

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 7 August 2020 at 10.30 am

This was a virtual, online meeting.

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Emily Smith (Chair), Debby Hallett (Vice-Chair), Andrew Crawford, Neil Fawcett, Jenny Hannaby, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber

Officers: John Backley, Pat Connell, Steve Culliford, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne and Councillor David Grant

Number of members of the public: 1

Ca.11 Apologies for absence

None

Ca.12 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 July 2020 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

Ca.13 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.14 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ca.15 Public participation

Cabinet received a statement from Sally Povolotsky regarding the car parking fees and charges proposals. Ms Povolotsky made suggestions to better utilise the car parks and generate more income, support local businesses, help achieve emissions' targets and aid public education.

The Chair thanked Ms Povolotsky for her statement and asked for a copy so that her suggestions could be further investigated.

Cabinet also received statements from Councillors David Grant and Hayleigh Gascoigne on car park fees and charges. Councillor Grant gave context to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's comments. The council should not be subsidising car travel and parking but should take a cautious approach to any changes to car parking fees and charges. The council should promote active travel and public transport over private car use. However, electric cars were better than petrol or diesel cars. However, it was a balancing act and the council must be careful to avoid adversely impacting on town centres. The impact of these changes should be monitored.

Councillor Gascoigne embellished this with suggestions that offering free parking was giving the wrong message. The council should concentrate on tackling the climate emergency and promote more cycling and walking instead and not use taxpayers' money to subsidise car parking.

Ca.16 Recommendations from other committees

None

Ca.17 Car park fees and charges

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report on a review of car park fees and charges.

The Cabinet member for housing and environment highlighted the following options for Cabinet's consideration:

- A. Increase all fees (for up to two hours and above) by 20p (or 40p)
- B. Introduce flat fee of 60p for up to two hours (to replace the current free parking)
- C. Reduce free parking from two hours to one hour and introduce a charge of £1.50 for up to two hours and £2.00 for up to 3 hours.
- D. Increase the cost of parking permits by ten per cent
- E. Formalise the parking for one coach and market traders in Hales Meadow car park, Abingdon. Remove the commercial vehicle parking in Rye Farm car park, Abingdon and use the area to create 'overflow' parking for smaller vehicles.
- F. Removing residential permits to bring them in line with parking permits
- G. Making the Civic car park, Abingdon, short stay only with a maximum stay of three hours at £1.50 for up to three hours (or £1.70/£1.90 if option A agreed for increase of all fees)
- H. Charging points for electric vehicles
- I. Other considerations – increasing excess charge notices by £10

The report recommended that all other aspects of the fees and charges such as the charging periods, free parking for disabled and motorbikes and free parking on Sunday (except Rye Farm, Hales Meadow and Abbey Meadow), remained the same.

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee had considered a number of options for reviewing car park fees and charges on 28 January 2020. The committee's comments were set out in Table 1 of the report; it had supported options C, D, E, G, H and I.

Cabinet welcomed the committee's feedback, as well as contributions from the public and two committee members. The suggestions made were welcomed. However, Cabinet considered that the council must protect local businesses and shops at this time, especially after months of lockdown under the Covid-19 pandemic. Car park charges could be adjusted but radical changes must be avoided immediately. The suggestions made by the speakers were all relevant and could be captured and used to make changes in the future.

Cabinet noted that to do nothing was not sustainable as the car parks service was running at a loss. The council was allowed to break-even but not make a profit. Cabinet reviewed the options and concluded that it was important to retain two hours free parking at this time but raise the fees beyond two-hour stays by 40 pence. Parking permit prices should increase and the subsidy for residents' permits should be phased out. The report set out some changes that would be subject to the regulatory consultation on a draft car park order, others could be implemented immediately. The outcome of the formal consultation would be reported back to Cabinet later in the year.

Cabinet also asked for a review of the car park policy.

RESOLVED to

- (a) amend the car parking fees as follows:
 - (i) Increase all car parking fees for stays beyond two hours by 40p (option A);
 - (ii) Retain two hours free parking (thereby rejecting options B and C);
 - (iii) Increase the cost of parking permits by ten per cent (option D);
 - (iv) Formalise the parking for one coach and market traders in Hales Meadow car park, Abingdon. Remove the commercial vehicle parking in Rye Farm car park, Abingdon and use the area to create 'overflow' parking for smaller vehicles (option E);
 - (v) Phased removal of the discount on residential permits to bring them in line with parking permits, phased over four years, and commencing no later than 1 December 2020. Stop selling new residential permits from 1 October 2020 (option F);
 - (vi) Retain the current parking arrangements at the Civic car park in Abingdon (thereby rejecting option G);
 - (vii) Allow enforcement of electric vehicle charging points by amending the car park order (option H);
 - (viii) Retain the fee for early payment of Excess Charge Notices at £50 (option I);
 - (ix) Retain all other aspects of the fees and charges such as the charging periods, free parking for the display of a disabled badge and motorbikes, and free parking on Sundays (except Rye Farm, Hales Meadow and Abbey Meadow car parks in Abingdon) (option I);

- (b) authorise the head of legal and democratic services to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to reflect the agreed changes where required;
- (c) allow the head of housing and environment to oversee necessary consultations in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, and note that responses will be reported back to Cabinet after the end of the consultation period; and
- (d) undertake a review of car parking policy.

Ca.18 Oxfordshire Growth Board terms of reference

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships. This set out a proposal to amend the Oxfordshire Growth Board's terms of reference and memorandum of association following a review undertaken by the Growth Board. The adoption of these documents represented stage one of two in implementing outcomes from the review. The other five principal councils in Oxfordshire had agreed the stage one changes.

Some concern was expressed that the other district councils had agreed to the changes as the cost of the Growth Board did not appear to be fairly split between the six principal councils. For example, district councils had to pay a larger percentage of their budgets compared to the county council. It was noted that the costs should be proportionate to the officers' time spent on the Growth Board work.

The proposed changes were a first stage to make improvements to the Growth Board's operation. More changes would come forward. Stage two would involve a more detailed review of the Growth Board's operating arrangements to reflect the increasing importance of protecting the environment and tackling climate change. This included assessing how the Growth Board interacted with emerging proposals for a local nature partnership.

Cabinet supported the changes. However, some concerns were raised at how the principal councils undertook their statutory responsibility for scrutinising the Growth Board. This was not the responsibility of the Growth Board's Scrutiny Panel. Cabinet asked the leader to raise this with the Growth Board.

RESOLVED to

- (a) approve the Oxfordshire Growth Board's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding, as set out at appendices 1 and 2 respectively of the acting deputy chief executive – partnership's report to Cabinet on 7 August 2020;
- (b) authorise the chief executive, in consultation with the leader of the council and the Oxfordshire Growth Board, to make minor amendments to these documents as required to support the operational efficiency of the Growth Board's work; and
- (c) ask the leader of the council to raise with the Growth Board the question of how Oxfordshire's principal councils undertake their statutory responsibility of scrutinising the Growth Board, including its budget.

The meeting closed at 12.12 pm
Vale of White Horse District Council – Cabinet minutes

Friday, 7 August 2020

