

Cabinet Agenda



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Date: 2 July 2015
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A meeting of the

Cabinet

will be held on Friday 10 July 2015 at 10.00 am

Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Abingdon, OX14 4SB

Cabinet Members:

Councillors

Matthew Barber (Chairman)
Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman)
Eric Batts
Charlotte Dickson

Mohinder Kainth
Sandy Lovatt
Mike Murray
Elaine Ware

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Reed'.

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

Council's vision

The council's vision is to take care of your interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency.

1. Apologies for absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

(Pages 4 - 6)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 February 2015 (previously published).

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chairman.

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

Any statements, petitions, and questions from the public under Standing Order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

Petition to save the outdoor pool in Abingdon

At the Council meeting held on 20 May 2015, Ms Naomi Richardson presented a petition to save the outdoor pool in Abingdon. In her address she referred to the outdoor pool as a vital outdoor amenity for Abingdon and the surrounding area. She highlighted the health and safety benefits of providing an alternative swimming option to the River Thames, the health benefits for children and the wider economic benefits to the town arising from increased visitor numbers attracted to Abingdon by the outdoor pool.

At the council meeting the Leader of the council responded that: there was no intention to close the facility; that initial responses to the public consultation on the future of the Abbey Meadows indicated over 80 per cent of respondents were in favour of retaining the outdoor pool; and that £500,000 of funding had been identified to invest in the future of Abbey

Meadows.

Council agreed to refer the petition to Cabinet to consider as part of its deliberation on the future of Abbey Meadows.

6. Abbey Meadows, Abingdon

(Wards Affected: Abingdon Abbey Northcourt)

(Pages 7 - 12)

To consider the report of the head of economy, leisure and property. Appendix 1 to follow

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

None

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 6 February 2015 at 2.00 pm

in the Meeting Room 1, The Old Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

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

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, Simon Hewings, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed and Bob Watson

Also present: Councillor Yvonne Constance and Councillor Robert Sharp

Number of members of the public: Nil

Ca.20 Apologies for absence

Councillors Mike Murray and Reg Waite had sent their apologies for absence.

Ca.21 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt the Cabinet minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2014 as a correct record and agree that the chairman signs them.

Ca.22 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.23 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.24 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

None

Ca.25 Treasury management mid-year report 2014/15

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report that monitored the treasury management performance for the first half of 2014/15. Cabinet noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report and had raised no concerns. Cabinet was content with the performance also.

RESOLVED to recommend Council to:

1. to note the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2014/15, and
2. to note that Cabinet is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

Ca.26 Treasury management and investment strategy 2015/16

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report that proposed the adoption of a treasury management strategy for 2015/16. Cabinet noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report and supported the proposed strategy. Cabinet was content with the proposed strategy also.

RESOLVED to recommend Council to:

1. approve the treasury management strategy 2015/16 as set out in Appendix A to the head of finance's report;
2. approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2015/16 to 2017/18 as set out in table 2, appendix A to the report; and
3. approve the annual investment strategy 2015/16 set out in appendix A to the report and the lending criteria detailed in table 5.

Ca.27 Budget 2015/16

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report which proposed the draft revenue budget 2015/16 and the capital programme to 2019/20. Tabled at the meeting were appendices E (Prudential Indicators) and F.2 (Reserves Funding).

Cabinet supported the draft budget, and emphasised that should there be no change to the new homes bonus scheme, the leader of the council might wish to use an element of the remaining new homes bonus balance to fund infrastructure projects.

Cabinet made the following amendments to the draft budget:

- In appendix B item 5 under Economy, Leisure and Property, the title of the bid should be amended to 'strategic property – additional professional support'
- In appendix D.2 item 1 under Corporate Management Team, the title of the bid should read 'South Hinksey rail crossing' and 'South Hinksey' should replace 'North Hinksey' in the summary text
- In appendix D.2 item 2 under HR, IT and Technical Services, the title of the bid should read 'Abingdon flood defences' and the summary text should be amended to

'Funding of Abingdon flood defences including St Helen's Mill and River Ock retention scheme'

RESOLVED:

1. To recommend Council that it:
 - (a) sets the revenue budget for 2015/16 as set out in the appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report;
 - (b) approves the capital programme for 2015/16 to 2019/20 as set out in appendix D.1 to the head of finance's report, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D.2 of the head of finance's report;
 - (c) sets the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the head of finance's report;
 - (d) approves the medium term financial plan to 2019/20 as set out in appendix F.1 to the head of finance's report.

