

Ex.46

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE

HELD AT THE CIVIC HALL,
WANTAGE ON FRIDAY, 2ND
SEPTEMBER, 2005

SECTION I (Open to the Public, including the Press)

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillor Jerry Patterson (Chair), Tony de-Vere (Vice-Chair), Mary de-Vere, Joyce Hutchinson, Roz Smith and Tessa Ward

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE Steve Bishop, Terry Stock, Andrew Morgan, Helen Bishop, Mary Lambe, Jason Lindsey and Chris Webb

NON-PARTICIPATING MEMBERS: Councillors (none)

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Ex.68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jim Moley.

Ex.69 MINUTES

The Public Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 August 2005 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Helen Bishop declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 22 – Honorarium insofar as she was related to one of the named officers. Jason Lindsey declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 18 – Development of Open Space, Mably Way, Grove, insofar as he was associated with Grove Challengers Football Club.

Ex.71 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Urgent Business

The Chair advised that in accordance with Section 100B(4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Order 21(4) he had agreed to accept one item of urgent business relating to a recommendation from the Council's Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group relating to further joint work with South Oxfordshire District Council on Didcot in the context of the South East Plan to 2026. The Chair reported that he had agreed to accept this as an item of urgent business as a response to South Oxfordshire District Council was required before the next scheduled meeting of the Executive (see Minute Ex.83 below).

(b) Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that Agenda Item 20 – Comprehensive Performance Assessment Use of Resources Self Assessment would be considered prior to Agenda Item 19 –

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Exclusion of the Public, including the Press, insofar as the item could be considered in public session. The Chair also announced that a location and site plan in respect of the development of the open space at Mably Way, Grove had been circulated around the table and would be considered at Agenda Item 18.

Ex.72 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

The Executive received a statement from Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer, on behalf of Abingdon Town Council, concerning the future of the Old Gaol, Abingdon. She referred to a letter dated 25 August 2005 from the Town Clerk addressed to the District Council's Chief Executive setting out the resolution of the Town Council, following its special meeting to consider the Old Gaol Feasibility Study. She reiterated the views of the Town Council that recognised the Old Gaol as an important historic building and that it was highly desirable that any future development of the site enhanced the economic and social vitality of the town centre by including some public access and use. Furthermore, she urged the District and County Councils to continue to work together to ensure that the needs of the arts and the library, clearly identified in the report, were addressed by any development of the site. To this end, she requested that the two authorities discuss with the Town Council other options for the museum in the Old Gaol. Finally, she advised that the County Council's Cabinet would be discussing the Feasibility Study at its meeting on Tuesday 6 September 2005 and she would be making a statement at that meeting.

The Chair of the Executive thanked Councillor Mayhew-Archer for her statement, the contents of which will be considered in conjunction with the report on the future of the Old Gaol later in the meeting (Ex.75 refers).

Ex.73 FINANCIAL MONITORING

(Time: 2.33pm to 2.35pm)

The Executive received and considered requests for virements and permanent budget adjustments received for the period up to 23 August 2005. The Executive also received a summary of budget adjustments for cost centre A00 – Economic Development.

The Chair of the Executive noted that the virement request related to the Council's new responsibilities in respect of the Licensing Act 2003, responsibility which had been placed on the District Council without adequate funding from Central Government.

The Strategic Director advised that any budget variations could be raised by portfolio holders during their regular discussions with cost centre managers.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

Ex.74 FORWARD PLAN

(Time: 2.35pm to 2.36pm)

The Executive received the Forward Plan containing Executive decisions to be taken from September to December 2005. Updating the Plan, it was noted that responsibility for the Abbey Meadows Pool and Parish Cleansing Grants Review rested with Councillor Joyce Hutchinson. Furthermore, it was noted that Comments and Complaints Review was the responsibility of Councillor Roz Smith.

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RESOLVED

that the Forward Plan for September to December 2005 be received and updates be made to the next Forward Plan.

