

Minutes

of a special meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 6.00 pm
in The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage,
OX12 9BY

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Bethia Thomas (Chair), Mark Coleman (Vice-Chair), Sue Caul, Andy Crawford, Lucy Edwards, Neil Fawcett, Andy Foulsham, Diana Lugova and Helen Pighills

Officers: Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes) and Vivien William (Head of Legal and Democratic (Interim)).

Guests: Councillor Sarah James

39 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

40 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

41 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

42 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

43 Public participation

Councillor Sarah James, as leader of the Green Group at Vale of White Horse District Council, addressed Cabinet on item 6 on the agenda, Regulation 19 draft Joint Local Plan. She recognised that the draft Joint Local Plan Cabinet was making recommendations to Council on was important to the delivery of council priorities to shape a district where people and nature could thrive. She confirmed these were priorities shared by the Green Group who were looking for reassurance that the Joint Local Plan could do this when full Council debates putting the JLP forward to the next stage.

Councillor James highlighted some key changes since the Regulation 18 Preferred Options consultation, namely a reduction in the requirement for affordable housing in Vale of White Horse to 40% of dwellings (from 50%), though this remains 50% in South Oxfordshire,

removal of the requirement for residential developments of 50 homes or more in Vale to limit embodied carbon, though this remains a requirement in South Oxfordshire. Her understanding was that these changes arose from the viability assessment, but that assessment hadn't been seen by members yet.

Councillor James asked Cabinet, in their debate, to fully explore these changes to requirements in Vale compared to South. It would be helpful to members to hear and understand the basis for these changes and the expected impacts and risks to making or not making these changes.

She also asked Cabinet to explore the impacts and risks that may arise in Didcot as that was an important and growing town that straddles the boundary between Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire.

In response, Councillor Foulsham, the Cabinet Member for Policy and Programmes, confirmed that the changes Councillor James highlighted were as a result of the viability assessments. Whilst it was regrettable that the affordable housing requirement had been dropped from 50 per cent it was still a marked improvement on the 35 per cent required under the current Local Plan. He went on to advise that care had to be taken to ensure the soundness of the plan on deliverability grounds, the small adjustments which had been made went towards ensuring the viability and soundness of the plan.

44 Regulation 19 draft Joint Local Plan

Cabinet received the regulation 19 draft Joint Local Plan report from the Head of Policy and Programmes. The report summarised the progress made to date with preparation of the Joint Local Plan, including explaining how comments raised during previous public consultations and internal consultation have influenced its structure and content. In addition the report briefed Cabinet on the recommendations for Council, which included agreement that the Joint Local Plan 2041 Publication Version could be published for the purposes of formal Publication (Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), and thereafter submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination (under Regulation 22), together with the Proposed Joint Local Plan Policies Map (Publication Version 2024), all supporting technical evidence, topic papers and summaries of publication responses received, subject to further nonmaterial changes and corrections authorised by the Head of Policy and Programmes in consultation with the lead portfolio members, and any other proposed changes and corrections authorised by the Head of Policy and Programmes in consultation with the lead portfolio members, and to authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes, after submission, to invite the examining Inspector(s) to recommend any modifications to the Joint Local Plan 2041 that may be required.

The Cabinet Member for Policy and Programmes, Councillor Andy Foulsham, presented the report and highlighted that he was delighted to present a plan to Cabinet which reflected the policies which members had campaigned and committed to delivering. He commented on the strong evidence base which supported the innovative policies contained within the Plan such as affordable housing, net zero building and biodiversity net gain. The Cabinet member went on to remind Cabinet that the Plan was the culmination of years of work since the agreement in March 2021 to form a joint plan with South Oxfordshire District Council. He explained that the revisions to the submission timeline were in response to the invitation from the Deputy Prime Minister to submit a plan within one month of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) coming into force. Due to the limited window in which this could be done, agreement of the draft Plan as a whole package was required.

Cabinet discussed the report and thanked both officers for their work and members who had engaged in the development of the Plan. Cabinet noted the high level of engagement which

had been carried out with members which included 35 member steering group sessions and 14 all councillor roundtables. Members reflected that whilst they did not agree with every line of the Plan, they appreciated the importance of a viable plan which was backed up by evidence. Cabinet reflected that as soon as the Plan was submitted for examination it gained weight and the important policies within it could begin to be implemented.

RESOLVED: to Recommend to Council:

(a) that the Joint Local Plan 2041 Publication Version (Appendix 1), Proposed Joint Local Plan Policies Map Publication Version (Appendix 2) and supporting documents be made available for a six-week period under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

(b) following the six-week period, to authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the South Cabinet member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet member for Policy and Programmes, to submit the Joint Local Plan 2041 Publication Version and all associated documents, together with a Statement including how the responses to the Preferred Options Joint Local Plan have been taken into account and a summary of the main issues raised in the publication stage responses, to the Secretary of State for independent examination under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

(c) to authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes in consultation with the South Cabinet member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet member for Policy and Programmes, to make non-material changes and corrections to the Joint Local Plan 2041 and supporting documents, to address editorial, typographical and grammatical errors, up to the publicity period

(d) to authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes in consultation with the South Cabinet member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet member for Policy and Programmes, to propose changes and corrections to the Joint Local Plan 2041 and supporting documents, including policy updates, editorial, typographical and grammatical errors, during and following the publicity period, plan submission and during examination

(e) to authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes, once the Joint Local Plan 2041 has been submitted for examination, to invite the examining Inspector(s) to recommend any modifications they consider to be necessary in accordance with section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

(f) To approve the Joint Local Development Scheme (August 2024), attached at Appendix 3.

The meeting closed at 6.28 pm