

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 3 February 2023 at 10.30 am
in Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors Bethia Thomas (Chair), Neil Fawcett (Vice-Chair), Andy Crawford, Debby Hallett, Helen Pighills, Sally Povolotsky and Judy Roberts
Officers: Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader) and Simon Hewings (Head of Finance)

Remote attendance:

Officers: Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Jayne Bolton (Community Wellbeing Manager), Adrian Butler (Planning Officer), Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Cheryl Reeves (Community Enablement Team Leader), and Mark Stone (Chief Executive)
Guests: Councillor Richard Webber

63. Apologies for absence

None

64. Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 December 2022 and agree that the chair signs them as such.

65. Declarations of interests

Councillors Neil Fawcett, Debby Hallett, Sally Povolotsky, Judy Roberts and Bethia Thomas declared non-registrable interests in item 7, Distributing the White Horse Community Lottery – Community Fund, as they had each bought lottery tickets.

66. Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

67. Public participation

Cabinet received statements as set out below.

- (1) Philip Campbell made a statement on behalf of MEPC in support of the proposal to revise the Milton Park Local Development Order.
- (2) Councillor Richard Webber, the local ward member for Sutton Courtenay, made a statement in support of the revised Milton Park Local Development Order but sought confirmation that it would not be used as a mechanism to allow other uses, such as car dealerships.

The chair thanked the speakers for their contributions.

68. Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received updates from recent meetings of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, the Scrutiny Committee, and the Joint Audit and Governance Committee. Cabinet noted the recommendations made by the Joint Audit and Governance Committee, which would be considered later in the meeting.

69. Distributing the White Horse Community Lottery - Community Fund

Councillors Neil Fawcett, Debby Hallett, Sally Povolotsky, Judy Roberts and Bethia Thomas each declared a non-registrable interest in this item. They remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision.

Cabinet considered the head of policy and programmes' report. This sought approval to an approach to distribute income from the White Horse Community Lottery's central fund. The council had previously made a commitment that this fund would support local organisations and community initiatives across the district.

The report set out four options to spend the community fund:

1. Giving all registered good causes a share of the central fund based on the number of tickets they had each sold.
2. Giving good causes who had sold 20 or more tickets per week a share of the central fund.
3. Randomly selecting winners of the fund from registered good causes, with a minimum award of £1,000.
4. Splitting the income amongst the district's key voluntary and community sector infrastructure providers.

The Cabinet member for community engagement reported that the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis had highlighted the ongoing need within the voluntary and community sector for support. To help meet that need the Cabinet member recommended a blend of options 2 and 3. Option 3 should be used in year one as the method to distribute £9,000 income from the central fund to the voluntary and community sector organisations registered as good causes. For subsequent years, being 2023/24 onwards, option 2 should be used to proportionately distribute the fund to the voluntary and community sector organisations who sold 20 tickets or more per week.

Cabinet concurred, believing that random selection would give organisations an equal chance of receiving some of the funds. Subsequently, setting a minimum requirement of 20 ticket sales per week to receive a proportion of the central fund each year would

encourage the continued success of the scheme, and would raise more income for the organisations and the other causes. Both approaches would ensure the funding was directed to benefit the communities it was intended to support.

Cabinet also suggested that the council should encourage local charities to get involved in the lottery.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree to distribute the income the Vale of White Horse District Council receives in its central fund from the White Horse Community Lottery to the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations registered as good causes in the Lottery; and
- (b) agree to do this through random selection of nine winners, with a minimum award of £1,000 in 2022/23, and from 2023/24 proportionate to the number of tickets sold by each organisation, subject to organisations selling 20 tickets a week (as a minimum threshold).

70. Milton Park - Proposed Revised Local Development Order

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on a revised Local Development Order for Milton Park. The report sought Cabinet's agreement to recommend Council to adopt a revised Local Development Order, subject to completion of a legal agreement.

The Cabinet member responsible for planning services recommended that Cabinet supported the revised Local Development Order for Milton Park. It was a major employment location in the district and formed part of the Science Vale Enterprise Zone. The site had been awarded a local development order in 2012, which was now under review. The site's owners had developed a 2040 vision for the park. The site was not being extended but there were some changes proposed such as a 10 per cent net gain and increases permitted to the heights of buildings on parts of the site nearest to the railway line. There would also be some ancillary uses to support the users of the site. The revised Local Development Order had been subject to consultation; there were no technical objections outstanding. However, some local concerns had been expressed about other uses of the site, such as car dealerships, changing the nature of the park. It was confirmed that the car dealership uses were confined to the part of the site south of the railway.

Cabinet welcomed the revised Local Development Order and the aims of the owners to further improve Milton Park. Ecology surveys would be required, and all new development must be BREEAM compliant, an environmental standard of building design. There would be electric vehicle charging points, secure cycle parking and e-bikes, together with improved bus links. There were also plans to improve cycle and walking links, such as a new link to Steventon. Members supported these initiatives as they replicated the climate aims of the council's corporate plan. However, members asked the park's owners to develop their green travel plans further to provide cycle links to Abingdon and also walking and cycling links to the new development at Valley Park.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

to adopt the Milton Park Local Development Order, as set out in Appendix 1 to the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2023, subject to completion of a legal agreement securing the elements referred to in paragraph 24 of the report.

