

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 4 December 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: John Backley, James Carpenter, Emily Cockle, Pat Connell, Emma Creed, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Susan Harbour, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, Paul Howden, Jeremy Lloyd, Suzanne Malcolm, Catrin Mathias, Adrianna Partridge, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillor Ron Batstone, Councillor Nathan Boyd, Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Councillor Simon Howell, Councillor Alison Jenner and Councillor Elaine Ware

Number of members of the public: 3

Ca.50 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.51 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 25 September, 2 and 16 October 2020 as correct records and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

Ca.52 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.53 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ca.54 Public participation

Three members of the public had registered to speak at the Cabinet meeting.

- (1) Julie Kelly, the lead petitioner, addressed Cabinet, requesting it to keep Old Abbey House in public or community ownership/use. Since the Council meeting, to which the petition was presented in October, the petition had now achieved approximately 1,750 signatures, plus additional support on social media. Cabinet was urged to provide a venue for community arts, cultural and musical events, a restaurant, room hire for start-ups/community groups/societies, and help attract residents and visitors to the historic heart of Abingdon and bring Old Abbey House back to life.
- (2) Hester Hand spoke on behalf of the Friends of Abingdon, urging Cabinet to have a meaningful conversation about possible community use of Old Abbey House.
- (3) Roger Thomas urged Cabinet to consider community use options for Old Abbey House, reminding councillors that the community was not expecting the council to pay for this facility. He urged Cabinet to think of Abingdon residents in a few years' time and the needs of the local community.

Ca.55 Petition - Old Abbey House, Abingdon

At its meeting on 7 October 2020, Council received a petition, which at that time via an online website and a paper petition, had achieved in excess of 1,600 signatures. The petition called on the council to:

1. keep Old Abbey House in public or community ownership/use for the benefit of the growing population of Abingdon.
2. support the creation of a mixed usage, flexible community facility which could include space to host art, cultural and musical events, a restaurant, room hire for start-ups/community groups/societies, and help attract residents and visitors to the historic heart of Abingdon.

Julie Kelly had presented the petition to and addressed Council. In accordance with its options in the council's Petition Scheme, Council determined that the petition should be referred to Cabinet for discussion as part of its determination of the future of Old Abbey House in Abingdon.

Cabinet welcomed the feedback from the local community on the future of Old Abbey House and the need for improved community facilities in the town. Many organisations had made suggestions, such as for community and arts spaces for social and leisure activities in Abingdon. It was recognised that Abingdon had a range of good facilities, but there could be more.

Cabinet understood why the community was interested in the future of Old Abbey House and understood the need for improved community facilities in Abingdon. However, members questioned whether such uses had to be located in Old Abbey House. These uses would need the right accommodation and resources to match. There were other buildings in Abingdon that might be more suitable. Currently Old Abbey House was empty as the council had no direct use for it. The council was also spending approximately £20,000 per month to maintain and secure Old Abbey House; this was not sustainable. There would also need to be significant capital expenditure on the property. However, Cabinet considered that Old Abbey House should be revitalised and a suitable use found.

Cabinet considered that the council should maintain contacts established with the community to understand their needs better and further explore the options. Cabinet thanked the speakers for their comments and thanked Julie Kelly for her petition. Cabinet

would take these comments into consideration when debating Old Abbey House later in the meeting.

RESOLVED: to receive the petition on the future of Old Abbey House, Abingdon, and take it into account when considering the Cabinet report later in the meeting.

Ca.56 Recommendations from other committees

Cabinet received the following comments from the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 November 2020. The committee made no recommendations but noted and commented on the reports relating to the community infrastructure levy spending strategy and civil parking enforcement. The committee was generally content with the reports and made comments to the Cabinet members.

Cabinet welcomed the committee's feedback.

Ca.57 Strategic vision for Oxfordshire

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships. This sought Cabinet's views on the first draft of a strategic vision for Oxfordshire.

Through the Growth Board, Oxfordshire's principal councils had collectively expressed their desire for plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire to be ambition-led and outcome-focussed. This required councils to maximise impact by working together based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions. Developing a strategic vision for Oxfordshire was an opportunity to achieve this.

