

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 6 December 2013 at 2.00pm

in the Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Matthew Barber (Chairman), Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman), Mike Murray, Reg Waite and Elaine Ware

Non-participating members: Councillors Yvonne Constance, Jenny Hannaby, Robert Sharp and Richard Webber

Officers: John Backley, Steve Bishop, Steve Culliford, Simon Hewings, Paul Howden, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed and Anna Robinson

Number of members of the public: 3

Ca.26 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.27 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4 October 2013 and agree that the chairman signs them.

Ca.28 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.29 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.30 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

Councillor Richard Webber had requested to address Cabinet on the council tax reduction scheme item. He queried the justification for the proposed scheme that it would encourage people back to work. He believed that the Vale residents that needed support were disadvantaged and needed the council's help. He urged Cabinet to reconsider as

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Ca.15

the scheme would remove money from the most vulnerable and only save the council less than £20,000.

Ca.31 References from Scrutiny Committee

(1) Two hours free parking

At its meeting on 19 September 2013, the Scrutiny Committee discussed a paper from the head of economy, leisure and property on the two hours free parking scheme. As a result, the Scrutiny Committee made the following points for Cabinet's consideration:

- to develop a strategy to translate increased use of car parks into economic vitality in market towns and the district;
- to review a range of fees between car parks and towns;
- to consider whether level of excess charge notices (fines) was appropriate;
- to consider extending length of free parking period.

Cabinet noted that these points would be considered later in the meeting under the car park fees and charges item. The first bullet point would be the subject of a report to Scrutiny Committee in February 2014.

(2) West Way, Botley

At its meeting on 21 November 2013, Scrutiny Committee considered the redevelopment of West Way, Botley and made the following comments. The committee:

- urged Cabinet to keep all councillors, but especially local members, informed of all relevant developments on West Way, Botley, and to take note of the obvious local concerns and feed these back to the developer, Doric
- suggested that Cabinet should update councillors and the public about its interactions with Doric on a regular basis
- urged Cabinet to hold confidential briefings for all local members at regular intervals to ensure they were kept fully updated on this complex matter

Cabinet agreed to Scrutiny Committee's requests.

The leader also reported that he had met with the West Way Concern group, and Cumnor and North Hinksey parish councils to discuss the proposed redevelopment. He had agreed for the council to hold regular meetings with these bodies to feed into the planning process. He also agreed to write to the developer, Doric, with his views on the proposed development and agreed to publicise this letter.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) keep all councillors, but especially local members, informed of all relevant developments on West Way, Botley, and to take note of the obvious local concerns and feed these back to the developer, Doric;
- (b) update councillors and the public about its interactions with Doric on a regular basis; and

- (c) hold confidential briefings for all local members at regular intervals to ensure they are kept fully updated on this complex matter.

(3) Community Safety Partnership

At its meeting on 21 November 2013, Scrutiny Committee considered the annual report of the Community Safety Partnership and made the following comments.

The committee:

- noted the positive work of the partnership, and urged that the annual report be more widely distributed, for example, as an attachment to the councillors' Vale Information Sheet, via the parish newsletter, and on the council's website
- recommended to the Cabinet Member for Finance that the growth bid being submitted into the council's 2014 budget round to make up part of the expected shortfall in partnership funding from 2014/15 onwards should be supported in full, i.e. £10,000 in 2014/15 and £34,266 in 2015/16 onwards
- asked Cabinet's representative on the partnership, Councillor Bill Jones, to express support to the partnership for the ongoing work on early intervention support and treatment services for people misusing drugs and alcohol

RESOLVED to:

- (a) distribute the annual report more widely, as an attachment to the councillors' Vale Information Sheet, via the parish newsletter, and on the council's website;
- (b) consider the growth bid to make up part of the expected shortfall in partnership funding, as part of the council's 2014/15 budget setting process; and
- (c) ask Cabinet's representative on the partnership, Councillor Bill Jones, to express support to the partnership for the ongoing work on early intervention support and treatment services for people misusing drugs and alcohol.

Ca.32 Delivering Accelerated Housing Growth in Science Vale, Southern Oxfordshire

Cabinet considered the strategic director's report that sought approval of a project to accelerate housing growth across the Science Vale area of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts and asked both councils to establish budgets to allow the project to proceed.

