

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Monday 3 February 2020 at 6.00 pm

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



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Emily Smith (Chair), Debby Hallett (Vice-Chair), Andrew Crawford, Neil Fawcett, Jenny Hannaby, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber

Officers: John Backley, Jayne Bolton, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, Marybeth Harasz, Simon Hewings, Steve May, Margaret Reed, Ricardo Rios and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillors Amos Duveen and David Grant

Number of members of the public: 1

Ca.35 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.36 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 December 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

Ca.37 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.38 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.39 Public participation

Rita Atkinson addressed Cabinet on behalf of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council. She praised the council's efforts to revise the governance arrangements for Didcot Garden Town and spoke in favour of allowing the parish council a place on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board.

Ca.40 Recommendations from other committees

(a) Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

Cabinet received an update from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee chair, Councillor David Grant, on the work undertaken to date and on the committee's plans. The committee sought Cabinet's support and a budget for its year one work programme.

Cabinet welcomed the committee's year one work programme and confirmed that the budget, as requested, had been included within Cabinet's budget proposals for 2020/21.

RESOLVED: to support the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's year one work programme.

(b) Joint Audit and Governance Committee

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had made recommendations to Cabinet on the treasury management mid-year monitoring item and on the treasury management and investment strategy item. These are recorded under minutes 47 and 48 below.

Ca.41 Affordable Housing and Oxfordshire Growth Deal

Cabinet considered the head of development and regeneration's report, which updated on progress with the Joint Housing Delivery Strategy 2018-2028 action plan. The report recommended support for Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal funding to be awarded to an identified Extra Care project, together with the creation of a top-up fund to supplement additional Growth Deal projects where a shortfall in grant requirement was demonstrated. The report sought authority to enter into legal agreements relating to Growth Deal and Registered Provider funding conditions. The report also sought approval for the exploration of a potential joint housing delivery company with South Oxfordshire District Council.

The Cabinet member reported that the Growth Deal had an affordable housing element and options had been explored to deliver affordable housing in the Vale. The Cabinet member recommended that Cabinet supported a project for up to 80 Extra Care accommodation units, with Growth Deal funding of up to £2.9 million. This development would be located in Didcot (in the parish of Harwell). The project would contribute to the Growth Deal target and was subject to negotiation with Oxfordshire County Council. Up to £746,500 top-up funding might be required from the Vale, to be funded from section 106 financial contributions.

Cabinet supported the proposal, believing that this would give the council the best chance of delivering extra care housing. Cabinet also asked officers to develop a strategy on how to spend the affordable housing funds and bring that to Cabinet in due course.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) award Oxfordshire Growth Deal funding (subject also to the approval of the Growth Deal Programme Board, planning permission for the scheme and transfer of the land

to Housing 21 from Oxfordshire County Council) of up to £2.9 million for an Extra Care Housing Scheme of up to 80 dwellings which is anticipated will be delivered on Great Western Park, Didcot (parish of Harwell);

- (b) approve the use of section 106 financial contribution commuted sums as 'top up funding' up to a maximum total of £746,500 in connection with the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, the levels of which to be identified and approved on a scheme by scheme basis;
- (c) authorise the chief executive to enter into a legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council, in respect of the detailed funding arrangements for the affordable housing element of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal;
- (d) authorise the head of development and regeneration to enter into a funding agreement with Housing 21 (a Registered Provider) in connection with (a) above; and
- (e) enter into a joint approach with South Oxfordshire District Council to explore a joint solution to the delivery of affordable housing through a joint council delivery vehicle.

Ca.42 Local Plan - Local Development Scheme - Statement of Community Involvement consultation

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on the preparation of a new Local Plan. The report sought agreement to the Local Development Scheme, which set out the proposed timetable for the plan, and to the Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation.

Cabinet supported the proposals, subject to Council's approval of the budget to allow this work to proceed.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree, subject to Council approving budget provision for a local plan, to endorse the Local Development Scheme programme of work for preparing the new Local Plan and associated Development Plan Documents;
- (b) agree publication of the revised Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation for a period of six weeks; and
- (c) authorise the head of planning in consultation, with the Cabinet member for planning, to make any minor amendments, additions, typographical and grammar corrections to the documents prior to publication.

Ca.43 Neighbourhood planning funding

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on changes to the government's neighbourhood planning grants. The report sought approval to end the council's grant support to community groups preparing or reviewing neighbourhood plans.

Cabinet noted that the way the government funded neighbourhood planning had changed. The government grant to district councils had reduced by £10,000 per plan. Instead, the

government was offering community group grants directly, rather than through district councils.

Cabinet considered that it should no longer offer grants to community groups as these were now being offered directly by the government. The council would continue to support neighbourhood plans with officer advice through the dedicated neighbourhood planning team, and by funding the costs of examination and referendums.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) cease the district council's neighbourhood planning grant support from 1 April 2020;
- (b) use the income from the Government neighbourhood planning grant to support the development of neighbourhood plans; and
- (c) support neighbourhood planning groups in securing alternative grant funding towards developing new and revising neighbourhood plans.

Ca.44 Didcot Garden Town

Cabinet considered the head of partnership and insight's report on Didcot Garden Town. The report recommended approval of a revised governance structure and approval of project priorities.