2. That Cabinet agrees that the leader of the council makes minor adjustments to the draft budget proposals and prudential indicators, in conjunction with the head of finance, should they prove necessary following the publication of the final Local Government settlement and prior to its submission to Council on 18 February 2015.

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

None

The meeting closed at 2.10 pm

Cabinet report



Report of head of economy, leisure and property

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Wards affected: All

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To: Cabinet

DATE: 10 July 2015

Vision for Abbey Meadow

Recommendations

That cabinet agrees to:

- (a) the wording in the consultation summary as set out in appendix 1, attached to this report, so that this can be published on the Vale Council's website
- (b) proceed with the appointment of a project manager to investigate the cost implications of the improvement works to the outdoor pool and the other top ten priorities
- (c) develop a programme of phased activity to implement these works, bringing forward growth bids as required.

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the cabinet following the recent public consultation on the future of Abbey Meadow, and to set out a response to the consultation and the way forward.

Strategic objectives

2. The vision for Abbey Meadow will contribute towards the strategic and corporate objectives of "building the local economy" and "continue to invest to improve the viability and attractiveness of our towns", in this case Abingdon.

Background

3. An approved capital growth bid of £500,000 was allocated in 2015/16 financial year to support the improvement of this strategically important riverside site that, with some

investment, could become significantly more attractive and improve Abingdon's offer as a visitor destination.

4. Since October 2014 there have been two phases of consultation on the future of Abbey Meadow. Phase one was an informal discussion with key stakeholders to generate initial objectives/scenarios for the site that took into consideration practical and financial constraints. Phase two was a district-wide public consultation to identify which of the three scenarios discussed by the stakeholder groups was the most popular.
5. The three scenarios that were consulted on were:
 - scenario A – a place to swim and play
 - scenario B – a place to relax and unwind
 - scenario C – a flexible outdoor space.
6. The consultation allowed the public to select their preferred scenario from A, B and C, but also within that scenario to rank in order of preference what additional facilities they would like to see. A free text comments box was also provided.

Consultation results

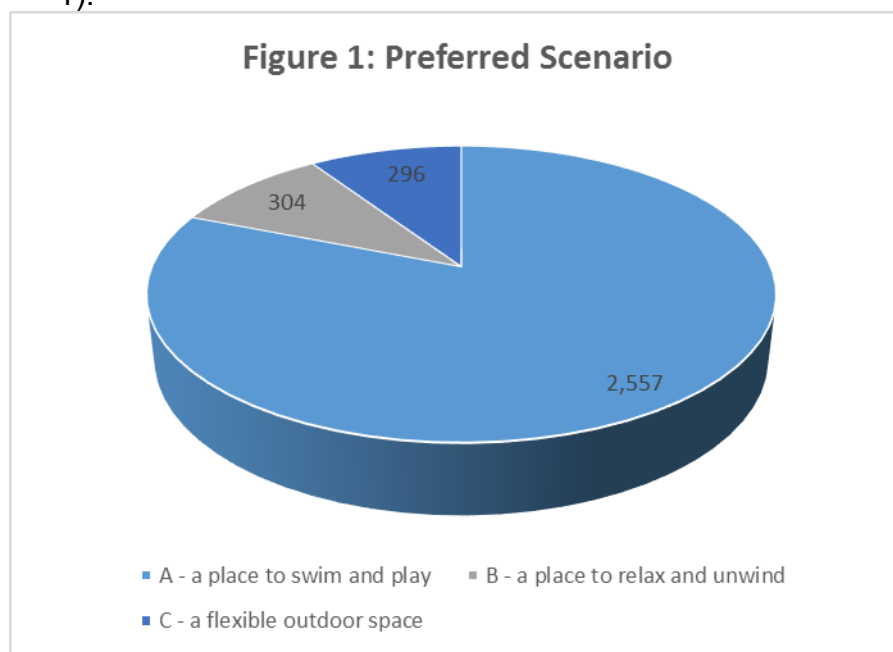
Phase one

7. The Vale Council sought the views of key stakeholders with an interest in Abbey Meadow in October 2014. This involved 1-2-1 meetings with representatives from five groups that had strong connections to the site, as well as a more formal workshop which was attended by 29 community groups.
8. Early discussions with these stakeholders showed there was an appetite for improving Abbey Meadow. The stakeholders considered that many existing facilities needed to be repaired or replaced to ensure the park remains a popular attraction for local residents and visitors.
9. Common objectives for the site included:
 - making the site appeal to a broader spectrum of people
 - extending seasonal usage of the site
 - improving access and signage
 - maintaining or increasing the range of leisure activities on offer.
10. However, discussion about the practical and financial limitations of the site exposed some differences of opinion with regards to the relative importance of retaining key facilities/ assets. Some groups expressed a strong preference for keeping facilities, such as the outdoor pool, and building on what's already there. Others felt that the project provided an opportunity to introduce new leisure opportunities. The scenarios developed were a response to this feedback.