The councils had secured £2.06 million in grant funding from the Large Sites Programme Capacity Fund to help accelerate the delivery of strategic housing sites. The requirements of the project were that the councils would deliver a 30 per cent increase in the rate of housing delivery across the Science Vale area. To achieve this, a range of projects were planned to remove barriers to delivery and bring forward swift delivery actions. The programme agreed with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was flexible and included such activities as:

- appointing consultants to produce a delivery plan to tackle the causes of under-delivery and to undertake elements of the work that emerged from the plan;

- appointing a programme manager to drive delivery, plus three staff to bolster planning delivery;
- specialist advice on section 106 negotiations;
- specialist assistance to evaluate infrastructure and community needs across Science Vale to provide an evidence base to support negotiations on strategic and local infrastructure needs arising from housing development;
- consultancy support on land and property negotiations;
- modelling, design and technical appraisals on infrastructure projects;
- site and area master planning;
- marketing campaign for the Science Vale area;
- legal support to speed up section 106 agreements and to advise on the appropriate actions to bring forward difficult sites.

The grant of £1.025m for 2013/14 had been received, on the basis set out in the offer letter appended to the report. However, the council had to demonstrate sufficient progress in accelerating housing delivery to receive the second tranche of funding of £1.035m for 2014/15. The entire 2013/14 grant must be spent or committed to projects by 31 March 2014. The grant would be split between the two councils, with this council's allocation being £500,000 in 2013/14 and £535,000 in 2014/15.

Cabinet recognised the benefits of the project but accepted that accelerating delivery was a challenge at this time due to slow progress on large strategic sites. However, Cabinet believed that many of the actions outlined above would make a significant contribution to accelerated housing growth in 2014 and therefore supported the project.

RECOMMENDED: to Council to

- approve a revenue budget to accelerate housing growth in the Science Vale area, in 2013/14 of £500,000 funded from a £1.025 million capacity fund grant;
- approve a revenue budget, in 2014/15 of £535,000 funded from the second tranche of capacity fund grant;

RESOLVED: subject to Council approving recommendations (a) and (b) above, to:

- approve the project to accelerate housing growth in the Science Vale Growth Area, funded by the DCLG capacity fund:
- authorise the strategic director, in consultation with the head of legal and democratic services, if necessary as an exception to contracts procedure rules, to use the fund to commission and pay for works necessary to deliver the core objectives of the project as set out in the offer letter attached as an appendix to the report; and
- approve South Oxfordshire District Council as the accounting body for the administration of the capacity fund and as the accountable body to DCLG for appropriate use of the fund.

Ca.33 Science Vale Enterprise Zone accountable body

Cabinet considered the strategic director's report, which sought agreement to this council acting as the accountable body for the Science Vale Enterprise Zone. The report also asked Cabinet to agree that the Leader will make an individual decision to agree a memorandum of understanding with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council.

Cabinet noted that a local authority must be nominated as the accountable body for the retained business rates for audit and accounting purposes, and would be required to:

- prepare and revise estimates of additional business rates income generated in the enterprise zone for the local enterprise partnership;
- report actual additional business rates income to the local enterprise partnership;
- agree with the local enterprise partnership, and the county council as the local enterprise partnership's accountable body, mechanisms to disburse the retained business rates income, in accordance with the local enterprise partnership's priorities;
- perform, as required, due diligence on projects to be funded from retained business rates, and report progress on those projects to the local enterprise partnership.

Cabinet agreed to the council becoming the accountable body for the Science Vale Enterprise Zone and noted that there would be minimal risk to the council.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree that Vale of White Horse District Council acts as accountable body for the Science Vale Enterprise Zone; and
- (b) agree that the leader of the council, as cabinet member for finance, will make an individual cabinet member decision to agree a memorandum of understanding with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council, in consultation with the strategic director, head of legal and democratic services and the head of finance.

Ca.34 Council tax reduction scheme 2014/15

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report that sought adoption of a revised council tax reduction scheme for 2014/15. Following a suggestion from the leader and feedback from the Scrutiny Committee, the draft scheme had been amended to not proceed with the modifications in respect of reducing the upper capital limit and treating child maintenance as income. The outcome of the Scrutiny Committee debate on 28 November 2013 was tabled at the meeting.

