

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 20 December 2024 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:

Councillors: Bethia Thomas (Chair), Mark Coleman (Vice-Chair), Andy Crawford, Neil Fawcett, Diana Lugova and Helen Pighills

Officers: Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer) and Mark Stone (Chief Executive)

Remote attendance:

Councillors: Sue Caul

Officers: Nick Bennett (Head of Legal and Democratic), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes) and Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate and Communities)

91 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the procedure to be followed. She provided an update in light of the recent local government reorganisation announcement confirming that she had written to the leader of Oxfordshire County Council requesting that she write to the Secretary of State expressing a desire to move forward with devolution and reorganisation in Oxfordshire. The chair went on to confirm she had met with all but one of the other Oxfordshire council leaders and noted that a meeting the day before with West Berkshire District Council leader had been constructive.

92 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lucy Edwards and Andy Foulsham. Councillor Sue Caul joined the meeting online.

93 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2024 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

94 Declarations of interests

None.

95 Urgent business

None.

96 Public participation

None.

97 Recommendations and updates from other committees

None.

98 Q2 budget monitoring report

Cabinet received the Q2 budget monitoring report from the head of finance. The report provided Cabinet with an update on the revenue and capital expenditure outturns for March 2025 as forecasted by head of service. Cabinet were asked to note the contents of the report.

The Cabinet member for finance and property, Councillor Andrew Crawford, introduced the report and highlighted that the net revenue budget had been agreed in February 2024 but that this had been increased since to £23.172 million as a result of carry forward of unspent one off project budgets.

Cabinet asked for confirmation of the figure in paragraph 6 of the report which showed the underspend as £1.8 million. The head of finance confirmed that this figure should read £1.3 million underspend.

RESOLVED: to note the report

99 Budget setting 2025/26 update

Cabinet received the budget setting 2025/26 update report, from the head of finance. The report provided Cabinet with an update of the progress made to date in preparing the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 and the capital programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30. It also reported on the funding issues that needed to be considered when Council sets a revenue budget and capital programme in February 2025. Cabinet were asked to note the report.

The Cabinet member for finance and property introduced the report and informed Cabinet that the report built on the budget scene setting they received in October. Apologies were expressed for the late publication of the report. The Cabinet member confirmed that the member budget challenge was well underway and would be complete by Christmas. He informed Cabinet that officers were reporting a broadly balanced budget. It was confirmed that the draft settlement from the government was still awaited but that the Local Government Finance Policy Statement had advised no council would see a reduction on "Core Revenue Spending Power. It was reflected there would be an expectation to increase council tax. The Cabinet member for finance and property confirmed that growth bids were included in the report.

Cabinet asked if additional funding was going to be provided to Local Authorities to cover the increase in National Insurance contributions. The head of finance informed Cabinet

government had said financial assistance would be available but that it was unclear if this would cover all of the increased cost.

Cabinet asked for confirmation that officers were content with the budgeted £400,000 contingency. The head of finance confirmed he was content with this amount.

Cabinet thanked officers for their work on the report and in the work that goes into setting the budget.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

The meeting closed at 10.46 am