

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 2 October 2020 at 10.30 am

This was a virtual, online meeting.

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

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

Officers: Jayne Bolton, Emily Cockle, Pat Connell, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, Jeremy Lloyd, Suzanne Malcolm, Steve May, Adrianna Partridge, Margaret Reed, Melanie Smans, Mark Stone and Michelle Wells

Ca.32 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.33 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.34 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ca.35 Public participation

None

Ca.36 Recommendations from other committees

Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee from the meeting held on 7 September 2020 on entering into power purchase agreements. The committee recommended that officers should join discussions with other Oxfordshire councils, larger parish councils, town councils and commercial partners, to identify the feasibility of entering into a power purchase agreement.

The Cabinet member for climate emergency supported the committee's recommendation, believing that the council could learn from others and might have greater purchasing power through a joint agreement. The council should also look for green energy providers and should support wind farms in the district. Cabinet supported the proposal but

suggested that the council should not limit itself to just one agreement, when multiple agreements might be more beneficial.

RESOLVED: to agree that officers join discussions with other Oxfordshire councils, larger parish councils, town councils and commercial partners to identify the feasibility of entering into power purchase agreements.

Ca.37 Budget 2020/21

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on the 2020/21 budget. The report recommended changes to 2020/21 budget to reflect the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and other matters on the council.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that for many years there had not been a need to review the budget mid-year, but the impact of Covid-19 had reduced income (such as car parking) and increased expenditure (on support for vulnerable residents, local communities and businesses). The additional cost to the council, after the government's grant support, was £0.791 million, which would need to be funded from the council's reserves. It was possible that if the Covid-19 pandemic continued, there might be a need for further in-year budget changes.

Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the report and supported the proposals.

Cabinet supported the proposal to recommend Council to use reserves to fund the gap; this would also protect the council's services. This meant the council had met the government's requirements under Covid-19 without full funding. Cabinet thanked the finance team for their work on this.

RECOMMENDED to Council on 7 October 2020: to

- (a) agree that the net revenue expenditure budget for 2020/21 be increased to £15.835 million, with the increase to be funded from revenue reserves; and
- (b) agree the additions to the capital programme to be funded from capital receipts, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 2 October 2020.

Ca.38 Corporate plan 2020-2024

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations. The report set out feedback from the consultation on the draft corporate plan for 2020 to 2024.

The Cabinet member with responsibility for the corporate plan thanked all those who had responded during the consultation. There had been 773 responses. The feedback had been positive and helpful. As a result, the plan had been amended and had received Scrutiny Committee's support. Following the Scrutiny Committee meeting, the draft plan had been updated and an amended appendix 4 to the report had been circulated to Cabinet members. Council would be asked to adopt the plan and a marketing launch would be held at the end of October.

Cabinet welcomed the consultation responses and the amended draft plan. Councillors also thanked officers for their work on the plan and thanked the public for the encouraging feedback.

RESOLVED: to agree the final content to be included in the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024, including the revised appendix 4 submitted to Cabinet meeting on 2 October 2020; and

RECOMMENDED: to Council on 7 October 2020 to adopt the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 set out in Appendix 4 to the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations’ report to Cabinet on 2 October 2020, with a marketing material launch following on 30 October 2020.

Ca.39 Establishing a council owned delivery vehicle

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – place. This sought agreement to develop a business case to establish a wholly owned holding company/vehicle to focus on public sector intervention to deliver a wide range of regeneration and community benefits.

The Cabinet member for development and regeneration reported that it was commonplace for councils to establish such delivery vehicles to support the corporate plan projects. Legal advice had been sought on the steps to progress the establishment of a delivery vehicle company and the Cabinet member recommended that these steps were followed. The vehicle would have the ability to deliver a range of projects, including affordable housing and regeneration projects.

The strategic property review that was underway provided an opportunity to identify pieces of land which the council could seek to transfer to the vehicle to deliver regeneration projects. These projects could include affordable housing delivery, but also commercial and community facilities, such as community hubs, land maintenance and management, and health facilities.