1. Cabinet noted that the council must adopt a local council tax reduction scheme for 2014/15 by 31 January 2014. Cabinet believed that the revised scheme supported residents on low incomes with help towards paying their council tax. The rationale of the scheme was to be fair on all residents, protect the vulnerable, and encourage residents back to work by the inclusion of work incentives. Cabinet also noted that Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner would meet their share of the cost, there would be no cost to this council to establish the scheme. Cabinet welcomed Scrutiny Committee's plan to review the scheme after a year's operation.

RECOMMENDED: to Council to

- (a) adopt for 2014/15 onwards, the 2013/14 adopted council tax reduction scheme but with the following amendments:
- entitlement for working age claimants will be capped at 91.5 per cent of their council tax liability, except for these protected groups - people with disabilities, war widows and war disabled pension recipients;
 - removal of the second adult rebate scheme;
 - entitlement for properties in bands F, G and H will be capped to band E council tax levels;
 - the current four week “run on” entitlement will be extended for thirteen weeks when a claimant moves into work. Any rules concerning eligibility for the run on remain the same;
 - personal allowances and non-dependent deductions for working age claimants will be uprated by one per cent each financial year commencing 1 April 2014.
- (b) establish a hardship fund to assist claimants who may face difficulties meeting their council tax liability;

RESOLVED:

- (c) subject to Council agreeing (a) and (b) above, to authorise the head of finance to set the rules and eligibility criteria for the hardship fund in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance.

Ca.35 Council tax base 2014/15

Cabinet considered the head of finance’s report on the council tax base for 2014/15. The calculation of the tax base was a legal requirement and an essential part of the tax setting process.

Cabinet noted that before the council tax could be set by the council, it had to calculate its council tax base. This was an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area. The council tax base for the district had to be notified to Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner by 31 January 2014. Each parish and town council was also notified of the figure for its area. The legislation required that the council tax base was approved by full Council.

RECOMMENDED: to Council to agree:

- (a) that, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) and the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended)
- i. from 1 April 2014 the council tax discount to be applied on unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings (Class C in the Regulations) be 100 per cent for one calendar month and zero per cent thereafter. Where an unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling has already received the current 25 per cent discount for more than one calendar month on 1 April 2014, it shall receive zero discount. Where an unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling has

received a 25 per cent discount for less than one calendar month on 1 April 2014, it shall receive a 100 per cent discount for the number of days required to reach one calendar month and then zero per cent discount thereafter. In considering whether a dwelling has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for any period, any one period not exceeding six weeks, during which it was not unoccupied and substantially unfurnished shall be disregarded.

- (b) that the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2014/15 be approved;
- (c) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2014/15 be 46,640.5;
- (d) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2014/15 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2013.

Ca.36 Council tax reduction scheme grant for town and parish councils

2. Cabinet considered the head of finance's report regarding the amount of council tax reduction scheme grant that would be passed down to town and parish councils for 2014/15, how the grant amounts for individual town and parish councils would be calculated, and the actual amounts.

The council received funding during 2014/15 that would be attributable to town and parish councils to mitigate the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on their taxbases. There were two options to distribute the grant:

1. For 2014/15, the council could decide to distribute the pot of money by the same proportions as 2013/14. This would provide stability for some town and parish councils but if any had a significant increase in residents claiming under the council tax reduction scheme during 2013/14, this would not be taken into account in the 2014/15 grant. Also, some towns and parishes did not receive any grant at all during 2013/14 because they had not been impacted by the introduction of the scheme. If circumstances had changed in these particular towns and parishes, this would not be taken into account under this proposal.
2. Alternatively, the scheme's effect could be recalculated again for 2014/15 using up to date council tax reduction scheme figures. However, it would introduce an element of volatility for town and parish councils if circumstances in their area had changed significantly.

The officers had met with town and parish councils to explain the scheme and seek their views on the preferred option. The response was a preference for option 2. Scrutiny Committee had considered the scheme and also preferred option 2.