Ex.75 FUTURE OF THE OLD GAOL

(Time: 2.36pm to 3.03pm)

The Executive received and considered report 74/05 of the Strategic Director which appraised Members of the findings of the Feasibility Study commissioned into the redevelopment of the Old Gaol as a combined Arts and Cultural Centre. A copy of the Feasibility Study prepared by ABL Cultural Consulting Limited had been circulated to all Members of the Executive.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director (Estates Management) updated Members in respect of the table set out in paragraph 5.1 to the report – Vale Revenue Position. He advised that under Option 3B the estimated net revenue cost per annum should be -£53,016 and that the estimated total revenue cost per annum was £501,000. The Assistant Director placed on record his thanks to the Consultants and the partners involved in the consideration of this matter for their hard work in producing the Feasibility Study report.

Councillor Tony de Vere also acknowledged the work undertaken by the consultants, the Council's partners and officers into the study and expressed his disappointment that the cost of the scheme to redevelop the Old Gaol had doubled since the initial study, undertaken in November 2002. He expressed disappointment at the lack of external funding opportunities for the redevelopment of the site and accepted with reluctance that no financially viable scheme to develop the Old Gaol as a cultural centre had been identified. He referred to Oxfordshire County Council's consideration of the consultant's report at its Cabinet meeting on 6 September 2005 and advised that the officer recommendation was that the creation of a cultural centre at the Old Gaol was not viable on the grounds that the capital costs could not be afforded by either the County Council or the Vale of White Horse District Council. In speaking to the Consultant's report, Councillor de Vere recognised and accepted that there was an identified need for a cultural facility in Abingdon and referred to a letter from the Abingdon Performing Arts Group Enterprise (APAGE) confirming this view. Finally, Councillor de Vere requested the Officers to report back to the Executive as soon as possible on options for the future use of the Old Gaol site retaining some public use of the building. Furthermore, he referred to a report on the Civic Halls' Procurement of Trust Management, which would be considered later in the meeting, in which it was recommended that the Guildhall, Abingdon be redeveloped to better meet the cultural needs of the District.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the County Council's Cabinet would be meeting on 6 September 2005 to consider the Consultant's report on the future of the Old Gaol and that the County Officers had recommended that the creation of a cultural centre was not financially viable. He explained that the County Council had advised that its capital programme was committed up until 2008/09 and that in terms of library improvements, there were higher priorities than Abingdon across the County.

Other Members of the Executive expressed their disappointment at the outcome of the Feasibility Study and the recommendation to the County Council's Cabinet that the redevelopment of the Old Gaol as a cultural centre was not financially viable. The Executive Members stressed the need that this Council undertook further work to meet the cultural needs of the District, which had been clearly identified in the Consultant's report and to retain some public use of the Old Gaol building.

RESOLVED

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- (a) *that the Council accepts the report's content and findings on the feasibility of developing the Old Gaol site as a mixed cultural/heritage/social centre;*
- (b) *that the Council does not proceed to commission the redevelopment of the Old Gaol as a cultural heritage social centre;*
- (c) *that the Executive receives a further report at its November 2005 meeting on the future use of the Old Gaol site in order to consider the possible options;*
- (d) *that, subject to the agreement of Oxfordshire County Council, the Feasibility Study commissioned into the redevelopment of the Old Gaol as a combined Arts and Cultural Centre prepared by ABL Cultural Consulting Limited be released into the public domain.*

Ex.76 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE - FIRST QUARTER (APRIL, MAY, JUNE) 2005/06

(Time: 3.03pm to 3.17pm)

The Executive received and considered report 74/05 of the Strategic Director which detailed those issues referred by the Strategic Management Group following its detailed consideration of the Directors' Corporate Governance Report. The report for the first quarter looked at the following key areas:-

- Key Issues
- CPA Improvement Action Plan Monitoring
 - Corporate
 - Housing
 - Open Spaces
 - Implementing Electronic Government (IEG)
- Best Value Performance Indicators
- Local Performance Indicators linked to priorities for improvement
- Financial Information
- Key Staffing Data