Phase Two

11. 3,157 people took part in the district-wide consultation, which ran from 27 February 2015 to 7 April 2015. This excludes 46 duplicate entries, which were removed for the purposes of analysis.

12. 81 per cent of respondents expressed a preference for scenario A – a place to swim and play. Only ten per cent favoured scenario B and nine per cent scenario C (Figure 1).



13. Analysis of the free text comments shows that most of the people who expressed a preference for scenario A did so as they did not want to see the outdoor pool close. Many people spoke about how the pool is part of Abingdon's heritage and represents a unique offer to visitors. The strength of feeling about retaining the pool was also expressed in the form of a 38 Degrees online petition with over 2,500 signatories – roughly comparable to the number of people who voted for scenario A1. This petition was reported to full council at its meeting on 22 May 2015.

14. The comments also showed that the proposal to build a new café/restaurant is divisive. Proponents suggested this would make better use of the park's riverside location or draw more people into the park. Objectors claimed that Abingdon doesn't need any more cafés, would take business away from the town centre or encourage people to be lazy rather than active.

15. The consultation also allowed people to rank in order of preference, other facilities or improvements they would like to see delivered as part of their preferred scenario. It is possible to see how these facilities rank across the three scenarios, to also take into account the views of people who expressed a preference for B and C (Figure 2). The most popular improvements common to all three scenarios were new picnic tables and seating, adventure play equipment and an enhanced splash pad.

¹ <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-abbey-meadows-outdoor-pool-abingdon>

Figure 2: Preferred additional facilities/ improvements²

| | A score | B score | C score | Total | Rank |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------|------|
| New picnic tables and seating | 12,118 | 2,043 | 2,366 | 16,527 | 1 |
| Refurbished changing rooms | 16,312 | 0 | 0 | 16,312 | 2 |
| Adventure play equipment for over 10s | 9,728 | 1,450 | 4,497 | 15,675 | 3 |
| Enhanced splash pad | 10,126 | 1,507 | 2,115 | 13,748 | 4 |
| Improved coffee kiosk | 13,389 | 0 | 0 | 13,389 | 5 |
| Improvements to under 10s play area | 8,791 | 1,363 | 2,068 | 12,222 | 6 |
| Outdoor gym equipment | 6,142 | 779 | 1,312 | 8,233 | 7 |
| Refurbished tennis courts | 6,217 | 785 | 871 | 7,873 | 8 |
| Electricity supply for a mobile ice rink | 5,218 | 974 | 1,263 | 7,455 | 9 |
| Multi-use games area | 0 | 1,189 | 1,894 | 3,083 | 10 |
| Pop-up cafe | 0 | 0 | 2,363 | 2,363 | 11 |
| Outdoor performance space | 0 | 0 | 2,276 | 2,276 | 12 |
| Landscaping improvements | 0 | 0 | 1,894 | 1,894 | 13 |
| Circular walking paths | 0 | 0 | 1,568 | 1,568 | 14 |
| Nature areas and information boards | 0 | 0 | 1,251 | 1,251 | 15 |
| Bandstand | 0 | 997 | 0 | 997 | 16 |
| Public art trail | 0 | 0 | 772 | 772 | 17 |

16. A more in-depth summary of the consultation has been prepared by the Vale Council's corporate consultation officer for publication on the Vale Council's website, set out in appendix 1, attached to this report.

17. Given the strength of response favouring the retention of the pool, officers recommend that this should be the favoured option and the opportunity to add other favoured facilities to enhance the area should be investigated further.

Financial implications

18. The Vale Council maintains Abbey Gardens and Abbey Meadow and spends just under £60,000 every year on routine grounds maintenance of these areas.

