

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday, 5 December 2014 at 2.00 pm
in the Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Matthew Barber (Chairman), Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman), Reg Waite and Elaine Ware

Officers: John Backley, Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Andrew Down, Suzanne Malcolm, Margaret Reed, Anna Robinson and Ron Schrieber.

Also present: Councillors Eric Batts and Robert Sharp

Number of members of the public: 0

Ca.9 Apologies for absence

Councillor Mike Murray sent his apologies for absence.

Ca.10 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 3 October 2014 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

Ca.11 Declarations of interest

None.

Ca.12 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Ca.13 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

None.

Ca.14 Future of corporate services

Cabinet considered the strategic director's report on the future delivery of corporate services. Since Cabinet's last meeting, the council's consultant had informally tested the market and consulted our other council partners to assess which services should be market tested in 2015. The report sought Cabinet's approval to confirm the services that should be market tested in 2015, confirm those that should not, approve two service package procurements; delegate authority to approve the procurement strategy and delegate authority to negotiate an agreement with the other partner councils.

Cabinet members had received a letter from UNISON expressing its concerns about the proposals. The strategic director acknowledged that this was a time of uncertainty for staff affected by the proposals but outlined the steps being taken to communicate with staff to keep them fully informed and to support them. He confirmed that any request from UNISON to discuss the proposals at a public committee meeting would be welcomed although he suggested that a private meeting between UNISON officials and cabinet members would probably be more appropriate as it would allow open discussion of sensitive and confidential information.

Cabinet agreed the recommendations, believing that this presented an opportunity for the council to achieve efficiency savings, improved resilience, and improved service quality.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) confirm the following services should be jointly market-tested in 2015: revenues, benefits and associated financial services in the current contract; accountancy, internal audit, land charges, licensing, debt recovery legal activity, car park administration, data capture, human resources, street naming and numbering, IT applications support, IT helpdesk, IT infrastructure support, IT security, facilities management, procurement, engineering and property services;
- (b) confirm that the following services should not be jointly market tested in 2015, but included in the procurement as potential future contract additions: canteen, democratic services, professional legal services, mobile home parks management, CCTV operations, public conveniences cleaning and treasury management;
- (c) approve two service package procurements, being one package comprising 'citizen, corporate, support services', and, one package comprising 'technical, asset and location-based services';
- (d) authorise the Strategic Director in consultation with the leaders to approve the details of the joint procurement strategy; and
- (e) authorise the Strategic Director in consultation with the leaders to negotiate an agreement with other council partners and to approve it.

Ca.15 Car park fees and charges

Cabinet considered the report of the head of HR, IT, and technical services. This sought Cabinet's views on whether to increase car parking fees and charges in 2015/16 and set out options to do so.

The car park pricing policy balanced the requirement for users to meet the costs of the car parks, with the need for charges to be economically viable having regard to the impact they have on the local economy. With this in mind, Cabinet agreed not to increase fees and charges for 2015/16.

RESOLVED: to make no increase to the car park fees and charges in 2015/16.

Ca.16 Broadband

Cabinet considered the report of the head of economy, leisure and property. This provided an update in relation to the Better Broadband scheme for Oxfordshire and the additional coverage that would be provided by a council contribution of £250,000. The report also recommended cabinet to ask full council to transfer this amount from the capital contingency budget to the capital programme and to authorise officers, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, to negotiate and enter into the necessary agreements with Oxfordshire County Council.

Cabinet agreed with the proposals.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree to provide £250,000 to increase superfast broadband coverage in the Vale;
- (b) recommend Council to transfer £250,000 from the capital contingency budget to the broadband budget for the delivery of the extension of the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme in the Vale; and
- (c) authorises the strategic director, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, to negotiate and agree the detailed terms of the contract and implementation plan with Oxfordshire County Council, and authorises the head of legal and democratic services to complete the necessary agreements.

Ca.17 Business rates pooling and business rate distribution

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on business rates pooling and distribution.

The report explained that in the future the council might have the opportunity to form a 'business rates pool' with other principal councils in Oxfordshire and/or to be a member of a group of councils that shares the surpluses or losses made by the pool. Both decisions would need to be made annually and at short notice as they would be in part dependent on government information released as part of its settlement announcement each December. The report sought authority for the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make the annual decisions whether the council should enter into a "business rate pool" and/or whether to join the 'business rate distribution group'. Cabinet agreed with the proposal.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make annual decisions on whether the council should enter into a “business rate pool” with other local authorities if it appears to be financially advantageous to do so; and
- (b) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make annual decisions on whether the council should enter into a “business rate distribution group” with other local authorities if it appears to be financially advantageous to do so.

Ca.18 Council tax base

Cabinet considered the head of finance’s report that asked Cabinet to recommend Council to approve the council tax base for 2015/16.

Before the council tax could be set by the council, it had to calculate the council tax base: an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area. The council tax base for the district had to be notified to Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner by 31 January 2015. Each parish and town council is also notified of the figure for its area.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council

- (d) that the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council’s tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2015/16 be approved;
- (e) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2015/16 be 47,563.1; and
- (f) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2015/16 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2014.

Ca.19 Council tax reduction scheme grant to towns and parishes

Cabinet considered the head of finance’s report on the amount of council tax reduction scheme grant that should be passed on to town and parish councils. Cabinet was asked to make a recommendation to Council.

The council received an annual grant from the government which could be passed on to town and parish councils to mitigate the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on their tax bases. Passing on the grant could help keep down the town and parish element of council tax bills.

Cabinet agreed with the proposal.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council

- (a) that the total council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed down to town and parish councils for financial years 2015/16 to 2017/18 be:
- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 2015/16 | £120,445 |
| 2016/17 | £ 80,297 |
| 2017/18 | £ 40,149 |
- (b) that the individual grant amounts for towns and parishes for 2015/16 are as set out in appendix 1 to the head of finance's report; and
- (c) that delegated authority be given to the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to determine the individual town and parish allocations in 2016/17 and 2017/18, based on the current method of distribution.

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

None

The meeting closed at 2.26 pm