

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held at 2pm on Friday 9 September 2011
at The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the Public, including the Press

Present:

Members: Councillor Matthew Barber (Chairman), Roger Cox (Vice-Chair), Yvonne Constance and Reg Waite

Non-participating members: Councillors Dudley Hoddinott, Jerry Patterson, and Richard Webber

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed, Miles Thompson and Bob Watson

Number of members of the public: None

Ca.8 Apologies for absence

Councillor Elaine Ware had sent her apologies for absence.

Ca.9 Minutes

RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 July 2011 and agree that the chairman signs them.

Ca.10 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.11 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The chairman accepted one item as a matter of urgent business relating to conferring the title of honorary alderman on two former councillors. The Cabinet was asked to consider this matter at this meeting as this was the last ordinary scheduled Cabinet meeting before the next Council meeting in October.

Ca.12 Honorary Aldermen

There had been a suggestion that the council should confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former councillors Terry Cox and Joyce Hutchinson. This would need a resolution at an extraordinary Council meeting. Cabinet was asked to give its support to the suggestion.

RECOMMENDED: To recommend Council, in accordance with section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, to admit Terry Cox and Joyce Hutchinson as Honorary Aldermen of the Vale of White Horse District Council in recognition of the eminent services which they have rendered to the council and the local community for many years.

Ca.13 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

None

Ca.14 Financial outturn 2010/11

Cabinet considered report 20/11 of the head of finance, which detailed the council's revenue and capital expenditure position for 2010/11. At the year-end there was a £1.654 million revenue underspend. This returned £1.163 million to general fund balances, improving the council's financial position. Cabinet noted the variances for each service area.

Despite the economic downturn and a significant drop in income, Cabinet was pleased to see the contribution to reserves and thanked officers and the management team on the revenue outturn results for 2010/11. This was significantly better than predicted for the year. However, Cabinet noted that there was still a pressure on reserves during the five-year medium term financial plan period.

Cabinet noted that there had been some slippage in the capital programme.

Cabinet noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had asked to see this report as part of its work on approving the statement of accounts for 2010/11. Cabinet considered that the committee should also see this report in future and asked the officers to update the committee's terms of reference during the next constitution review.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) note the overall 2010/11 outturn position of the council as well as the individual service areas and cost centres;
- (b) take into account the impact of the outturn position in the integrated service and financial planning process when setting the 2012/13 original budget;
- (c) note the slippage in the capital programme to 2011/12; and
- (d) ask the officers to consider changing the Audit and Governance Committee's terms of reference during the next constitution review to include consideration of the financial outturn report each year as part of understanding and approving the statement of accounts.

Ca.15 Budget monitoring - first quarter 2011/12

Cabinet considered report 21/11 of the head of finance on the revenue and capital expenditure position for the first quarter of 2011/12. Cabinet noted that, at the end of the first quarter, services were predicting a year-end revenue overspend of £352,119. The forecasted capital outturn was as per the budget.

Councillor Dudley Hoddinott, a non-Cabinet member, addressed the meeting. He thanked officers for achieving a significant level of savings in 2010/11 but questioned what steps the Cabinet would take to correct the year-end overspend as projected at the end of the first quarter overspend of 2011/12.

Cabinet noted that it was common for the actual spend at the end of the first quarter to differ from the budget. The main reasons for this were accounting for accruals (expenditure incurred in the previous but not charged until this year), and budget profiling (more expenditure at the beginning of the year rather than spread evenly throughout the year). The projected year-end overspend was a result of a loss of income from the government's delay in introducing legislation to allow councils to charge planning applicants for the full cost of the planning service. Councils were putting pressure on the government to introduce this legislation quickly. This council had budgeted to cover the cost of the service for the current year, as the government's original timetable to introduce the legislation was October. If the government did not introduce the legislation in this financial year, the council could lose £165K projected income. Councillors also noted the reduced investment property income due to the loss of a tenant. Although the property had since been re-let, this left a £39,000 loss of income for the year.

The accuracy in administering housing benefit claims had improved. Cabinet welcomed this.

Cabinet encouraged management team to continue to keep service area budgets under control in preparation for the 2012/13 budget.

RESOLVED: To note the current budget position and the services' forecasted outturn.

Ca.16 Budget virement requests

Cabinet considered nine budget virement requests. These totalled £209,060. The agenda report also set out details of five virements approved by the chief finance officer under delegated authority.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) approve the budget virement requests set out in table 1 of the agenda report; and
- (b) to note the virements approved by the chief finance officer under delegated authority.

Ca.17 Planning: Review of the South East Plan housing target and its relevance to the Vale Core Strategy

Cabinet considered report 22/11 of the head of planning that reviewed the South East Plan's housing target for the Vale and its relevance to the council's core strategy. This formed part of the process in determining the council's strategic direction of the core strategy, which

would shape and guide development across the Vale. The government wanted councils to take responsibility to identify the right level of housing for their area. The Localism Bill proposed to remove regional spatial planning strategies, including the South East Plan. Councils would then be free to determine their housing levels but these must be defensible.

The report looked at the foundation behind the South East Plan housing target. This showed that the assumptions behind the target were still relevant and provided the basis to continue with it. Cabinet agreed with these conclusions and agreed to monitor the situation and adjust the target if necessary. This approach would help correct the current backlog of house completions and allow flexibility.

RESOLVED:

- (a) to continue to rely on the South East Plan housing target beyond the plan's pending revocation, as a basis for progressing the emerging core strategy; and
- (b) to keep under review the evidence and planning guidance relevant to the appropriate level of housing provision, to refine the core strategy housing target if appropriate.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting rose at 2.25 pm