

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 3 December 2021 at 10.30 am
at 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Emily Smith (Chair), Bethia Thomas (Vice-Chair), Debby Hallett, Andy Crawford, Neil Fawcett, Judy Roberts and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steve Culliford

Remote attendance:

Councillors: Councillor Helen Pighills

Officers: Patrick Arran, Harry Barrington-Mountford, Pat Connell, Diane Foster, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, Jeremy Lloyd, Lucy Murfett, Tom Rice, Mark Stone, Emma Turner, David Wilde and Emma Wright

53 Apologies for absence

None

54 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 29 October 2021 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

55 Declarations of interest

None

56 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The Chair reminded Cabinet that only those members present in the meeting room had voting rights.

57 Public participation

None

58 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received a paper summarising the updates and recommendations from other committees since the last Cabinet meeting. The Licensing Acts Committee, the Scrutiny

Committee, the Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Audit and Governance Committee had each discussed matters requiring Cabinet's attention. Cabinet welcomed the update and agreed to consider each matter under the relevant agenda item below.

59 Review of joint gambling policy

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report regarding a review of the gambling policy. The Gambling Act 2005 required the council to have a gambling policy and to review it every three years. The draft policy had been considered by the Licensing Acts Committee and had been subject to public consultation. The committee had recommended that Cabinet made a recommendation to Council to adopt the policy.

Cabinet noted that there had been no significant policy changes as a result of the review and public consultation. Cabinet supported the recommendations set out in the report and thanked officers and the Licensing Acts Committee for its work in reviewing the policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) adopt the proposed joint gambling policy;
- (b) authorise the head of housing and environment to make minor editorial changes to the joint gambling policy; and
- (c) authorise the head of housing and environment to publish the joint gambling policy in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

60 Treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2021/22

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, which monitored the council's treasury management performance in the first six months of 2021/22. The report, written as at 30 September 2021, showed that the income from treasury activities was under the budget forecast; this was largely due to the lower than expected interest rates during that period. However, the council's performance had exceeded all benchmarks and there had been no need to borrow funds during the first six months of the financial year, nor was there any expectation to borrow during the remainder of the year. The treasury activities had also been carried out within the prudential indicators and counterparty limits set out in the 2021/22 treasury management strategy. Cabinet noted a correction that in paragraph 25 of the report; the interest rates quoted should be amended from 10 per cent and 25 per cent to read 0.1 per cent and 0.25 per cent respectively.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report on 30 November 2021 and was content that the treasury management activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy. Cabinet concurred and thanked officers and the committee for their work in managing the council's treasury management performance.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) note the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2021/22; and

- (b) note that Cabinet is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

61 Council tax base 2022/23

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on the need to set the council tax for 2022/23. This was required to calculate the amount of taxable resources to allow Council to set its council tax in February 2022. Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police and all parish councils within the district would also be informed of the tax base relevant to them.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve 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 2022/23;
- (b) agree 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 2022/23 is 55,362.8; and
- (c) agree 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 2022/23 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 3 December 2021.

62 War pensions and war widow(er)'s pension disregard top up in housing benefit

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, seeking approval for the council to continue to disregard war pensions and war widow(er)'s pensions in calculating housing benefit entitlement.

Cabinet noted that it was being asked to re-affirm the council's previous policy without change. Cabinet endorsed the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED to Council to re-affirm its decision to approve the disregard of War Pensions and War Widow(er)'s pensions:

- (i) in full as income above the statutory £10.00 per week disregard in the calculation of Housing Benefit entitlement; and
- (ii) in full as income in relation to the means tested assessment of Council Tax Reduction Scheme discount.

63 Local Plan Part 1 Review

Cabinet considered the report of the head of policy and programmes. To comply with regulations, the council was required to review Local Plan Part 1 by 14 December 2021, which was five years from its adoption. The review was not an opportunity to revise or replace the plan, but to ensure consistency with the current National Planning Policy Framework.

An appendix to the report assessed the plan against current guidance and found three policies that needed updating. The updates did not change the overall homes supply for the Vale.

Cabinet supported the recommendations in the report. The review of Local Plan Part 1 would continue to provide for sustainable development in the Vale. Cabinet thanked officers for their work on the review.

Cabinet commented on the need for two-way co-operation with neighbouring councils. For example, the Vale's Local Plan provided for housing to assist Oxford with its unmet housing need. However, if Oxford City Council found sites for housing or employment within its boundary, it would be expected to use such sites to reduce the unmet housing need that had been placed on neighbouring councils. Local plans should co-locate jobs and homes.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve for publication the Regulation 10A review of Local Plan Part 1 policies; and
- (b) authorise the head of policy and programmes, in consultation with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, to make any minor amendments, if required, to the Local Plan Part 1 Review, prior to publication.

64 Joint statement of community involvement

Cabinet considered the head of policy and programmes' report. This proposed the adoption of a joint statement of community involvement as part of work on a joint local plan with South Oxfordshire District Council. The statement set out how the council would engage when preparing planning policy documents, including neighbourhood planning, and the support the council offered to neighbourhood planning groups. The statement also set out how the council would consult on planning applications, and included information on the pre-application advice, planning appeals and planning enforcement.

The statement had been through a public consultation, the feedback from which was positive. Some changes had been made to the document, as set out in appendix 1 to the report. The Cabinet member reported that there had been no radical change since the Vale's statement for its own local plan, but the new joint statement had more emphasis on digital consultation.

Joint Scrutiny Committee had given its support to the statement, including the consultation arrangements. Some strengthening of the language used, and some additional signposting were suggestions made by the committee; these suggestions would be taken on board by officers before publication. Officers were also developing a system to reply to each consultee response.

Cabinet also supported the joint statement, and the changes made resulting from the consultation and Joint Scrutiny Committee's response. The council was doing the best it could to maximise influence within the national limits set by government.

The public and the Joint Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their responses. Officers and the Cabinet member were thanked for their work on the new statement.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) adopt the statement of community involvement subject to the amendments set out in the head of policy and programme's report and appendix 1 to Cabinet on 3 December 2021; and
- (b) authorise the head of policy and programmes, in consultation with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, to make the changes set out in the report and appendix 1 and any other minor changes, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the statement of community involvement prior to publication.

65 Planning enforcement statement

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report, which sought approval of an updated planning enforcement statement. During the past year, officers had conducted a review of the planning enforcement service and had revised the planning enforcement statement. The statement included improvements to service provision, resulting in a more efficient use of resources. For example, all new cases would undergo a triage assessment to decide what action was necessary.

This council was one of the top performers in planning enforcement, but the Cabinet member recognised that there was always room for improvement. However, the public should be reminded of the limits placed on the council. The planning enforcement service was not a policing function, the objective was to find proportionate remedies to unacceptable planning harm. The planning enforcement statement set this out clearly, stating what the council could and could not do. All parish councils would be provided with a copy of the statement. The council's website would also be updated also.

Cabinet welcomed the planning enforcement statement. The review and the statement would bring further improvements to the service and it would reduce the backlog of enforcement cases. The effectiveness of the revised statement would be kept under review.

Cabinet thanked officers for reviewing the service and preparing the revised statement, and asked that the communications team, through its head of service, was consulted on the draft planning enforcement statement before it was published.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the feedback from Scrutiny Committee;
- (b) approve the new enforcement statement and approach to managing planning enforcement; and
- (c) authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the South Oxfordshire District Council Cabinet member for planning, the Vale of White Horse District Council Cabinet member for community engagement, and the deputy chief executive – transformation and operations, to make any minor changes, formatting, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the joint planning enforcement statement.

66 Customer transformation strategy

Cabinet considered the head of corporate services' report, which proposed a customer transformation strategy. This complimented the council's technology strategy but went further, to introduce a technology and digital strategy to support high quality and efficient service delivery.

The intention was to make it easier for the customer to interact with the council. To address this the strategy set out six core principles:

- Re-imagined front doors – service engagement points that were easy to use, designed around residents and businesses and their needs, not the council's organisational structure
- "Once and done" or "right first time" – the right outcome achieved without repeat referrals and the need for the customer to chase, increasing the customer's trust in the council
- Safeguarding – meet statutory obligations whilst never compromising the safety of the customer
- Efficient and environmentally positive – deliver services in the most cost-effective way for the councils, whilst helping to tackle the climate emergency
- Transparency – ensure that customers understood how the council delivers services
- Accountability – take ownership of service fulfilment and ensure complaints and follow-up on commitments were dealt with quickly and properly

Cabinet recognised that adopting these principles and applying them to the way services were delivered would require significant change but would help residents. Therefore, Cabinet approved the customer transformation strategy and its roadmap to ensure these principles were met.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the customer transformation strategy and proposed roadmap for delivery;
- (b) appoint the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation as the lead Cabinet member, and the deputy chief executive – transformation and operations as the executive sponsor, and to delegate further decisions on the initiation of the programme to the deputy chief executive – transformation and operations in discussion with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation.

67 Housing and homelessness IT solution

Cabinet considered the head of corporate services' report on the need to procure a new IT solution for the housing and homelessness service. The intention was to upgrade current systems to run on a cloud-based platform. Estimated costs of the procurement were detailed in an exempt appendix, which Cabinet noted. Some cost savings were expected.

Cabinet supported the proposal, noting that it aligned with the recently adopted technology strategy and customer transformation strategy. Cabinet noted that the management of mobile home rent would become part of the new system.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the budget based on proposed costs required for the housing and homelessness IT solution project (the breakdown of costs is shown in Annex A to the head of corporate services' report to Cabinet on 3 December 2021);
- (b) agree the procurement route by which to procure an IT solution for the housing and homelessness service using the Government GCloud 12 Framework Agreement;
- (c) authorise the head of corporate services, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member, to award the contract and to enter into the contract and any ancillary documents; and
- (d) note the transfer of the mobile homes site rents into the housing IT system for future management of those customer accounts.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am