The options open to Cabinet were to:

1. choose not to establish such a delivery vehicle—Cabinet considered that this could hinder the council’s ability to address its emerging corporate plan ambitions such as “providing the homes people need” “improving health and jobs” and “dealing with the climate emergency”.
2. choose to establish a delivery vehicle primarily focused on making a financial return—Cabinet dismissed this option as the Local Government Association had advised against this approach.
3. establish a joint vehicle with South Oxfordshire District Council—having taken legal advice, Cabinet believed it would be simpler for the council to progress with the establishment of the vehicle without having to wait for agreement from the another council, and it also provided greater transparency and traceability of each council’s own investment along with greater flexibility.
4. establish one company with a series of sub-companies for particular themes or projects—Cabinet did not consider this was necessary at the outset, but could be relevant as projects came forward.

Cabinet supported the proposal to develop a business case. This delivery vehicle was not purely to make a profit or to delivery affordable housing, it was to provide greater regeneration and community benefits.

RESOLVED: to agree that, subject to the decision of Council on 7 October 2020 in relation to the establishment of an appropriate budget, to progress the development of a business case setting out the rationale for the setting up of a council-owned delivery vehicle to focus on public sector intervention to achieve desired goals to deliver a wide range of regeneration and community benefits.

Ca.40 Affordable Housing - Allocating Section 106 Commuted Sums

Cabinet considered the report of the interim head of development and regeneration. This set out the current position with the delivery of affordable housing as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The report also proposed a framework for adoption to enable the evaluation and prioritisation of commuted sums received as part of section 106 agreements as a result of the council granting planning permissions. The commuted sums were in lieu of the on-site delivery of affordable housing.

The Cabinet member for development and regeneration reported that the intention of the framework was to assist in the development of affordable housing schemes. All tenure types would be considered.

Cabinet supported the proposal. In answer to a question from a councillor, once a policy framework had been approved officers would work on a definition of affordable housing to deliver homes that were affordable to Vale residents.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the current position regarding the affordable housing delivery programme; and
- (b) approve the framework (attached at appendix one to the interim head of development and regeneration's report to Cabinet on 2 October 2020) to evaluate and prioritise the spend of commuted sums (S106 monies) received by the council in lieu of the on-site delivery of affordable housing, in order to enable the provision of further affordable homes.

Ca.41 Delegation of enforcement functions from Oxfordshire County Council to Vale of White Horse District Council under Covid-19 legislation

Cabinet considered the head of legal and democratic's report. This set out a proposal to accept the delegation of functions granted to Oxfordshire County Council under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020, that gave councils powers relating to the control and prevention of coronavirus. With the support of district council officers, Oxfordshire County Council had decided to delegate these functions to the district councils, adding to this council's existing powers.

The Cabinet member recommended that the council took on these additional powers. Cabinet agreed also, as local control would be more effective. Environmental health

officers would have a full range of health protection powers. The delegation arrangements from the county council would be effected through an agency agreement. It was noted that the council would be able to bid for funding to the Health Protection Board to fully cover the costs of taking on the new powers.

RECOMMENDED: to Council on 7 October 2020 to:

- (a) accept the delegation of functions from Oxfordshire County Council to enable Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out the enforcement actions detailed in The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020;
- (b) authorise the head of legal and democratic to enter into all necessary contracts and agreements to implement the delivery of the enforcement actions on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020;
- (c) authorise the head of legal and democratic to enter into all necessary contracts and agreements to implement the delivery of the enforcement actions on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council for any further period for which The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 may be extended by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and any enforcement actions which Oxfordshire County Council may delegate to the council in pursuance of any other provision (whether by statute, regulation or direction) by which The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 may be replaced, amended or supplemented; and
- (d) authorise the head of housing and environment to perform the enforcement actions set out in any such agreements referred to (a) to (c) above, and to authorise other officers to exercise any of these actions.

Ca.42 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 paragraph 3, 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.43 The impact of Covid-19 on leisure facilities

Cabinet agreed to continue to find a way to reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the operation of the council's leisure facilities.

Ca.44 Budget 2020/21

Cabinet noted the exempt information in the appendices to the budget report.