In considering the report, the following points/amendments were made:-

- In respect of partnership grants, a report would be made to the October 2005 meeting of the Executive.
- In respect of a Strategy for Youth Provision, it was reported that a draft Vale Strategy had been received by the Portfolio Holder which would eventually dovetail with the developing County Strategy.
- In respect of the Summary of Sickness 2005/06 table, it was agreed that officer names should be omitted from the table in future reports.
- In respect of the programme "Create a Cleaner, Safer and Healthier Environment", it was reported that this should be amended to read "Create a Cleaner, Safer and Healthier Community and Environment".
- In respect of the implementation of the Communication Strategy, it was noted that the responsible officer should be amended to read "Councillor Tessa Ward and the Chief Executive".

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- In respect of the Implementing E-Government (IEG) Action Plan, it was noted that the next meeting of the IEG Project Steering Group would be held on 13 September 2005 and that it would need to report on the Council's progress in this area prior to the publication of the next Corporate Governance Report.
- In respect of Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 109a - % of Major Planning Applications in 13 weeks – the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council be asked to raise with Oxfordshire County Council the need for improved performance from the County in preparing Section 106 Agreements relating to highway contributions to assist the Vale in improving its performance in this area.

In response to the above comments, the Chief Executive reported as follows:

- In respect of the County Youth Provision Policy, a first working draft had been received which would be considered by the Oxfordshire Public Service Board on 12 September 2005. A further draft would then be submitted to the Government Office for the South East by the end of September 2005 with final agreement expected in March 2006.
- Referring to the removal of officer names from the Summary of Sickness 2005/06 table, the Chief Executive advised that the names related to Steve Bishop and Tim Sadler's offices and in future these would be grouped under a common heading "Strategic Management".
- Referring to the implementation of the Communications Strategy, the Chief Executive advised that an offer of appointment had been made to the post of Communications Officer, subject to the successful candidate receiving satisfactory medical clearance.
- In respect of Best Value Performance Indicator 109a, the Chief Executive confirmed that the performance of the County Council in dealing with Section 106 Agreements relating to highway contributions had been raised at Officer level and that the County Council was sympathetic to the views of the Vale. Furthermore, he advised that the matter would be raised at the forthcoming Oxfordshire Leaders Group meeting on 7 September 2005 and the bilateral meeting between the County Council and the Vale on 14 September 2005.

RESOLVED

that the Directors Group Corporate Governance Report 75/05 be noted.

Ex.77 ABBHEY MEADOWS POOL

(Time: 3.17pm to 3.30pm)

The Executive received and considered report 76/05 of the Strategic Director which set out the latest position in respect of the Abbey Meadow Open Air Swimming Pool. The report detailed the position of Abingdon Town Council and how an indicative management fee might impact on the decision to consider the re-opening of the pool in 2006.

The Executive welcomed the offer by Abingdon Town Council to increase its contribution towards the operation of the open air pool and requested the Vale officers to conduct a tendering exercise, obtain a more detailed assessment of commissioning costs, undertake a condition survey of the pool and agree satisfactory heads of terms with the Town Council as a

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matter of urgency. In response, the Leisure Facilities Manager advised that the Officers should be in a position to report back to the November 2005 meeting of the Executive.

In respect of the Business Plan submitted by the Save the Open Air Pool (STOP) campaign group, the Chair of the Executive confirmed that a plan had been received within the deadline set of 31 July 2005 but it contained a number of weaknesses which rendered it incapable of implementation.

In response to a question, the Leisure Facilities Manager explained the difference between a condition and a structural survey and confirmed that the survey undertaken would include an assessment of the plant and machinery at the pool.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that any decision to re-open the Abbey Meadow Open Air Pool in 2006 would need to be a decision of the Council and that any agreement entered into with Abingdon Town Council concerning its financial contribution towards the running of the facility would need to be a five year agreement which clearly stated each Council's responsibilities in this matter.

