

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 2.30 pm
in the 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors Emily Smith (Chair), Bethia Thomas (Vice-Chair), Andy Crawford, Neil Fawcett, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts and Catherine Webber
Officers: Steve Culliford and Mark Stone

Remote attendance:

Cabinet members: Councillor Debby Hallett
Officers: Emma Baker (Planning Policy Team Leader), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Ben Coleman (Programmes and Assurance Manager), Pat Connell (Legal Services Manager), Andrew Down (Deputy Chief Executive – Partnerships), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations), Richard Spraggett (Chief Accountant), and Michelle Wells (Insight and Policy Manager)

90. Apologies for absence

None

91. Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the public and exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4 February 2022 and agree that the chair signs them as such.

92. Declarations of interest

None

93. Urgent business and chair's announcements

The chair made an announcement regarding the invasion of Ukraine. The chair thanked people across the district for their compassion for the Ukrainian people and those in the region effected directly. Her thoughts were with them and people living in the Vale who were originally from Ukraine or had family and friends fleeing for safety. The chair had written to the council's chief executive, who had responded quickly to her suggestions and was in touch with colleagues across the county to ensure Oxfordshire was well prepared if councils were needed to support refugees here in the future. There had been no specific

requests of this council to date but the council had issued a statement of solidarity on its website and social media platforms, and had raised the Ukrainian flag outside its offices at Milton Park.

The chair had formally endorsed a statement from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, condemning the attacks and violations in Ukraine and expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people and colleagues in local government. The chair had worked with the other five principal councils in Oxfordshire to ensure joined up planning, should councils be required to support refugees and to issue consistent communications to residents about how best to help, i.e. cash donations was what was most needed at this point. The chair had asked for the local response to the situation in Ukraine to be on the agenda for the Oxfordshire Leaders' Meeting in March. Should the government expand its visa scheme, or enable refugees to come to the UK, this council would do all it could to support Ukrainians with housing and resettlement. Emergency and contingency plans were in place and ready to be activated if required. The chair would write to relevant Ministers to make this point and request that any resettlement scheme was adequately funded. Councillor Pighills and the leader aimed to keep in regular contact with the local Members of Parliament and would share relevant information with councillors.

94. Public participation

None

95. Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet noted the recommendations and updates from other committees since the last Cabinet meeting. An update from the Scrutiny Committee was included with the agenda.

96. Covid response and the next steps

Cabinet considered the report of the deputy chief executive – transformation and operations. This set out how the council had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by providing a plethora of community and business support. The report also set out the agreed staff structure to continue the councils' response and to progress the recovery programmes. In addition, the report sought Cabinet's support for the principles outlined within the document 'Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework'.

Cabinet recognised the effort made to provide community and business support during the pandemic. Staff worked long hours in addition to meeting the council's statutory responsibilities and had adapted to new ways of working. Cabinet thanked staff for their above and beyond efforts.

Although the pandemic was not over, the council would continue to support its community through the recovery phase, to living with Covid-19 in the long-term. The council needed to move forward with caution and consideration, continuing to provide a resilient response approach should it be required.

Appended to the report was an Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework. Cabinet was asked to support its principles. Whilst supporting the three key aims of consolidating recovery and building resilience, addressing the unequal impact of Covid-19, and supporting renewal, Cabinet did not support the framework document as a whole. The framework, as written, had unnecessary duplication to the council's corporate plan.

However, Cabinet was keen to support ongoing partnership work and co-operation in response to Covid-19.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the council's Covid-19 community support response activity to date and the agreed staff structure to continue the response and progress the recovery programmes; and
- (b) support the three aims (as set out in paragraph 8 of the Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework covering report) of:
 - (i) consolidating recovery and building resilience,
 - (ii) addressing the unequal impact of Covid-19, and
 - (iii) supporting renewal,and support continued work and co-operation with partners, but Cabinet does not support the framework document as a whole.

97. Oxfordshire Plan 2050

Cabinet considered a report from the programme lead on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This sought Cabinet's approval to an update on the Oxfordshire Plan's Statement of Community Involvement. The statement set out how the public and local organisations would be consulted on the preparation of the plan. The statement had been amended in response to the recent lifting of coronavirus restrictions and now included consultation options through social media. The cabinet at each of Oxfordshire's five local planning authorities was being asked to approve the same statement. Once adopted, the Oxfordshire Plan would provide a high-level spatial framework to shape the future planning of the county up to 2050 and would sit alongside local plan reviews and neighbourhood plans.

The Scrutiny Committee had considered the report in a different form to that now before Cabinet. Feedback from each councils' scrutiny committee had resulted in the report being updated before the Cabinet meeting. The committee had recommended the adoption of the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

The Cabinet member supported the approval of the statement, as it would allow the Oxfordshire Plan to progress. The Cabinet member asked officers to review the statement again once the final timelines were known, to give councillors an opportunity to review any future draft Oxfordshire Plan documents and send feedback before they were published, and to look at a policy on housing density as suggested by the Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet supported the updated statement of community involvement but asked that it be kept under review. The document as written would allow the Oxfordshire Plan to progress.

That said, Cabinet believed that there would need to be a paradigm shift in thinking. The plan's statement of community involvement had understated how much change was needed. To tackle climate change the Oxfordshire Plan must reduce the need to travel, and thereby reduce carbon emissions. This meant building homes near jobs. The plan needed to ensure more homes were built in or close to Oxford so that residents did not have to commute from all over the county to work in the city. The Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation agreed to take that message back to the Oxfordshire Plan sub-group.

Cabinet also noted that the statement included a reference to aligning the Oxfordshire Plan with the Local Industrial Strategy. Cabinet noted that by approving the statement of community involvement, it was not endorsing the Local Industrial Strategy. However, Cabinet supported the Oxfordshire strategic vision for long-term sustainable development.

RESOLVED: to approve the adoption of the revised Oxfordshire Plan Statement of Community Involvement, and to note that the statement will be kept under regular review as the project continues.

98. Corporate plan performance monitoring report Q2 2021/22

Cabinet considered the corporate plan performance monitoring report for quarter 2, 2021/22.

The Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and had welcomed the improvements made since quarter 1.

The Cabinet member reported that the document set out progress against the corporate plan covering the period 1 July to 30 September 2021. It demonstrated that the council was continually striving to improve its performance by evaluating what it had done and comparing this to its corporate plan objectives.

Cabinet welcomed the report and the improvements made. Cabinet thanked the officers involved in preparing the report.

RESOLVED: to note the corporate plan performance monitoring report for quarter 2, 2021/22.

99. Budget monitoring

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being the 2021/22 budget monitoring report for the period up to 30 November 2021.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that there had been a revenue and capital underspend, much of which had been included in the budget carry forwards to 2022/23.

In relation to The Beacon at Wantage, the Cabinet member reported that there had been an under-receipt of income due to the facility being closed to the public for community use during most of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the facility had been used as a vaccination centre. In relation to waste services, there was not a reportable variance due to the service being successfully operated during the pandemic, which was welcomed.

Cabinet welcomed the report but asked that in future, further explanations were given for variances. These should be written in plain English as these reports would be published.

RESOLVED: to note the 2021/22 budget monitoring report, for the period up to 30 November 2021.

The meeting closed at 3.13 pm

Chair:

Date: