

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Cabinet

held on Friday 5 April 2013 at 2.00pm

in the Council Chamber, 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

Officers: David Buckle, Geoff Bushell, Steve Culliford, Alison Hamilton, William Jacobs, Carole Moss, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed and Anna Robinson

Number of members of the public: Nil

#### Ca.60 Apologies for absence

None

#### Ca.61 Minutes

**RESOLVED:** To adopt as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 February 2013 and agree that the chairman signs them.

#### Ca.62 Declarations of interest

None

#### Ca.63 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

#### Ca.64 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

None

#### Ca.65 Referral from Scrutiny Committee: New homes bonus policy

On 14 February 2013, the Scrutiny Committee had considered the head of finance's report proposing the new homes bonus interim policy. Cabinet had approved this interim policy

at its last meeting on 8 February. At the Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Cabinet member for finance agreed to consider any amendments the committee suggested.

The committee had asked the Cabinet member to review the new homes bonus policy to clarify how the council would distribute the bonus between the area committees. Cabinet noted that the Cabinet member for finance would make an individual cabinet member decision in due course, as well as a later policy decision on how the area committees could allocate the new homes bonus as grants.

## **Ca.66 Virements**

Cabinet noted the virement approved under delegated powers.

## **Ca.67 Customer services**

Cabinet considered the report of the head of HR, IT, and customer services. The report sought Cabinet's agreement to outsource the customer services function to Capita. The aim was to achieve savings, customer service improvements, and efficiencies arising from harmonising the function with South Oxfordshire District Council.

Cabinet noted that the Scrutiny Committee had supported the proposal subject to a number of suggestions, most of which were in place or would be implemented shortly. The committee had also asked to receive a contract monitoring report each year in line with the council's other major contracts; Cabinet supported this.

Cabinet noted that when the financial services contract was awarded to Capita in 2006, this provided for the outsourcing of customer services. Therefore, no competitive procurement was needed to invite Capita to submit a proposal; the transfer of the team's functions to Capita would comply with the council's contracts procedure rules.

Cabinet supported the outsourcing proposal but stressed that this decision did not reflect on the customer services staff but related to achieving savings, improvements, and efficiencies arising from harmonisation with South Oxfordshire District Council.

Cabinet looked at service options offered by Capita. Of these, Cabinet supported:

- a consolidated switchboard, shared with South Oxfordshire District Council but where the relevant council's name would be given when the call was answered
- interactive voice response whereby callers would be given number options to choose their own call route
- cold handover of calls where calls were put through by a receptionist without the caller being announced
- a strong service target whereby 80 per cent of calls were answered within 20 seconds
- retaining the cash office at Abbey House, Abingdon

Cabinet noted that now it had chosen its preferred service options, Capita would make its best and final offer. The savings quoted in the report were the minimum assuming maximum redundancy costs. The savings would increase if staff were redeployed instead of redundancy.

The officers would commence work on options for the cash office. However, the option of South Oxfordshire residents using the cash office at The Abbey House in Abingdon, as opposed to Crowmarsh Gifford, had not found favour with South Oxfordshire's councillors.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) outsource the Vale of White Horse District Council customer services function to Capita to achieve savings, customer service improvements, and efficiencies arising from harmonising the function with the existing outsourced South Oxfordshire District Council function;
- (b) implement the following options offered by Capita: consolidated switchboard, interactive voice response, cold handover of calls, strong service target, and retain the cash office at The Abbey House, Abingdon;
- (c) agree that Scrutiny Committee should receive a contract monitoring report each year; and
- (d) request Capita representatives to meet with Cabinet members six months after the contract commencement to review performance.

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

None

The meeting closed at 2.08 pm