The vision set out how the plans, strategies and programmes for Oxfordshire, including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, could be ambition-led and outcome focussed, facilitating a step-change in the approach to delivering sustainable development in Oxfordshire. If successful, the vision would achieve the following outcomes by 2050:

- This would be the first generation to leave Oxfordshire's natural environment in a better state than that in which it found it. The natural environment would be more biodiverse, supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.
- Oxfordshire would already be carbon neutral and be moving towards a carbon-negative future, in which the county was removing more carbon than it emitted each year.
- The population would be healthier and happier, inequalities would have been reduced, young people would feel excited about their future, and the overall well-being of the population would have improved.
- The economy of Oxfordshire would be successful and sustainable, making the most of all our people and with quality places where people want to live and work.
- We would have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our residents.
- Movement around Oxfordshire would be transformed, with greater connectivity and mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic well-being.
- Our communities would be rooted and flourishing, with enhanced and lasting connectedness driven by individual and community action.

Cabinet welcomed the draft strategic vision but considered that it must not be ignored once in place. There would be a need to create a balance between growth and sustainability. All councils and agencies would need to support it. The council's plans and strategies would need to fit Oxfordshire's vision.

Councillors were asked to feed back any detailed comments to the Cabinet member by 11 December to allow time for a response to be drafted to the consultation document.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) authorise the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships to develop a response to the strategic vision engagement exercise, in consultation with the Cabinet member for strategic partnerships, reflecting the views expressed at this meeting; and
- (b) invite Cabinet members to provide any further comments on the draft strategic vision for Oxfordshire to the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships.

Ca.58 Civil parking enforcement

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report on a proposal to introduce civil parking enforcement, being the enforcement of on-street parking regulations. The report sought approval in principle to authorise Oxfordshire County Council to manage the enforcement in an agreement with South Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council.

A cross-council group had worked on various options, which were narrowed down to the proposal to introduce on-street parking enforcement as a joint service for all three districts, covering on-street enforcement only, but not the council's own off-street car parks. On-street civil parking enforcement would be carried out using the county council's existing external provider, whereas the Vale would retain off-street car parks enforcement using its existing external provider. This was the most cost-effective option, showing an estimated surplus to the council. The scheme was expected to pay for itself in the long term.

The Cabinet member supported this proposal, Cabinet members too. There were likely to be knock-on impacts such as parking displacement and increased use of council car parks. Councillors asked whether yellow lines could be re-painted where necessary to make the regulations clearer.

Cabinet noted there was a maximum capital cost to the council of £60,000 to set up the scheme, plus an internal revenue cost of £30,000 in 2020/21. A recommendation would be made to Council to approve this funding.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) support an application by Oxfordshire County Council to the Department for Transport for the introduction of a Special Enforcement Area and bus lane enforcement powers across the districts of Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse to provide civil parking enforcement;
- (b) support the proposal for Oxfordshire County Council to manage civil parking enforcement and to authorise the head of housing and environment, in consultation

with the head of legal and democratic, to negotiate and enter into any formal legal agreements required between South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council on 9 December 2020 to:

- (c) approve the addition of a new civil parking enforcement scheme in the approved capital programme of £60,000 as the council's contribution to Oxfordshire County Council's implementation costs, and to approve a revenue supplementary estimate of £30,000 in the 2020/21 budget for costs to be incurred by the council.

Ca.59 Treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2020/21

Cabinet considered the report of the interim head of finance. This set out a review of the treasury management performance at the mid-point of the 2020/21 financial year. The report projected that the Vale could be marginally over budget at the year end. However, officers expressed caution a relying on this projection due to the current low interest rates. At the mid-year point though, there had been no need for the council to borrow funds. Cabinet noted that the mid-year returns had been achieved within the counterparty limits and the prudential indicators set out in the treasury management strategy 2020/21.

The report had been considered by the Joint Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2020. The committee had been satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy. Cabinet concurred and recommended Council accordingly.

RECOMMENDED to Council on 9 December 2020 to:

- (a) note that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee is satisfied that the treasury activities have been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy; and
- (b) approve the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2020/21.

Ca.60 Council tax base 2021/22

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report regarding the setting of the council tax base for 2021/22. 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 2021/22.

Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED to Council on 9 December 2020 to:

- (a) approve the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 4 December 2020 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2021/22;
- (b) agree 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 2021/22 is 53,919.1; and
- (c) agree 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 2021/22 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix A of interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 4 December 2020.

Ca.61 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 1-7 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.62 Minutes

Cabinet approved the exempt minutes of its meetings held on 25 September and 2 October 2020.

Ca.63 Old Abbey House, Abingdon

Cabinet agreed to dispose of Old Abbey House and offer it to a bidder, subject to contract.