

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 10 March 2023 at 10.30 am
in 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 Bethia Thomas (Chair), Andy Crawford, Helen Pighills and Judy Roberts

Officers: Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader), Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive - Place) and Mark Stone (Chief Executive)

Remote attendance:

Cabinet member: Councillor Debby Hallett

Officers: Harry Barrington-Mountford (Transformation Programme Lead), Ben Coleman (Programmes and Assurance Manager), Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), and Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive - Transformation and Operations)

Guests: Councillors Nathan Boyd and Janet Shelley

75. Apologies for absence

Councillors Neil Fawcett and Sally Povolotsky had sent their apologies for absence.

76. Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 3 February 2023 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

77. Declarations of interests

None

78. Urgent business and chair's announcements

Those present in the meeting room noted the evacuation arrangements in case of an emergency.

79. Public participation

None

80. Recommendations and updates from other committees

None

81. Refugee accommodation

Cabinet considered the report of the deputy chief executive – transformation and operations on work the council was progressing under the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee accommodation workstreams.

In December 2022, the government had announced a scheme to part fund accommodation that was to provide sustainable housing for refugees under the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes. The council had been offered a grant of £2,136,513 to deliver 14 homes that met the eligibility criteria outlined within the Local Authority Housing Fund prospectus.

The Cabinet member for healthy communities recommended that the council accepted the government grant and signed a memorandum of understanding with the government department. The scheme would involve setting up a team to deliver the homes by purchasing properties and managing them thereafter. This scheme would also support the council's housing delivery strategy.

Cabinet was being asked to continue participating in the scheme by signing the memorandum of understanding. Officers had carried out an initial assessment of the financial risks, a broad-brush high-level modelling exercise, and had concluded that the scheme should be pursued, subject to more detailed financial checks. Officers would need to assess and be confident in the costs on a property-by-property basis. It was anticipated that the council could proceed to purchase these properties without the need to set up a Housing Revenue Account.

The signing of the memorandum of understanding was a non-binding commitment; the council did not have to proceed if the project was not financially viable. Although the council had allocated funds towards this project in its budget, there was no financial commitment to proceed at this stage until further work had been completed and the council satisfied with the costs.

Noting that further detailed work would be carried out to assess the financial risks, Cabinet supported the proposal to accept the grant and sign the memorandum of understanding. Cabinet believed that the council needed to work on providing sustainable, settled accommodation to support these refugees.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the update regarding the refugee accommodation workstreams being reviewed to find sustainable housing for those who are in the UK under the Government Afghan and Ukraine schemes; and
- (b) accept the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) grant of £2,136,513 (total allocation) to deliver 14 homes that meet the eligibility criteria outlined within the Local Authority Housing Fund prospectus, and to authorise the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations to sign the Memorandum of

Understanding with DLUHC, which sets out the understanding between both parties for the use of funding.

82. Corporate Plan Performance Report, quarter 3 2022/23

Cabinet considered the Corporate Plan Performance Report for quarter 3, 2022/23. This set out progress against the Corporate Plan objectives during the period 1 October to 31 December 2022.

Cabinet members were grateful to officers for changing the way the council worked to monitor and report on performance. The report had been improved incrementally and was a publication to be proud of.

RESOLVED: to note the Corporate Plan Performance Report Quarter 3, 2022/23.

83. Climate Action Plan Performance Report, quarter 3 2022/23

Cabinet considered the Climate Action Plan Performance Report for quarter 3, 2022/23. This set out progress against the Climate Action Plan during the period 1 October to 31 December 2022.

Cabinet welcomed the report. It showed the council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency, putting climate action at the heart of its activities. Many projects had been completed successfully; others were still in progress. The tree planting and wildflower planting schemes, and the decarbonisation of some leisure centres were highlighted in particular; Cabinet hoped such schemes would inspire others. Officers were congratulated for their work.

RESOLVED: to note the Climate Action Plan Performance Report Quarter 3, 2022/23.

84. Exclusion of the public, including the press

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

85. Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet noted the updates from the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting on 27 February 2023, relating to the exempt items on the Cabinet agenda.

86. Delivery of waste services

Cabinet agreed a method to provide the council's future waste services.

87. Waste vehicle procurement

Cabinet authorised the procurement of waste vehicles.