Cabinet preferred option 2, believing that recalculating the figures with the most up to date figures was fairer. Cabinet asked the leader to re-send his letter about the scheme to town and parish councils and asked the officers to inform each town and parish council of their share of the grant.

RECOMMENDED: to Council:

- (a) that the total council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed down to town and parish councils for 2014/15 be £160,593;
- (b) that the individual amounts for town and parish councils be calculated based on their relative need after considering the negative impact of the council tax reduction scheme on parish taxbases and the positive impact of additional charges for empty dwellings and second homes; and
- (c) that the individual grant amounts for towns and parishes are as set out in the appendix to these minutes.

Ca.37 Car parking fees and charges

Cabinet considered the report of the head of economy, leisure and property. This reviewed the council's car park fees and charges and set out options for 2014/15.

Cabinet considered:

- reducing the price of parking permits – Cabinet decided against this option at this time;
- extending the length of free parking to three hours – given the scale of the cost to the council, Cabinet rejected this option at this time;
- extending the differential pricing policy so that car park fees were varied depending on their location – Cabinet considered that the existing pricing schedule included differential pricing and was working effectively and therefore extending differential pricing further was unnecessary;
- reducing the cost of excess charges (parking fines) – Cabinet agreed to reduce the cost from £50 to £40 if the fine was paid within 10 working days. Although this would reduce income from excess charges, the council should not rely of this income;
- introducing a cashless payment system in car parks (pay by mobile phone) – Cabinet asked the officers to investigate this through a pilot scheme as soon as possible. If successful, this would be introduced in the council's car parks;
- introducing spaces to charge electric vehicles – Cabinet noted the provision for this in other car parks and agreed to not introduce spaces for electric vehicle charging at this time.

Cabinet approved the fees and charges for 2014/15 in line with its decisions above.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the car park fees and charges for 2014/15 as set out in appendix 1 to the report, subject to reducing the cost of excess charge notices (parking fines) to £40 if paid within 10 working days; and
- (b) carry out a pilot scheme of cashless payments for car parking.

