

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Tuesday 20 December 2022 at 10.30 am
in the Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors Neil Fawcett (Vice-Chair - in the chair), Sally Povolotsky and Judy Roberts

Officers: John Backley (Technical Services Manager), Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader), and Mark Stone (Chief Executive)

Remote attendance:

Cabinet members: Councillors Andy Crawford and Debby Hallett

Officers: Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic), James Carpenter (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), and Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services)

55. Apologies for absence

Councillors Bethia Thomas (Chair) and Helen Pighills had sent their apologies for absence.

Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vice-Chair) took the chair for this meeting.

56. Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 December 2022 and agree that the chair signs them as such.

57. Declarations of interests

None

58. Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

59. Public participation

None

60. Car Park Fees

Cabinet considered the report of the head of development and corporate landlord. This set out the annual review of the council's car park fees and helped Cabinet to decide whether to change the fees for 2023/24. This year Cabinet was not asked to review the charges for penalties, as the level of car park penalty charges was now set by legislation, which changed on 1 November 2022 when the council introduced civil parking enforcement.

The car park policy, agreed by Cabinet in August 2022, included guidance from the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which stated that council parking enforcement should be self-financing, and that the council should aim for its parking income to at least meet the cost of managing its car parks. The report set out the current fees and permit prices, together with a comparison of fees in other neighbouring council's car parks. It also set out the cost of providing the car parks' service, and projected income and expenditure over a five-year period.

Based on the current usage and estimated income and expenditure, the report set out options to allow the car park account to at least 'break even' in the medium term. The options for 2023/24 were to:

1. make no change to the current car parking fees
2. remove the one-hour free parking and charge a nominal amount of 50p
3. extend Sunday parking charges to all car parks
4. create premium rate parking spaces closest to major amenities
5. introduce a flat fee of £1 for the period 6pm to 9pm
6. introduce half price permits for zero-emission vehicles
7. increase the cost of permits by 10 per cent (rounded), in line with inflation
8. simplify the charging regime
9. increase fees across the board by 10 per cent

The Cabinet member with responsibility for the council's car parks service, recalled that last year Cabinet had reduced the free parking from two hours to one hour and increased all fees by 40 pence. This had a marked impact on increasing car park income, putting the car park account in a better financial position, although overall the cost of running the car parks was still more than the income generated. The report showed that there was an estimated deficit for 2022/23 of £259,186, and this deficit continued up to 2025/26. Although none of the options set out in the report met the deficit, the Cabinet member would work with officers and Cabinet members in 2023 to review the council's parking provision.

Turning to the options, the Cabinet member recommended option 7, to increase the cost of parking permits by ten per cent. Although there was an existing decision to increase residents' permits by 10 per cent on 1 April 2023, this was for existing residents only, as the option of cheaper parking permits for residents was removed in 2020. Option 7 was for all other parking permits to increase by ten per cent.

For straight forward increases in fees or permits, these could be amended by displaying variation notices in the car parks and local newspapers, and if there were no delays to the implementation, officers aimed to arrange for the changes to be made from 1 April 2023. If other changes were agreed involving anything other than increase in fees, this would involve a period of formal consultation and for Cabinet to consider any feedback, and therefore such changes would not be implemented until a least June 2023.

Cabinet concurred with the Cabinet member's recommendation to approved option 7: to increase all the cost of parking permits by ten per cent. This could be done by displaying a variation notice. The other options were rejected as they would either require a lengthy consultation or would inflict more financial pressure of local residents and small traders in town centres during the current cost-of-living crisis. However, members welcomed further investigations into the possibility of introducing premium rates in future, by increasing fees in the car parks nearest to town centre facilities.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree the car parking fees for the financial year 2023-24, including increasing the cost of permits by 10 per cent;
- (b) authorise the head of legal and democratic to prepare a Notice of Variation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 for publishing in the local newspaper and all affected car parks; and
- (c) authorise the head of development and corporate landlord to oversee necessary communications.

61. Budget Monitoring April to August 2022

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being the budget monitoring report for April to August 2022.

The Cabinet member for finance highlighted a projected revenue overspend at the year-end. Rising inflation had resulted in costs being higher than budgeted for but these increases were partially offset by investment income being higher than expected due to interest rate rises. The capital programme would be kept under review and re-profiled.

RESOLVED: to note the budget monitoring report for April to August 2022.

62. Budget setting 2023/24 update report

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being an update on the budget position for 2023/24. This showed the work that was being undertaken to build the base budget. The 2023/24 budget was proving challenging as high inflation had resulted in rising costs. This would be offset by high investment income due to rising interest rates, but this was unlikely to continue over the Medium Term Financial Plan period.

The head of finance updated Cabinet with news of the government settlement, which had been sent to the council the previous day. This showed that for 2023/24 the council would receive a government funding increase, resulting in an increase in core revenue spending power of approximately 4.85 per cent. New Homes Bonus would continue for a further year but would then be subject to review. Cabinet noted that no firm detail had been provided on government funding for 2024/25 onwards.

Cabinet thanked officers for the update report and noted that the next steps were for Cabinet members to consider a draft budget in February 2023 and recommend it to Council for adoption.

RESOLVED: to note the latest position for the 2023/24 budget.

The meeting closed at 10.55 am

Chair:

Date: