

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Executive

held at 3.30pm on Friday 2 October 2009
at the Guildhall, Abingdon

Open to the Public, including the Press

Present:

Members: Councillors Tony de Vere (Chair), Jerry Patterson (Vice-Chair), Mary de Vere, Richard Farrell, Jenny Hannaby and Richard Webber

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Geoff Bushell, Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Clare Kingston, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed, Anna Robinson, Toby Warren and Robert Woodside

Number of members of the public: Nil

Ex.18 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Angela Lawrence.

Ex.19 Minutes

The minutes of the Executive's meeting held on 7 August 2009 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.20 Declarations of interest

None

Ex.21 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ex.22 Statements and petitions from the public under standing order 32

One member of the public had given notice that she wished to make a statement at the meeting concerning report 50/09 – community grants. However, she was unable to attend and therefore the statement was read out in her absence.

The statement was from Kate Sankey of Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN) asking the executive to support a grant application. She stated that she believed that all young children

had the right to access enjoyable recreational activities that supported them and developed their skills. KEEN had been effective in allowing children to do this, something that was evident from the children's sense of pride, self-confidence and belonging created at the sessions. She asked the Executive to consider awarding a grant to KEEN to enable it to continue to offer these sessions to children.

Ex.23 Questions from the public under standing order 32

None

Ex.24 Financial monitoring

(Time: 3.31pm to 3.32pm)

The executive received and considered an agenda report setting out requests for virements. The report also separately set out the requests approved by the strategic director under delegated authority. Councillors approved the requests.

RESOLVED

that the virements set out in table 1 of the agenda report be approved.

Ex.25 Community grants

(Time: 3.32pm to 3.39pm)

The executive received and considered report 50/09 of the head of corporate strategy. The report set out the executive's community grants budget position and detailed four grant applications.

Previously, the budget was split in to different agendas: economic, environmental, social and a discretionary proportion. This guided the executive and the area committees in the allocation of the budget. However, the executive noted that as the community grants scheme was discretionary, the executive or area committees should not have to apportion the budget this way. Instead, councillors considered that the budget should support the corporate plan and the sustainable community strategy.

It was noted that there was a £12,000 deficit in the community grants budget. This was due to inflationary increases of grant payments to the Abingdon Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Wantage Independent Advice Centre. As the council was facing a difficult financial situation, councillors decided to reduce the community grants budget by £15,000. This addressed the deficit of £12,000 and provided an allowance of £3,000 for any unforeseen costs. Councillors apportioned the reduction between the executive and the area committees.

Councillors considered each application, mindful of the limitations on the budget. Councillors also took into account the statement recorded from the member of the public earlier in the meeting. Grants were awarded to all four applicants.

RESOLVED (by six votes to nil)

(a) that the remaining budget for 2009/10 for Vale-wide grants be noted;

- (b) that the apportioning of the budget into different agendas be no longer required when the Executive or an area committee is considering or determining community grant applications;
- (c) that the executive's community grants budget for 2009/10 be reduced by £15,000 and be apportioned between the executive and area committees as follows:

	Budget reduction	Remaining budget in 2009/10
Executive	£3,150	£8,314
Abingdon Area Committee	£3,786	£10,830
North East Area Committee	£ 2,710	£13,670
South East Area Committee	£3,264	£8,531
West Area Committee	£2,090	£413
Total	£15,000	£41,758

- (d) that the following grant applications be approved: -

Applicant	Scheme	Grant
<i>KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now)</i>	<i>Towards running costs of providing sport and recreation activities for children and young people with special needs</i>	<i>£1,000</i>
<i>Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action</i>	<i>Towards running costs of the Volunteer Centre and expansion of its work in the Vale</i>	<i>£2,500</i>
<i>MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Therapy Centre</i>	<i>Towards running costs of providing support to Multiple Sclerosis sufferers</i>	<i>£1,000</i>
<i>My Life My Choice</i>	<i>Towards running costs of four self-advocacy groups for people with learning difficulties in the Vale</i>	<i>£1,000</i>

- (e) that the executive's remaining community grants budget for 2009/10 of £2,814 be returned to the council's general balances.

Ex.26 Performance monitoring report: April to June 2009

(Time: 3.39pm to 3.48pm)

The executive received and considered report 51/09 of the Head of HR, IT, and Customer Services. The report monitored the council's performance from April to June 2009. It set out:

- how the council had performed against the national indicators which applied to district councils, ten of which were local area agreement 2 targets
- how the council performed against the local performance targets, set by the council
- a summary of sickness and turnover

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Ex.12

- a financial commentary.

The executive considered that after the first quarter, it was too early to form opinions on performance. The known issues of benefits administration and the low number of house completions were being tackled. However, councillors asked that where it was difficult to show performance outcomes, in future heads of service should provide a commentary on their perception of performance so far.

The executive considered the need for improvement in the planning enforcement service. Councillors had often been concerned at the length of time it took to take enforcement action against planning breaches. Councillors considered that the scrutiny committee should be asked to investigate the process involved and make recommendations back to the executive.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the council's progress and the end of year predictions be noted; and*
- (b) *that the scrutiny committee be requested to consider the performance of the council's planning enforcement service and make recommendations back to the executive.*

Ex.27 Tender evaluation policy

(Time: 3.48pm to 3.50pm)

The executive received and considered report 52/09 of the Head of HR, IT, and Customer Services. The report proposed a new tender evaluation policy which had been jointly prepared with South Oxfordshire District Council to harmonise tendering processes with the Vale. Officers had drafted the policy, incorporating best practice from both councils. The draft policy:

- ensured that the council bought supplies, services and works that best met the needs identified;
- enabled the council to select the quote or tender which offered best value for money;
- required that price formed at least 60 per cent of the evaluation criteria and award decision; and
- made the tendering process open, transparent, fair and objective.

The executive welcomed the policy, believing it would provide a more robust approach to evaluate tenders in the current financial climate.

RESOLVED

that the tender evaluation policy be approved.

Ex.28 Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy

(Time: 3.50pm to 3.53pm)

The executive received and considered report 53/09 of the Head of Corporate Strategy. The report proposed a new policy to support children and vulnerable adults. This had been jointly prepared with South Oxfordshire District Council.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2007 widened the council's responsibilities in relation to children. As well as protecting children from harm, the council had a responsibility to promote their welfare. The Act applied to a range of public bodies, including district councils, whose housing, environmental health, leisure and licensing teams all had a role to play. The Act required the council to:

- produce a clear statement or policy on the council's responsibilities and communicate these to staff;
- allocate clear lines of responsibility on safeguarding issues and identify a designated officer to ensure the duties were carried out and to be the first point of contact for staff;
- provide training for all staff and councillors appropriate to their roles and the level of contact with children; and
- ensure it had safe recruitment practices, including Criminal Record Bureau checks appropriate to the level of contact staff and councillors had with children.

Proposals to achieve these were set out in the draft policy, including guidelines on Criminal Records Bureau checks. The executive supported the policy. Councillors noted that councils across the county would be working towards a joint training programme for councillors and officers.

RESOLVED

that the safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy be approved.

Ex.29 Exclusion of the Public, including the Press

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(1) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following item is considered:

Restructuring the Council's Direct Services Organisation

(Category 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of any individual.)

(Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

Summary of the items considered in the exempt part of the meeting

Ex.30 Restructuring the Council's Direct Services Organisation

The executive considered a report on the possible restructuring of the council's direct services organisation. Councillors agreed to investigate restructuring the service.