

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 7 December 2018 at 10.30 am

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



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Roger Cox (Chairman), Ed Blagrove (Vice-Chairman), Alice Badcock, Eric Batts, Mike Murray, Robert Sharp and Elaine Ware

Officers: Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Diane Foster, Simon Hewings, Paul Howden, William Jacobs, Vicky Johnson, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillor Emily Smith

Ca.83 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.84 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as correct records the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 28 September and 5 October 2018.

Ca.85 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.86 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.87 Public participation

None

Ca.88 Joint gambling policy

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report on the review of the gambling policy. This was a joint policy with South Oxfordshire District Council and was subject to review every three years.

The Cabinet member responsible for the licensing service reported that the review had not brought any significant policy changes, nor changes required by legislation. The minor changes included:

- additional information on the detail required for premises risk assessments, including for the risk assessments to be kept at the premises
- paragraphs 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 referred to the local area profiles that were now available on the council websites to assist operators in developing their risk assessments required for the application process
- the policy had been updated to refer to the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018 and the councils' Licensing Enforcement Policy
- Annex 4 referred to the recent government review of gaming machines and social responsibility measures, and the decision that maximum stakes on fixed odds betting terminals would be reduced from £100 to £2

The revised policy had been supported by the Licensing Acts Committee; Cabinet concurred and agreed to retain the 'no casinos' clause within the policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) adopt the proposed Joint Gambling Policy;
- (b) authorise the head of housing and environment to make minor editorial changes to the joint gambling policy; and
- (c) authorise the head of housing and environment to publish the joint gambling policy in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

Ca.89 Council tax empty homes premium

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on a council tax premium on empty homes.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that new legislation had been passed that allowed councils to apply a higher premium on council tax due on long-term empty homes. He advised Cabinet to recommend Council to charge the premiums permitted by the legislation.

Cabinet noted the number of homes that would be affected in the district and the financial implications for the council. In answer to questions from Cabinet members, it was reported that inspections took place regularly to determine whether homes were empty. Cabinet suggested that parish councils should be reminded how to inform this council if they became aware of empty properties. It was suggested that this should be raised at the next Town and Parish Council Forum.

Cabinet supported the recommendation, believing that this would encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back into occupation and increase the supply of homes available.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

that in accordance with the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018, the Long Term Empty Property Premium (currently set at a 50%) is:

- (i) increased to 100% from 1 April 2019 for those properties which are empty for two years and over;
- (ii) increased to 200% premium from 1 April 2020 for those properties which are empty for five years and over;
- (iii) increased to 300% premium from 1 April 2021 for those properties which are empty for 10 years and over.

Ca.90 Council tax base

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report regarding the setting of the council tax base for 2019/20. Before the council tax could be set by Council, a calculation had to be made of the council tax base: an estimate of the taxable resources for the whole district and for each parish.

Cabinet noted how the council tax base was calculated and noted the assumptions made as part of that calculation. Cabinet was asked to recommend the council tax base to Council. Once set by Council in December, the council tax base would be notified to Oxfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and each parish and town council to allow them to set their budgets for 2019/20. Cabinet noted that the council tax base had been adjusted to take into account the recommendations to amend the long term empty homes premium, referred to in minute Ca.89 above.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- (a) 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 2019/20 be approved;
- (b) 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 2019/20 is **51,706.2**; and
- (c) 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 2019/20 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 2 of the report.

Ca.91 Budget setting update

Cabinet considered the report of the head of finance on the changes expected to local government finance. The Cabinet member for finance reported that the Government's finance settlement announcement had been deferred. He advised that it was likely that New Homes Bonus funding would not be available from 2020/21. This would impact on the council's medium term financial plan, which projected the budget forward by five years, allowing the council to recognise and plan for changes to local government funding.

In light of potential future financial pressures, the council had already instigated a number of actions that would help ensure it was best placed to respond to the challenges. These actions included:

- pausing non-essential capital spending, pending certainty around future funding
- reviewing all base budgets to remove any over-budgeting
- curtailing the discretionary growth bid process during budget setting for revenue and capital spending
- commissioning the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to assist with work on benchmarking the base budget with other councils and on a commercial strategy

The Cabinet member for finance, in speaking to the report, recommended that as part of the council's 2019/20 budget setting, the capital programme should include essential schemes only, and all other capital schemes should form a preparation pool of schemes to be considered when affordable. Cabinet agreed that this was prudent, given the council's uncertain medium to long term financial position.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the report; and
- (b) instruct officers as part of 2019/20 budget setting, to revise the capital programme to include only essential schemes, with all other schemes forming a preparation pool of schemes to be considered when considered affordable.

The meeting closed at 10.58 am