The Cabinet member reported that the revised governance model was simpler and more inclusive, adding a parish council representative to the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board. This representative would be from one of the five parish councils within the Garden Town boundary.

It was noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 16 January 2020 and supported the recommendations with the following changes:

- the parish council representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board be chosen from the five parish councils within the Didcot Garden Town boundary; and
- recommend that the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board considers adding a voting member to increase its environmental representation.

The Cabinet member proposed the recommendations set out in the report together with Joint Scrutiny Committee's additions. It was noted that the Advisory Board had met and welcomed the suggestion for environmental representation and would give this consideration.

Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the operating guidelines, terms of reference and revised governance for the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board and sounding boards, as set out in appendix 2 to the head of partnership and insight's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020, with the following changes:
 - (i) the parish council representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board be chosen from the five parish councils within the Didcot Garden Town boundary;

- (ii) recommend that the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board considers adding a voting member to increase its environmental representation;
- (b) agree to name the nominated Didcot Garden Town Board as the 'Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board';
- (c) agree the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan project priorities, as listed in sections 22 to 25 of the report; and
- (d) authorise the relevant head of service to apply for future funding opportunities that directly align with the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan as appropriate.

Ca.45 Council tax reduction scheme 2020/21

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on proposed amendments to the council tax reduction scheme for 2020/21.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the proposal included modest changes to the scheme, which had been supported by the Scrutiny Committee. The changes included:

- helping single parents with children under age five
- widening the definition of who was considered disabled
- disregarding Bereavement Support Payments as income when calculating an applicant's council tax reduction

Cabinet supported the proposal, noting that the cost to the council was less than £4,000.

RECOMMENDED to Council to adopt, for 2020/21 onwards, the 2014/15 adopted council tax reduction scheme with the following amendments:

- (i) to remove the 91.5 per cent limit when calculating their council tax bill, and remove the band E restriction for single parents with children under age five, so that qualifying residents will have their council tax reduction calculated at 100 per cent of their council tax bill after any deductions and based on their property's actual council tax band, as set out in the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020;
- (ii) to widen the definition of who is considered disabled, in order to be exempt from paying council tax (e.g. council tax reduction will be calculated on 100 per cent of their council tax bill and their actual council tax band), as set out in the report; and
- (iii) to disregard Bereavement Support Payments as income when calculating an applicant's council tax reduction, as set out in the report.

Ca.46 Capital strategy

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report, which recommended a capital strategy for the period 2020/21 to 2029/30. The strategy outlined the proposed approach to how capital spending, capital financing and treasury management supported the council's services. It was updated annually to adapt to changing circumstances.

Cabinet supported the proposed strategy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the capital strategy 2020/21 to 2029/30, which is contained in appendix one of the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020.

Ca.47 Treasury management mid-year monitoring

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report, which monitored the councils' treasury management activities during the first six months of 2019/20. This showed that the council had achieved higher treasury management income than anticipated during the period. Cabinet noted that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) note that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy; and
- (b) approve the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020.

Ca.48 Treasury management and investment strategy 2020/21

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on the proposed treasury management and investment strategy for the Vale in 2020/21. The strategy defined the parameters within which the council invested. The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had supported the proposed strategy.

Cabinet approved the report and supported the proposed strategy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the treasury management strategy 2020/21, set out in appendix A to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020;
- (b) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2020/21 to 2022/23, as set out in appendix A to the interim head of finance's report; and
- (c) approve the annual investment strategy 2020/21, set out in appendix A (paragraphs 41 to 82) to the interim head of finance's report, and the lending criteria detailed in table 5 to that report.

Ca.49 Revenue budget 2020/21 and capital programme to 2024/25

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on the revenue budget 2020/21 and the capital programme to 2024/25.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that Scrutiny Committee had considered the budget proposals but had made no comment. Cabinet was limited to a £5 increase in council tax per Band D property, and had to use reserves to balance its budget for the medium term financial plan. The budget proposal included the creation of a transformation budget to investigate revenue income generation options during 2020/21. The proposals

also included funding for the climate emergency year one work programme. Car parking fees and charges would remain the same, pending a review. There would need to be careful budget monitoring during the year.

Cabinet thanked officers for their work on the budget.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) agree to maintain car park fees and charges at current levels, pending a review of fees and charges later in the year;
- (b) agree that the interim head of finance may make minor adjustments to his report and the prudential indicators, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, should they prove necessary prior to its submission to Council on 12 February 2020;

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (c) set the revenue budget for 2020/21 as set out in appendix A.1 to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2020;
- (d) approve the capital programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25 as set out in appendix D.1 to the report, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D.3 of the report;
- (e) set the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the report; and
- (f) approve the medium-term financial plan to 2024/25 as set out in appendix F.1 to the report.

Ca.50 Exclusion of the public, including the press

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Ca.51 Service delivery for grounds maintenance, public conveniences cleaning and public realm services in 2020

Cabinet agreed a proposal for provision of grounds maintenance, public convenience cleaning and public realm services.

Ca.52 Corporate services contract

Cabinet agreed changes to the corporate services contract.