

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 8 March 2024 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), Mark Coleman (Vice-Chair), Andy Crawford, Lucy Edwards, Neil Fawcett, Andy Foulsham, Diana Lugova and Helen Pighills

Officers: Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer) and Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader)

Remote attendance:

Cabinet members: Councillor Sue Caul

Officers: Andrew Busby (Head of Development & Corporate Landlord), Phil Ealey (Housing Needs Manager), Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment), Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy & Programmes), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive -Transformation and Operations), Ben Whaymand (Leisure Facilities Team Leader).

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Declarations of interests

None

3. Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

4. Public participation

Councillor Sarah James had submitted a statement in relation to item 7 on the agenda, White Horse Leisure & Tennis Centre and Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b Decarbonisation Projects. The Democratic Services Team Leader read out her statement. Whilst she was pleased to note the commitment to decarbonising the districts leisure centres and the funding which had been secured for this project, she was concerned about the risk of losing some of the secured funding for the project, and therefore the delivery of

the project as planned, due to delays in the procurement process. Councillor James asked the Cabinet member for finance and property for an explanation as to what had happened.

The Cabinet member for finance and property committed to providing a written response to the statement and to addressing some of the points raised when the item was considered.

5. Recommendations and updates from other committees

None

6. Empty Homes Policy

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report which sought adoption of the Empty Homes policy and to delegate authority to the head of housing and environment to make minor amendments to the policy in future.

The Cabinet member for community health and wellbeing presented the report and highlighted what the policy sought to achieve. She went on to inform Cabinet that by adopting the policy a proactive approach to bringing properties back into use would be implemented with the addition of a staff member to deliver this. There was the potential to increase the number of properties coming back into use through proactive engagement not just those identified in the report.

Cabinet were encouraged to see the report which went towards achieving the corporate objective of providing the homes needed in the district. Cabinet were keen to ensure that communications were put out to raise awareness of the policy.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve the adoption of the Empty Homes policy; and
- (b) authorise the head of housing and environment to make minor amendments to the policy in the future.

7. White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre and Wantage Leisure Centre - Salix Phase 3b Decarbonisation Projects

Cabinet considered the head of development and corporate landlord's report which sought approval of the procurement process to appoint a main contractor, and to delegate authority to award the first stage Pre-construction Services Agreement, and award the design and build contract for Stage 2 to the most economically advantageous tenderer.

The Cabinet member for finance and property presented the report and began by responding to the question raised by Cllr James. He advised that had there been no challenge to the procurement or had funding been rolled over from year one to year two, as it has been in the past, the council would be in a very different position but provided assurance that a lessons learnt exercise would be carried out. He continued by stating the importance that officers focused on contract delivery and mitigating the risks which had been identified. The Cabinet member for finance and property committed to providing a written response to Councillor James.

The Cabinet member for finance and property highlighted the success in securing such a large grant for the proposed works. He outlined that the project would involve the installation of photovoltaic solar panels and air source heat pumps at both White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre and Wantage Leisure Centre and the installation of glazing and cladding at Wantage Leisure Centre. He outlined the risks to the project of failing to award the contract before the start of the next financial year and advised that the recommendations reflected the need to maximise year one funding due to the delays which had been experienced.

Cabinet agreed the securing of such a large grant was a huge success for the council and were pleased to see the recommendations aimed to maximise the funding in light of the delays. Cabinet sought clarification of the reference to £200,000 at paragraph 33 of the report. The Cabinet member for finance clarified this was an error and should read £20,000. Cabinet also requested that the resolution clarified the abbreviation of JCT as Joint Contracts Tribunal.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve the procurement process to appoint a main contractor in respect of the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre and Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b decarbonisation projects following a two-stage procurement process;
- (b) authorise the head of development and corporate landlord, in consultation with the head of finance and the Cabinet member for finance and property, to award the first stage Pre-construction Services Agreement following the completion of satisfactory design to Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 4; and
- (c) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the relevant head of service under the constitution, to tender and award the contract for stage 2 (a Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) design and build contract) to the most economically advantageous tenderer within up to a five per cent variation of the allocated budget approved by Council.

8. Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24

Cabinet considered the corporate performance report and the climate action plan performance report for quarter 3, 2023/24, being the period October to December 2023.

Cabinet welcomed the reports and highlighted areas of the council's achievements including the progress being made towards tackling climate targets.

Cabinet reflected that it was useful to measure success in both a qualitative and quantitative manner and noted that moving forward the reports would be higher level with the data behind them available on the websites.

RESOLVED: to note the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report for quarter 3, 2023/24.

The meeting closed at 11.17 am

Chair:

Date: