

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held at 2.00pm on Friday 5 October 2012
at The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillor Matthew Barber (Chairman), Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman), Yvonne Constance, Mike Murray, Reg Waite and Elaine Ware

Non-participating members: Councillors Jenny Hannaby, Dudley Hoddinott and Robert Sharp

Officers: John Backley, Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Matt Prosser and Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: Nil

Ca.22 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.23 Minutes

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 July 2012 as a correct record and agree that the chairman signs them.

Ca.24 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.25 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.26 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

Non-Cabinet Councillors Jenny Hannaby and Dudley Hoddinott both requested to address Cabinet.

Councillor Hannaby congratulated the officers on progressing the council taking on agency powers from the county council to carry out work under the Flood and Water Management Act. She was pleased that the council was working towards a local development order for Milton Park. However, Councillor Hannaby queried whether the council had sufficient resource to carry out the work to develop additional mobile home plots at Pebble Hill, Radley. She also queried whether the underspend on capital community grants schemes related to the Vale and Downland Museum at Wantage.

Councillor Dudley Hoddinott asked a series of questions relating to financial outturn from 2011/12 and the first quarter budget monitoring report from 2012/13. He asked why the council had not purchased software for the planning service in 2011/12 and whether this had caused or contributed to the drop in performance? In relation to the delayed capital spend on additional mobile home plots, he asked why the council had not determined the legal position before making any expenditure? Finally, he asked what action had been taken to improve budget forecasting so the expenditure in a financial year was closer to the budget.

The Chairman thanked the councillors for their questions.

Ca.27 Financial outturn 2011/12

Cabinet consider the head of finance's report on the financial outturn position for 2011/12. The council's net revenue expenditure for the year was £1.067 million under-spent. After carrying £334,000 forwards to the current financial year, this allowed the council to transfer £701,000 to general fund balances. This would improve the council's financial position as it headed towards a challenging budget-setting process for 2013/14. However, there was still pressure on the council's reserves during the five-year period of the medium term financial plan. There had also been some slippage in the capital programme.

Cabinet noted that the most significant variance was in the planning service where the income from planning applications was below the expected level. Cabinet recognised that there were issues over budget forecasting accuracy but noted that there had been recent improvements.

The chairman agreed to answer Councillor Hoddinott's questions outside the meeting.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) note the overall outturn position of the council in 2011/12 as well as the outturn of individual service areas;
- (b) take into account the impact of the 2011/12 outturn position in the integrated service and financial planning process when setting the 2013/14 original budget; and
- (c) note the slippage in the capital programme to 2012/13.

Ca.28 Treasury management outturn 2011/12

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on the performance of the council's treasury management function during 2011/12. Cabinet noted that during the year, the officers had taken a decision under delegated authority to withdraw investment funds from

Investec, the council's fund manager. These funds were re-invested with government-backed UK banks, achieving a higher rate of return.

The Audit and Governance Committee had also considered the report, and thanked the officers for their work during the year. The committee had made no recommendations for adjustments to the treasury management strategy for next year. Cabinet concurred with the committee's views.

RECOMMENDED: To Council to

- (a) approve the treasury management outturn report for 2011/12; and
- (b) approve the actual 2011/12 prudential indicators detailed in the report.

Ca.29 Budget monitoring - quarter 1 2012/13

Cabinet considered the head of finance's budget monitoring report for the first quarter of 2012/13, being 1 April to 30 June 2012. This forecasted a revenue overspend of £91,000 at the year-end. Cabinet noted that this followed the same trend as last year when there was a predicted full-year overspend after the first quarter but an eventual underspend at the year-end. This raised questions over the value of budget monitoring over such a short timescale. Cabinet expected the variance to even out over a long period.

In answer to a question from Councillor Hoddinott earlier in the meeting (minute Ca. 26 refers), Cabinet noted that the head of legal and democratic services would provide legal advice on the council's ability to develop new mobile home plots and sell them at a profit, although work was proceeding on the capital programme for Pebble Hill, Radley.

In answer to a question raised by Councillor Hannaby (minute Ca.26 refers), the chairman reported that the slippage of some capital community grants funding into 2013/14 was not related to the Vale and Downland Museum at Wantage.

RESOLVED: To note the first quarter budget position for 2012/13 and forecasted outturn by the services.

Ca.30 Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone - approving draft local development order for consultation

The Cabinet considered the strategic director's report on a local development order for Milton Park in the Science Vale UK enterprise zone. The report sought Cabinet's approval to consult on the draft order.

Cabinet noted that the order would allow development of land within the designated area of Milton Park, including the construction of new buildings. The options were to:

1. not to proceed with an order, leaving businesses without certainty that their development plans would be approved, or
2. proceed with the order, to create economic growth, business rates growth and new jobs at Milton Park.

Cabinet believed the council should proceed with the order, as it would bring economic benefits to the Vale. The order would last for 15 years. In answer to a question from a Cabinet member on whether the new buildings at the park would be built with sustainability

in mind, generating more energy than they used, the chairman agreed to take this up with Milton Park's owners.

Cabinet noted that the order effectively created additional permitted development rights. The council would retain enforcement powers if there were any breaches of the order.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) authorise the officers to carry out a statutory public consultation on the draft Local Development Order for Milton Park; and
- (b) authorise the strategic director to approve the final format of the consultation papers, including the draft order and statement of reasons.

Ca.31 To accept agency powers from Oxfordshire County Council for work under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010

Cabinet considered the report of the head of economy, leisure, and property. This set out a proposal for the council to take on agency powers from Oxfordshire County Council to carry out work under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Act was central to reducing flood risk from extreme weather.

Under the agency agreement, the council would be able to claim all reasonable costs from the county council to carry out flooding investigations, designate flood structures and give formal consent, and enforce where necessary. Cabinet noted that the council had the expertise to take on this role. Riparian owners would be required to keep watercourses clear of obstructions.

Cabinet welcomed the proposal. The council was often the first point of contact for the public in need of assistance during a flood. The agency powers would give the council more control over how it responded to flooding and in prioritising its resources.

RECOMMENDED: To Council

to accept agency and all other necessary powers from Oxfordshire County Council to carry out work under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and to authorise the head of legal and democratic services to complete the appropriate arrangements.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting closed at 2.40 pm