RESOLVED

to accept, in principle, the Abingdon Town Council offer of an increased contribution towards the operation of the Abbey Meadow Pool, as detailed in report 76/05, subject to conducting a tendering exercise, obtaining a more detailed assessment of commissioning costs, carrying out a condition survey of the pool and agreeing satisfactory heads of terms with Abingdon Town Council before committing to re-opening Abbey Meadow Pool.

Ex.78 TILSLEY PARK – HEALTH AND FITNESS PHASE 2

(Time: 3.30pm to 3.43pm)

The Executive received and considered report 77/05 of the Assistant Director (Leisure) which provided information on the design of the proposed development at Tilsley Park and sought agreement to the design and the progression of the project. Additional drawings and layouts of the Phase 2 development was circulated at the meeting.

The Leisure Facilities Manager reported that a planning meeting had been held with the scheme Architect and amendments had been made to the original plans which were currently being considered by the Vale's Planning Officers.

The Chair of the Executive welcomed the appointment of Roger Lyons, the original Architect for the development of the Tilsley Park facility, as the Architect for the Phase 2 development.

In respect of the marketing of the new facility, it was noted that South Oxfordshire Leisure Limited (SOLL) was currently preparing a marketing plan and in the first instance were aiming to attract clients in the 25-60 years age bracket. However, some of the developments proposed would be attractive to disabled users. It was noted that the developments proposed at Tilsley Park would complement existing health and fitness provision locally.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the design of the proposed health and fitness development at Tilsley Park be agreed;*

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- (b) *that officers finalise the project details with South Oxfordshire Leisure Limited and implement the development scheme with a view to possibly opening the facility in the summer of 2006.*

Ex.79 CIVIC HALLS PROCUREMENT OF TRUST MANAGEMENT

(Time: 3.43pm to 3.48pm)

The Executive received and considered report 78/05 of the Strategic Director which covered the objectives and contract term for Trust Management of Wantage Civic Hall and Abingdon Guildhall, the democratic function's use of the halls, the Guildhall's potential contribution as a wider cultural venue and the way forward.

The Leisure Facilities Manager confirmed that expressions of interest had been received and that a process of selecting contractors was being undertaken prior to the formal tendering stage.

Members of the Executive recognised that the consideration of cultural need would be crucial in the tendering exercise and the assessment of the successful contractor. To this end, it was important that Members had an input in the contract specification.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the objectives of the Trust Management Project as identified in paragraph 4.1.3 to report 78/05, be agreed;*
- (b) *that the contract term for management of Wantage Civic Hall and Abingdon Guildhall be 8½ years;*
- (c) *that it be agreed to proceed with the Trust Management Project with the service specified as it is currently provided, including the democratic function with a view to seeking tenderers proposals on the potential impact of a relocation of this function and the redevelopment of the Guildhall, Abingdon to better meet the cultural needs of the District;*
- (d) *that the Chief Executive be delegated authority, in consultation with the Executive Member with responsibility for the Leisure and Community Portfolio, to deliver the project, including the shortlistings for the procurement .*

Ex.80 COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REVIEW

(Time: 3.48pm to 3.40pm)

The Executive received and considered report 79/05 which set out the annual review on the Comments, Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions received during 2004/05. The review showed that the Council monitored 247 comments and complaints and 299 compliments. The analysis showed that in most cases an explanation or apology was sufficient to satisfy the complainant and the Chief Executive dealt with only eight complaints at stage two of the Procedure. The Local Government Ombudsman determined ten complaints made against the Council (one of which was subsequently determined to be the responsibility of a partner organisation), resulting in no findings of maladministration.

Members of the Executive welcomed the Annual Review and asked that all staff to be thanked via the staff newsletter.

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RESOLVED

- (a) *that report 79/05 on the 2004/05 Comments and Complaints be noted;*
- (b) *that the report be published.*

Ex.81 DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN SPACE, MABLY WAY, GROVE

(Time: 3.50pm to 3.54pm)

(Jason Lindsey, the Democratic Services Officer, declared a personal interest in this item and remained in the meeting during its consideration).