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

None

The meeting closed at 2.20 pm

Proposed 2014/15 council tax reduction scheme grant allocations

Town/parish	A Unadjusted 2014/15 tax base	B Revised tax base after all changes	C Difference (A-B)	D 2012/13 band D council tax	E Council tax "shortfall" (C x D)	F 67% of shortfall
ABINGDON	12,820.2	11,703.2	1,117.0	£106.01	£118,413.17	£79,463
APPLEFORD	159.0	152.7	6.3	£41.76	£263.09	£177
APPLETON WITH EATON	445.2	430.9	14.3	£37.16	£531.39	£357
ARDINGTON AND	215.1	201.8	13.3	£29.08	£386.76	£260
ASHBURY	255.5	236.9	18.6	£13.71	£255.01	£171
BAULKING	46.7	46.7	0.0	£2.15	£0.00	£0
BESSELSLEIGH	36.9	36.9	0.0	£5.23	£0.00	£0
BLEWBURY	734.0	686.3	47.7	£55.64	£2,654.03	£1,781
BOURTON	149.1	139.4	9.7	£23.89	£231.73	£156
BUCKLAND	318.9	314.4	4.5	£19.31	£86.90	£58
BUSCOT	92.3	88.7	3.6	£18.81	£67.72	£45
CHARNEY BASSETT	150.9	146.1	4.8	£26.52	£127.30	£85
CHILDREY	248.0	231.5	16.5	£48.55	£801.08	£538
CHILTON	506.1	486.2	19.9	£32.81	£652.92	£438
COLESHILL	70.7	62.7	8.0	£11.94	£95.52	£64
COMPTON	41.0	40.8	0.2	£0.00	£0.00	£0
CUMNOR	2,800.8	2,676.1	124.7	£32.46	£4,047.76	£2,716
DENCHWORTH	87.7	83.1	4.6	£5.93	£27.28	£18
DRAYTON	968.4	898.8	69.6	£41.75	£2,905.80	£1,950
EAST CHALLOW	289.7	258.3	31.4	£72.47	£2,275.56	£1,527
EAST HANNEY	392.2	368.9	23.3	£0.00	£0.00	£0
EAST HENDRED	542.1	508.5	33.6	£48.90	£1,643.04	£1,103
EATON HASTINGS	34.0	34.0	0.0	£0.00	£0.00	£0
FARINGDON	2,884.4	2,540.5	343.9	£105.37	£36,236.74	£24,317
FERNHAM	116.4	105.8	10.6	£21.56	£228.54	£153
FRILFORD	117.1	116.4	0.7	£43.20	£30.24	£20
FYFIELD AND TUBNEY	247.4	240.0	7.4	£2.06	£15.24	£10
GARFORD	86.0	83.1	2.9	£36.57	£106.05	£71
GOOSEY	66.4	64.2	2.2	£0.00	£0.00	£0
GREAT COXWELL	159.3	153.4	5.9	£21.19	£125.02	£84
GROVE	2,692.6	2,507.3	185.3	£82.36	£15,261.31	£10,241
HARWELL	1,035.6	964.8	70.8	£53.19	£3,765.85	£2,527
HATFORD	49.1	46.6	2.5	£1.61	£4.03	£3
HINTON WALDRIST	157.5	142.1	15.4	£17.46	£268.88	£180
KENNINGTON	1,750.9	1,657.1	93.8	£45.91	£4,306.36	£2,890
KINGSTON BAGPUIZE	995.1	967.5	27.6	£22.86	£630.94	£423
KINGSTON LISLE	112.1	101.6	10.5	£35.80	£375.90	£252
LETCOMBE BASSETT	84.8	81.3	3.5	£5.96	£20.86	£14
LETCOMBE REGIS	380.0	368.3	11.7	£46.23	£540.89	£363
LITTLE COXWELL	77.5	75.2	2.3	£16.02	£36.85	£25
LITTLEWORTH	119.3	116.6	2.7	£6.04	£16.31	£11
LONGCOT	273.4	259.2	14.2	£18.55	£263.41	£177
LONGWORTH	273.8	258.5	15.3	£24.90	£380.97	£256
LYFORD	26.9	26.2	0.7	£0.00	£0.00	£0
MARCHAM	733.3	692.8	40.5	£51.65	£2,091.83	£1,404
MILTON	447.9	415.2	32.7	£44.53	£1,456.13	£977
NORTH HINKSEY	1,761.7	1,658.3	103.4	£36.87	£3,812.36	£2,558
PUSEY	33.7	33.1	0.6	£1.49	£0.89	£1
RADLEY	928.0	864.8	63.2	£54.69	£3,456.41	£2,319
ST HELEN WITHOUT	816.4	807.0	9.4	£19.88	£186.87	£125
SHELLINGFORD	82.1	79.8	2.3	£9.22	£21.21	£14
SHRIVENHAM	1,026.4	975.8	50.6	£50.36	£2,548.22	£1,710
SOUTH HINKSEY	196.1	179.8	16.3	£20.70	£337.41	£226
SPARSHOLT	154.6	150.9	3.7	£26.39	£97.64	£66
STANFORD IN THE	883.4	825.3	58.1	£23.09	£1,341.53	£900
STEVENTON	651.9	604.5	47.4	£35.44	£1,679.86	£1,127
SUNNINGWELL	449.9	440.8	9.1	£37.56	£341.80	£229
SUTTON COURTENAY	1,052.1	962.2	89.9	£45.71	£4,109.33	£2,758
UFFINGTON	346.0	323.1	22.9	£36.64	£839.06	£563
UPTON	213.3	210.1	3.2	£34.72	£111.10	£75
WANTAGE	4,545.3	4,158.1	387.2	£36.91	£14,291.55	£9,591
WATCHFIELD	791.8	752.8	39.0	£28.11	£1,096.29	£736
WEST CHALLOW	96.2	89.6	6.6	£19.17	£126.52	£85
WEST HANNEY	252.1	243.1	9.0	£17.95	£161.55	£108
WEST HENDRED	168.5	160.5	8.0	£38.47	£307.76	£207
WOOLSTONE	78.3	78.3	0.0	£2.05	£0.00	£0
WOOTTON	1,238.0	1,151.9	86.1	£30.50	£2,626.05	£1,762
WYTHAM	76.7	74.1	2.6	£72.33	£188.06	£126
Total	50,133.8	46,640.5	3,493.3		£239,309.84	£160,593