerning the Renewing Discretionary Housing Payment Policy report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council reviews how non-English speakers access advice services, including the suitability of current arrangements for advice services grant-funded by the Council, and the case for providing an in-person translation service in East Oxford, as part of the recommissioning of advice services.</p>	Yes	<p>The council wants to ensure fair access to its commissioned advice services, in particular for groups and communities who may currently struggle to access advice and support, including non-English speakers. The current 3 year funding agreement with the advice organisations in the city runs until the 31st March 2021 and therefore the council will soon begin the process of reviewing and recommissioning services. The committee's recommendations will be used to inform the review.</p>
<p>2) That the Council develops and implements a plan to monitor the ethnicity and other protected characteristics of DHP applicants, with a view to identifying any particular communities where access to DHP or the number of successful awards from DHP claims are unexpectedly low so as to understand the barriers to access and to inform service development to ensure fair and equal access to DHP for excluded groups.</p>	Yes	<p>We share the view that collecting detailed data on protected characteristics should be priority, and that it will provide valuable insight in the future to shape service development, helping ensure fair access to support. The team will make the necessary procedural changes to fully monitor equality data, so this information will be available in the future.</p>
<p>3) That the Council makes further effort to increase access to DHP for those most in need, including raising awareness with stakeholders and residents through a clear communications plan, and by carrying out targeted outreach to residents most at risk of homelessness informed by business intelligence.</p>	Yes	<p>The Welfare Reform Team have a strong track record of promoting DHP, and carrying out targeted outreach to engage residents in greatest need, ensuring the DHP fund is used effectively. However we acknowledge this needs to be continually renewed and reinforced, so accept the recommendation. The team will review its plan, ensuring there are clear communications reaching residents and stakeholders over the next year, as well as key internal stakeholders, alongside continuing to develop and rolling out new targeted outreach schemes to reach those most in</p>

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 01/09/2020 concerning the Air Quality Action Plan report

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council amends its action plan to make specific reference to the particular negative impacts experienced by BAME community members as well as other risk factors such as disability and low incomes, as well as the particular negative outcomes experienced by those intersecting multiple risk factors.	Yes	To be incorporated in AQAP prior to public consultation
2) That the Council makes the achievement of the legal 40 µg/m³ of NO₂ as a milestone in its plan clearer.	Yes	To be incorporated in AQAP prior to public consultation
3) That the Council provides an explanatory note or glossary reference to explain the technical meanings within the Action Plan of references to NO and NO₂.	Yes	To be incorporated in AQAP prior to public consultation
4) That the Council provides within its plan a definition of the term ‘local annual mean’.	Yes	To be incorporated in AQAP prior to public consultation

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<p>5) That the Council will continue to think of new and imaginative ways of increasing engagement with the issue of air pollution, especially amongst children and young people, and to increase participation in the Council’s consultation on the Air Quality Action Plan.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council will continue to work with schools and community groups to reach as wide an audience as possible for the public consultation</p>
<p>6) That in its communications plan the Council broadens the story it tells about the impact of air pollution away from the City Centre, including people and locations from across Oxford.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council will continue to ensure stories from across the city is hold in relation to air pollution to ensure it is clear this is a city wide issue.</p>
<p>7) That the Council, in its efforts to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points around the city, does not overlook provision for lower-income areas of the City.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council will continue its work as part of Go Ultra Low Oxford to engage across the city.</p>
<p>8) That the Council considers the feasibility of implementing an electric taxi service to replace the Pick Me Up service.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council regularly meet with the taxi trade and will seek their views. We have strong ambitions to help electrify the fleet so recognise one ambition of the recommendation is to clean up our demand responsiveness in the city</p>
<p>9) That the Council will work with ODS to bring forward the plans for the electrification of the ODS fleet.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council will continue to work with ODS on their plans for electrification of their fleet.</p>
<p>10) That the Council continues to employ its best endeavours in working with its partners to realise the plans for the Zero Emissions Zone and Connecting Oxford.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council will continue to progress plans for the introduction of the Zero Emission Zone and Connecting Oxford.</p>

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 03/09/2020 concerning Selective Licensing