The Executive received and considered report 80/05 of the Assistant Director (Leisure) which detailed progress made in order to develop the Mably Way Open Space, Grove for leisure use. The report recommended the development of the site for two football pitches and associated landscaping/tree planting and the transfer of the land to Grove Parish Council with it taking on the full maintenance responsibility for the site. A location plan showing the layout of the pitches was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the development of the Mably Way Open Space and the release of the capital sum identified in the 2005/06 budget be approved;*
- (b) *that the land be transferred to Grove Parish Council via a 25 year lease at a peppercorn rent where the Parish Council take on the full responsibility for the maintenance of the site.*

Ex.82 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT USE OF RESOURCES SELF ASSESSMENT

(Time: 3.54pm to 3.57pm)

The Executive received and considered an agenda report which advised that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime which was used to rate the performance of every Council, had changed. One of the new requirements was for District Councils to complete an annual "Use of Resources Self-Assessment". This scored the Council on its overall value for money and financial management arrangements from a score of 1 (inadequate performance) to 4 (performing strongly). The first self-assessment was due to be returned to the Audit Commission by the end of September 2005.

RESOLVED

that it be noted that the Leader will exercise his delegated authority to approve the Use of Resources Self-Assessment on behalf of the Council.

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Ex.83 URGENT ITEM - FURTHER JOINT WORK WITH SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL ON DIDCOT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SOUTH EAST PLAN TO 2026

(Time: 3.57pm to 4.04pm)

Further to Minute Ex.71(a) above, the Chair had agreed to accept this as an item of urgent business. The Executive received and considered a briefing note from the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group which had met on 31 August 2005. The Advisory Group had considered a request from South Oxfordshire District Council Officers for joint working with the Vale to assess the future of Didcot as part of the South East Plan to 2026. South Oxfordshire District Council intended to commission consultants to prepare a vision and strategic master plan for the development at Didcot to cover the next 20 – 25 years. This would indicate areas for the potential sustainable growth for housing, employment, retail, leisure and community facilities, outline the necessary infrastructure requirements to support it, and ensure integration into the existing urban and rural environment. South Oxfordshire District Council had advised that it would like to commission this work jointly with the Vale District Council.

Councillor Tony de Vere, the Chair of the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group, stressed the importance of this Council being involved in any joint work on the future growth of Didcot and being able to exercise a degree of influence from the start of the process. The Chair of the Executive confirmed that this work would have no direct link to the Didcot Integrated Transport Study, although it may identify options for funding.

The Strategic Director confirmed that funding for any contribution by the Vale would be by way of a one-off supplementary estimate and funded from contingency.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that South Oxfordshire District Council be advised that this Council agrees in principle to participate in the joint commission of consultants to prepare a vision and strategic master plan for Didcot to influence the preparation of the South East Plan and the local development framework to be prepared by the District Council, but reserves its final decision pending further discussion with South Oxfordshire on the Vale Council's ability to contribute to and influence the focus of the master planning in exercise;*
- (b) *that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Executive be delegated authority to identify the source of funding for the Vale's contribution to the exercise in the event that the decision is taken to proceed.*

Ex.84 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE PRESS

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A(4) 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 to the Act when the following items are considered:-

Minutes

(Category 7. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority).

(Category 9. Any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services).

Ex.55

Requests for Honoraria Payments

(Category 1. Information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee of, or a particular office-holder, former office-holder or applicant to become an office-holder under, the authority).

Haines Court, Marcham

(Category 9)

SUMMARY OF EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON FRIDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2005 AT 2.30PM.

Ex.85 MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 August 2005 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.86 HONORARIUM

The Executive received and considered report 81/05 of the Strategic Director concerning requests for Honoraria payments.

Ex.87 HAINES COURT, MARCHAM

The Executive received and considered report 82/05 of the Strategic Director regarding a property matter.