19. Whilst initial costings were obtained at the time of undertaking the consultation, officers need to undertake further work to understand what works are required, in particular in relation to the swimming pool and changing rooms, which were the favoured options. The next most popular facility requested in scenario A was in relation to the coffee kiosks and officers consider there is an opportunity to create a new-style kiosk and café facility.

20. There are opportunities to look at re-provision of the changing rooms in a different form by incorporating the public toilets (for which the technical and facilities manager holds a £100,000 budget for refurbishment work). There are a number of other valuable improvements that have been voted for as part of the consultation exercise that officers will pursue, in particular those ranked 1 -10 in figure 2 above in order to deliver the vision for Abbey Meadow.

21. Clearly all of these may not be achievable within the existing £500,000 budget allocation and, as such, officers will bring forward growth bids for further phases as required. Some of this budget will be required to cover professional fees needed to

² Scores were arrived at by weighting the ranking respondents gave to each facility/ improvement.

deliver this project and these could be in the region of 15 per cent of the budget, around £75,000 of the £500,000.

22. There will be additional constraints that will need to be considered, for example, additional facilities will potentially require funds to support maintenance costs and the current kiosk has a zero charge currently for non-domestic rates; however, improving it may result in a change of non-domestic rate implications.

Resource and timescale implications

23. To date, the project has been led by the economic development team with support from the consultation and other officers. However, the implementation of the project will be dependent upon the involvement of other teams, particularly the leisure and parks teams, and it may be appropriate for one of these teams to take the project lead. However, none of the teams involved has much spare capacity to take on such a project, particularly in view of existing and committed workloads and, therefore, officers recommend the use of an external project manager to move the project forward, using the £20,000 for strategic property advice included in the 2015/16 budget.
24. Officers will appoint a project manager to manage this project as soon as is practically possible and once the scope of the final scheme has been agreed, we can produce a project time line and consider the resource and timescale implications.
25. Given the seasonal nature of the open air pool, this project will require a lot of work to be carried out and completed by April 2016 to ensure that the pool re-opens at its normal time in May 2016. This may be difficult to achieve, given the timescales involved in working up a final scheme, procuring the necessary contractor(s) and carrying out and completing the works, but it is anticipated that the work can be phased and that some elements can be in place prior to the 2016 season.
26. There are also a number of constraints on the area that need to be fully investigated alongside any improvement plans.

Legal implications

27. There are some legal issues that need to be taken into account in relation to this site that need to be considered in any final scheme:
 - The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will need to give its approval to any scheme, although its main focus will be on Abbey Gardens and the area around the existing recreational area. These were the main areas that received grant funding and consequently HLF needs to give its consent to any alterations to existing layouts. The recreational area is of lesser importance as HLF provided little direct funding for any improvements to this area and, therefore, any constraints on development of Abbey Meadow would be unlikely.
 - There is a covenant affecting Abbey Meadow, the benefit of which is held by the Master and Governors of the Hospital of Christ of Abingdon (“the Charity”). This prevents the erection of any building or other structure on Abbey Meadow, other than such buildings or structures as may be ancillary to the intended use of the land as a public open space for recreational purposes. As it proposed any building will be for ancillary purposes, this covenant should not be breached. However, it is

recommended that any development plans should be communicated to the charity to ensure that no problems arise at a later date.

- There is a water pipe owned by Thames Water on the Abbey Meadow site, which runs around the edges of the site from the river. There are the usual covenants not to build over this pipe or plant any trees within a certain distance of the pipe. There should not be an issue as long as the location of this pipe is taken into account in any development. Thames Water will have a plan of the location, which can be used for consultation on any development of the waterside area
- The existing car parking area must continue to be used as a car park.

28. In summary, as long as the above matters are taken into account in terms of the extent of the proposed development, and consultations with the appropriate bodies are done at an early stage, the legal risks of development at Abbey Meadow as outlined in this report should be minimal.

Risks

29. This consultation exercise has raised expectations with residents. These expectations need to be managed particularly in relation to the £500,000 capital budget, unless extra funding can be identified.

Conclusion

30. The vision for Abbey Meadow consultation has clearly attracted significant input from the residents of the district. Therefore, officers recommend that cabinet agrees the wording in the consultation summary as set out in appendix 1, attached to this report, so that this can be published on the Vale Council's website and proceed with the appointment of a project manager to investigate the cost implications of the improvement works to the outdoor pool and the other top ten priorities. Officers also recommend that cabinet agrees to develop a programme of phased activity to implement these works, bringing forward growth bids as required.