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council commits to continuing to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers over the winter period, including those with no recourse to public funds.</p>	Yes	<p>Members have recently been circulated a briefing on the council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which ensures accommodation is available over winter to anyone who is rough sleeping when temperatures drop to zero or below. All rough sleepers are eligible for this, whether they have a local connection or not, or have recourse to public funds or not.</p> <p>The council and its partners will work to find longer term solutions for all people who are rough sleeping, although this is more challenging for people with no recourse to public funds as they are unable to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.</p>
<p>2) That the Council carries out a gender breakdown regarding who has been housed through the 'Everybody In' scheme to enable a more detailed understanding of the gendered impact of homelessness during Covid-19.</p>	Yes	<p>This work has been undertaken and reported to panel members. The gender breakdown for people accommodated under "Everyone In" is 48 Female (18.4%) / 213 Male (81.6%).</p>
<p>3) That the Council reviews the suitability of its emergency accommodation to those rough sleepers who have specific vulnerabilities and ensures the needs arising from those vulnerabilities are provided for</p>	Yes	<p>Prior to accessing emergency accommodation a detailed assessment is undertaken of rough sleepers so that vulnerabilities can be identified, and catered for. St Mungo's manage our emergency accommodation and have experience of dealing with people with complex needs in Oxford and elsewhere, and do so sensitively taking both a psychologically informed, and trauma informed approach to this work. Some residents will need specialist support which St Mungo's can't provide (e.g.</p>

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		Substance misuse, mental health) but in such cases they will work with other agencies and organisations to facilitate access to appropriate services.
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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 29/09/2020 concerning the Integrated Performance Report 2020/21 Q1 report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council ceases to net off uncertainty over its capital programme through the use of an optimism bias, and instead uses an aggregation of the level of risks given to each project in the budget to present the proportion of that figure over which the Council is uncertain of delivery.	Yes	The Council will in future cease to make use of optimism bias calculations in its capital monitoring reporting and look to introduce a risk rating assessment of each project.
2) That in its treatment of variance from budgeted capital spends the Council delineates the impact of increased costs and slippage.	Yes	Generally slippage will be reported as a 'favourable variance' i.e reduced budget against the original budget in year because the budget is 'slipped' into the following year. On some occasions the budget is brought forward from future years if spend is in advance of the amount budgeted in year. This appears as increased budget or an 'adverse variance'. In some instances the in-year budget is increased due to overspends and in future these will be differentiated from budget that is simply brought forward.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 29/09/2020 concerning the Performance Monitoring 2020/21 Q1 report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That in the setting of its corporate performance measures for next year, the Council introduces targets for short and long-term sickness levels.</p>	Partially	<p>Whilst it is clearly important to monitor long and short term absence and manage it effectively and persistently, It is not considered that introducing individual <u>targets</u> for long and short term absence would be realistic or help to manage absence. Numbers of long term cases can vary and are unpredictable. It is however proposed that there is regular <u>reporting and monitoring</u> of absence, split by long and short term absence, which would help to identify patterns or trends. It would also be useful to report on COVID and non-COVID related absences to see if the former drives up overall sickness levels.</p>
<p>2) That the Council investigates ways of measuring and monitoring productivity which take homeworking and the variable suitability of homeworking environments into account.</p>	Not agreed	<p>This is already in hand. One of the first actions arising from the recently developed People Strategy is to ensure that managers are well equipped to manage staff in a remote environment. This involves ensuring staff health and wellbeing, guarding against feelings of isolation from colleagues, managing performance and supporting staff with relevant training and equipment. There is an existing management and appraisal process in operation, which in effect monitors how productive staff are and will capture evidence of any drop in / increase in productive work as a result of more home based working. All of this is to ensure effective service delivery and meeting of Council objectives.</p>

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 05/11/2020 concerning the Rough Sleeping Update report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council makes, as a matter of urgency, a public statement to clarify its position that it will provide emergency accommodation to all rough sleepers, including those without recourse to public funds, and that individuals receiving such support will not have their details passed to any immigration agency.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Members have recently been circulated a briefing on the council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which ensures accommodation is available over winter to anyone who is rough sleeping when temperatures drop to zero or below. All rough sleepers are eligible for this, whether they have a local connection or not, or have recourse to public funds or not.</p> <p>The council and its partners will work to find longer term solutions for all people who are rough sleeping, although this is more challenging for people with no recourse to public funds as they are unable to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.</p> <p>Whilst the council does not proactively pass details of individuals to immigration authorities, it will need to comply with any current or new statutory duties.</p>

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