

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 2 August 2019 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 , Debby Hallett (Vice-Chair), Neil Fawcett, Jenny Hannaby, Ruth Molyneaux, Judy Roberts, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Simon Hewings, Dominic Lamb, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Ca.9 Apologies for absence

Councillors Andrew Crawford, Helen Pighills and Emily Smith had each sent their apologies for absence.

Ca.10 Declarations of interest

Councillor Neil Fawcett declared a personal interest in the agenda item 'Funding agreement – flood risk in Abingdon' (minute Ca.14 refers).

Ca.11 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.12 Public participation

None

Ca.13 North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report, which sought the adoption of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024.

The production of a management plan was a statutory requirement. All nine constituent councils within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty had responsibility to adopt the plan, which had been produced by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's Council of

Partners. The Council of Partners had councillor and officer representation from each constituent council and held its meetings in public.

Cabinet considered that an up to date management plan was an important tool in furthering the objectives of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's designation. While the primary focus was to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there was also a duty to increase public understanding and enjoyment, and to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the area. The plan brought together the public and private interests of the area to deliver the purposes of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in a sustainable way. Cabinet supported the recommendation to adopt the management plan.

RESOLVED: to adopt the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024.

Ca.14 Funding agreement - flood risk in Abingdon

Councillor Neil Fawcett declared a personal interest in this item as he lived in the area that had previously been impacted by flooding. However, the proposal set out in the report did not directly affect his property and therefore he remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – partnership and planning. The report summarised the background and work to date on the flood management schemes in Abingdon and future contributions to the project. The report also sought authority to enter into an agreement with the Environment Agency to determine the level of the council's contribution and the conditions surrounding the council's involvement.

Cabinet noted that the Environment Agency's previous flood relief project had proved to be too expensive. Focus had since shifted towards natural flood management opportunities in the catchment of the River Ock in Abingdon. This included changing the way land was managed so soil and trees could absorb more water. The report set out the costs involved and proposed a council contribution of £68,075.

Cabinet noted that the council's options were to:

1. Do nothing – the council was not obliged to provide any funding to the Environment Agency, which could seek alternative funding from other organisations.
2. Contribute £68,075 to natural flood management opportunities in Abingdon.
3. Contribute a lesser amount.

Cabinet considered that option 2 would provide the most appropriate and cost-effective way forward to mitigate the flood risk in Abingdon. Additionally, it demonstrated the council's commitment to working and engaging with partners to find environmentally-friendly solutions and represented a significant contribution towards the project. Cabinet also asked officers to work on a media release to publicise this project.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) make a payment of £68,075 and provide limited assistance in kind to the Environment Agency as a contribution towards the cost of appraisal and outline design work for the flood storage area and natural flood management opportunities in the catchment of the River Ock in Abingdon; and

- (b) authorise the head of legal and democratic, in consultation with the deputy chief executive - partnership and planning, to finalise the terms of and enter into an agreement with the Environment Agency as to the terms on which the contribution is to be made, the assistance in kind given, and the terms on which the Environment Agency is to provide reports to the council following completion of the work.

The meeting closed at 10.55 am