71. Treasury management mid-year monitoring 2022/23

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being the treasury management mid-year monitoring report for 2022/23.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that income from cash investments was likely to be above budget by the financial year end. This was due to increases in interest rates that were unexpected when the 2022/23 budget was set. The report also set out performance against benchmarks for the first six months of the financial year. There had been no borrowing during the first half of the year and borrowing was unlikely for the remainder of the year also.

Cabinet noted that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee had noted the report and was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2023;
- (b) note that Cabinet is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

72. Treasury management and investment strategy 2023/24

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on a draft treasury management and investment strategy for 2023/24. This set out how the council's treasury service would support the financing of capital investment decisions, and how treasury management operated day to day. The strategy also set out the prudential indicators, providing limits within which the treasury function must operate.

The Cabinet member for finance highlighted the following changes proposed to the strategy for 2023/24, which Cabinet was asked to recommend to Council:

- amend individual maximum counterparty limits for the higher credit rated counterparties, increasing the limits for LVNAV & VNAV Money Market Funds to £30 million
- increase specified instruments counterparty limit for banks and building societies with a minimum F1, A- credit rating from £10 million to £15 million
- increase non-specified instruments counterparty limit for institutions with a minimum credit rating of F1+, AA- from £10 million to £15 million
- amend the minimum lending criteria, increasing the minimum asset value criteria for non-rated building societies from assets over £1 billion to assets over £2 billion

Cabinet noted that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee had supported the draft strategy and had recommended this to Cabinet, along with approving the prudential indicators and limits, and approving the annual investment strategy and lending criteria.

Cabinet supported the changes to the strategy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2023;
- (b) approve the treasury management strategy 2023/24, as set out in appendix A to the report;
- (c) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26, as set out in appendix A to the report; and
- (d) approve the annual investment strategy 2023/24, as set out in appendix A to the report, and the lending criteria detailed in table 6 in appendix A to the report.

73. Capital strategy 2023/24 to 2032/33

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on a draft capital strategy for 2023/24 to 2032/33. The report sought Cabinet's agreement to recommend the capital strategy to Council.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the strategy would provide the parameters within which capital expenditure and investment decisions would be made once the supporting requirements were in place.

Cabinet noted that there were no substantive changes to the strategy. It was based on the council's corporate strategy, and was linked to the corporate objectives and delivery of capital projects. Cabinet supported the capital strategy and recommended its adoption to Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the capital strategy 2023/24 to 2032/33, as set out in appendix 1 of the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2023; and
- (b) agree the strategy for flexible use of capital receipts, which is contained as annex 1 of the capital strategy.

74. Revenue budget 2023/24 and capital programme to 2027/28

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on the draft revenue budget for 2023/24 and the draft capital programme to 2027/28. The report brought together information to allow Cabinet to recommend its budget to Council. The budget included the medium term financial plan, detailing a model budget for the next five years. The report also contained the opinion of the council's chief finance officer on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of the council's reserves.

Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and received a briefing from the head of finance. The committee noted the draft budget but made no recommendations to Cabinet.

The Cabinet member for finance introduced the draft budget, noting that through careful management the council's financial position had improved. For example, this year the draft budget contributed £2.5 million to reserves. There were no service cuts in the budget, yet it allocated funds to continue supporting the community hub at a time when the

government funding for this service was coming to an end. The medium term financial plan showed that the council was in a stable financial position for the next two years, but thereafter government funding was uncertain. Council tax would increase by £5 per Band D property, the maximum allowed before a referendum was required. The capital programme included a new learner pool at Wantage Leisure Centre, with funds provided from section 106 contributions. Capital was also allocated towards the Local Authority Housing Fund project, supported by government funding. Funds were also set aside for decarbonisation projects at Wantage Leisure Centre and the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, which had been supported by government grants.

Cabinet members welcomed the budget proposals. The council was now in a better financial position due to careful management. In preparing the budget members had to make challenging decisions to ensure the council continued to deliver its corporate plan priorities and reduce long-term running costs. The council would need to continue to act prudently and invest carefully as the government's approach to future local government funding was uncertain.

Members were pleased that the budget allowed the council to continue to support its residents. It included funding to continue the community hub, which had operated since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and had assisted residents during the cost-of-living crisis. The hub had also supported refugees and their host families in the district. Members supported the investment in leisure facilities by providing funds for a new learner pool at Wantage. Members were also pleased to allocate funds towards the decarbonisation projects at two leisure centres, which put climate at the heart of decision-making and would reduce running costs.

Cabinet questioned why the council had to produce a five-year medium term financial plan when it only had certainty over government funding for two years. The council must keep persuading government to change that.

Cabinet noted the confidential appendix D2 to the report and decided that it was unnecessary to discuss this in exempt session.

The Cabinet member for finance thanked officers involved in the budget's preparation, particularly the head of finance and his team, plus other Cabinet members for their work. The Cabinet member also thanked the external funding bid officers for successfully attracting government funding towards council projects. In turn Cabinet thanked the Cabinet member for finance.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) set the revenue budget for 2023/24, as set out in appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2023;
- (b) approve the capital programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28, as set out in appendix D.1 to the report, together with the capital programme changes as set out in appendix D.2 and appendix D.3 to the report;
- (c) set the council's prudential limits, as listed in appendix E to the report; and
- (d) approve the medium term financial plan to 2027/28, as set out in appendix F to the report.

RESOLVED: to agree that the head of finance, in conjunction with the cabinet member for finance, may make minor adjustments to the head of finance’s report and the prudential indicators, should they prove necessary prior to its submission to Council on 15 February 2023.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm

Chair:

Date: