

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Executive



held at 2.30pm on Friday 7 January 2011
at the Guildhall, Abingdon

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillor Tony de Vere (Chair), Richard Webber (Vice-Chair), Mary de Vere, Richard Gibson, Jenny Hannaby, Angela Lawrence and Jerry Patterson

Officers: John Backley, Steve Bishop, Jayne Bolton, Nick Burroughs, Steve Culliford, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed, Anna Robinson, Miles Thompson, Sally Truman and Toby Warren

Number of members of the public: Nil

Ex.54 Apologies for absence

None

Ex.55 Minutes

RESOLVED

To adopt the public minutes of the Executive meetings of 5 and 26 November 2010 and agree that the chair signs them.

Ex.56 Declarations of interest

Councillor Angela Lawrence declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9 'Community Grants' and item 13 'Guildhall, Abingdon' as she was a member of Abingdon Town Council.

Ex.57 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ex.58 Statements, petitions and questions relating to matters affecting the Executive

None

Ex.59 Budget virement requests

The Executive considered an agenda report setting out ten requests for virements. Councillors approved the requests and noted details of six virements approved by the chief finance officer under delegated authority.

RESOLVED

To approve the virement requests set out in table 1 of the agenda report.

Ex.60 Young people's plan

The Executive considered report 83/10 of the head of corporate strategy. This sought the Executive's approval of the young people's plan to 2013. The plan, developed jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council, showed how the council would support the younger residents of its district, aiming primarily at the 13 to 19 age group. The plan, which had achieved the Scrutiny Committee's support, proposed that the council would concentrate on:

- ensuring that young people could represent their views at a local and national level by making them aware of opportunities to do so
- providing them with knowledge to become active citizens and make a contribution, now and in later life, including opportunities for them to engage with their local councillors
- ensuring that they were aware of, and could participate in positive activities in their area
- helping them into work by providing information about council and other local jobs, and appropriate work experience placements, including for disadvantaged young people
- working with young people on projects which bring together different groups in the community and helping them promote a positive image of themselves

The Executive supported the plan but emphasised the need for additional effort to engage all young people.

In answer to a question from a member, the officer agreed to clarify outside of the meeting what the percentage referred to on page 13 of the agenda.

RESOLVED

To approve the young people's framework, including the young people's plan to 2013.

Ex.61 Car parking fees and charges

The Executive considered report 84/10 of the head of commercial services. This reviewed the council's fees and charges for its car parks for 2011/12. The Executive portfolio holder asked the Executive to ignore paragraph 23 of the report, as it did not relate to this council.

The portfolio holder highlighted the options set out in the report:

- To make no changes to the daily fees or excess charge levels
- To increase the cost of residents' annual and monthly permits in line with VAT at 1 April 2011
- To increase the cost of business permits from £12 to £25 plus VAT per space per day and increase the cost of locating wheeled bins in the car park from £200 to £204 per bin per year plus VAT
- To increase the cost of permits allowing vehicles associated with Abingdon Fair to park for the duration
- To provide special permits for school pick-up and drop-off in all car parks

The Executive noted that it was not necessary to increase the daily fees or excess charge levels as there had been reductions in the service costs from sharing the service with South Oxfordshire. Presently, the service was breaking even. The portfolio holder did not recommend offering free parking or the first hour free as this would significantly reduced income. She believed the car park users should pay for the service, not the Council Tax payers. The council's fees were favourable in comparison to many local authorities in Oxfordshire. The officers would review car park charges in December 2011 when a more accurate long-term picture of income and expenditure would be available.

The report had showed the costs of running the service, and included an amount for depreciating the car parks as an asset. This was not a statutory requirement but was the council's choice to show a fair representation of the costs. It was good accounting practice to write off depreciation costs over time.

The Executive supported the recommendations in the report, including the options listed above.

RESOLVED

To agree the options set out in paragraphs 10 to 17 of report 84/10 to form the basis of the car parking fees and charges recommendations to the Council as part of the 2011/12 budget proposals.

Ex.62 Community grants

Councillor Angela Lawrence declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and in accordance with Standing Order 34, she left the room during the debate on support for town and parish councils' twinning activities.

The Executive considered report 85/10 of the head of corporate strategy regarding a review of the council's community grants scheme.

The Scrutiny Committee had appointed a task group to review the scheme. The task group had recommended that the grants criteria should remain unchanged but recommended improvements to the process for awarding grants. There should be an online application form and the officers should check the application against the criteria before categorising applications into those projects that should be funding priorities, those that should receive some support, and those that should not. The task group had also recommended that the Executive continued to delegate authority to determine the majority of community grant applications to the area committees with 80 per cent of the budget apportioned between the committees on an electorate basis. The remaining 20 per cent of the budget should be reserved for the Executive to determine. To save costs, all area committees should determine the applications twice a year, meeting on the same day in Abingdon. Applicants should be able to make a presentation to the committee before their application was determined. Officers should have delegated authority to determine applications for grants under £1,000. The area committees should determine urgent applications by email between meetings every six months. The Scrutiny Committee had supported the task group and recommended these changes to the Executive. The Executive supported the task group's recommended changes.

The council would need to purchase software to manage the application process. The Scrutiny Committee recommended funding this from the Executive's proportion of the community grants budget. The Executive agreed with this.

The Scrutiny Committee had additionally recommended that town and parish councils should be able to apply for both capital and revenue grants. The Executive disagreed, believing that town and parish councils should fund revenue services, such as street cleaning and twinning activities, through their parish precepts. Grants would not be available to these councils for revenue services. However, the community grants scheme would allow these councils to apply for capital grants.

Finally, the Executive agreed to invite the area committees to meet in early April and early October to determine the community grant applications delegated to them, subject to the Council agreeing a community grants budget in February. The monitoring officer advised that candidates for election at the district council elections

in May 2011 must not make any media or public statements about forthcoming or determined grant applications.

RESOLVED

- (a) To agree the scrutiny task group's recommendations for managing and determining the community grants budget in the future, and to thank the task group for its work;
- (b) To amend the community grants criteria so that town and parish councils can apply for grants towards capital projects but not revenue grants;
- (c) To invite the area committees to meet no more than twice each year, in early April and early October, to determine community grants applications delegated to them, and request that to save costs, these six-monthly area committee meetings are all held on one day in Abingdon; and
- (d) To agree to fund the grants management software from the proportion of the community grants budget allocated to the Executive.

Ex.63 Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 3

The Executive considered report 86/10 of the head of planning. This summarised Oxfordshire County Council's proposals in its Local Transport Plan 3, and suggested a consultation response from the Executive. The county council required consultation responses by 9 January 2011.

The plan covered the period to 2030 and set out priorities for transport schemes. The Executive noted the county council's proposals for the Vale and commented that the recommendations set out in the report fairly reflected the Executive's views, subject to clarifying the descriptions of the roads around Wantage and Grove. The Executive also considered that an additional recommendation to the County Council should be included to require the Local Transport Plan to include the western extension of Mably Way as a long-term aspiration.

The Executive asked that for clarification, the response to the County Council should include or refer to a map to show the roads referenced in the council's consultation response, and that a copy of the map should be circulated to Executive members.

RESOLVED

To inform Oxfordshire County Council that this council:

- (a) welcomes publication of Local Transport Plan 3;
- (b) notes the general objectives and policies;
- (c) requires that the Abingdon Area strategy includes under 'Highway and Traffic Management' a strategy sub-section committing the county council to work

with the district and town councils to investigate how the case for the completion of the A34 Lodge Hill junction can be advanced;

- (d) requires the following bullet point to be added to paragraph 14.34 of the Abingdon Area strategy: “Investigate Marcham Road/Colwell Drive/Drayton Road/Ock Street junction improvements”;
- (e) supports the Science Vale UK strategy of establishing a transport network that supports economic development and growth and requires that the strategy confirms that the necessary transport infrastructure will be implemented as the county council’s top priority;
- (f) requires that the Science Vale UK strategy includes under ‘Area Wide Strategy’ additional strategy sub-sections:
 - commits the county council to channel, as a top priority, available funding to the provision of the Harwell Strategic and Field Link Roads and the Wantage Eastern Link Road (Mably Way extension), which will directly benefit the immediate Science Vale UK area and Oxfordshire economies, so that while support for improved rail links can be maintained this support will not result in the diversion of funds away from the implementation of these strategic highway schemes,
 - commits the county council to complement the provision of these strategic highway schemes with the highway improvements to the A338 north of Wantage and the A417 east of Wantage;
- (g) requires the Local Transport Strategy for Wantage and Grove to include under the ‘Highway Infrastructure and Traffic Management’ strategy an additional strategy sub-section that the Wantage Western Link Road (west of Mably Way) should be included in the transport plan as a long term aspiration;
- (h) recognises the potential long-term benefits from investment in strategic rail links but wishes the county council to ensure the top priorities are given to investment in Oxfordshire strategic highways schemes that will bring direct and more immediate benefits to the Oxfordshire economy, much of which is through the growth of Science Vale UK;
- (i) is disappointed that in the Rural Areas strategy, protection of the line of the Marcham bypass is only on the basis that it may be necessary to allow development in adjacent areas and the bypass would be expected to be funded by this development and that the county council gives no commitment to working with other bodies to prioritise the delivery of this scheme;
- (j) supports the inclusion in the Corridor Strategies of management systems to improve the operation of the network, proposals for new rail stations, and to work to improve the containment of settlements; and
- (k) notes that the paragraph numbering in chapter 27 is in places incorrect and missing.

Ex.64 Conservation Area appraisals for Bourton and Cumnor

The Executive considered report 87/10 of the head of planning. The report reviewed the conservation area boundaries for Bourton and Cumnor. The Executive reviewed the proposals against the responses to the public consultation on the draft conservation area appraisals.

The Executive supported the proposals, believing that the revised conservation area appraisals would safeguard the special character and historic interest in the two areas. They would help householders and developers draw up proposals before submitting planning applications, and would become material consideration for planning decisions.

RESOLVED

- (a) To adopt the Bourton conservation area appraisal and the new conservation area boundary for Bourton, as shown on map five of the appraisal document; and
- (b) To adopt the Cumnor conservation area appraisal and the new conservation area boundary for Cumnor, as shown on map four of the appraisal document.

Ex.65 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(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

Minutes

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

Guildhall, Abingdon

(Category 3)

SUMMARY OF EXEMPT MINUTES

Ex.66 Minutes

The exempt minutes of the Executive meetings held on 5 and 26 November 2010 were adopted and signed as correct records.

Ex.67 Guildhall, Abingdon

The Executive deferred consideration of a report on the future of the Guildhall in Abingdon and agreed to consider its next meeting.