

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Cabinet

held on Friday 28 June 2024 at 10.30 am in The Hanney Room, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BX

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present in the meeting room:**

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

Officers: Samantha Allen (Senior Conservation Officer), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Diane Foster (Licensing and Community Safety Manager), Stephen Gallagher (Programme Manager), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnership Manager), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive - Place), Vivien William (Head of Legal and Democratic (Interim)), and Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer)

### **Remote attendance:**

Councillors: Lucy Edwards, Andy Foulsham, Oliver Forder, Katherine Foxhall, and Sarah James

Officers: Phil Barker (Head of Communities), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), and Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes)

## **23 Chair's announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

## **24 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Caul, Lucy Edwards, Andy Foulsham, and Neil Fawcett. Councillors Lucy Edwards and Andy Foulsham attended the meeting virtually.

## **25 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2024 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

## **26 Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **27 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

## **28 Public participation**

Three members of the Vale of White Horse District Council addressed Cabinet:

- 1) Councillor Oliver Forder made a statement on item 12 on the agenda, the Review of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP). He sought Cabinet's support to review the future of the FOP given its changing role and costs. He also agreed with the recommendations set out in the report for it to be sent to the Scrutiny and Joint Audit and Governance Committees so it could be considered by more members of the council. He desired the organisation to be more open and transparent.

In response, the Leader indicated that she was also in support of making the FOP more open, transparent, and democratically accountable. In addition, she agreed that more members of the council should be given the opportunity to input their views and so recommended that Cabinet approve the recommendations to send the report to Scrutiny and Joint Audit and Governance Committees.

- 2) Councillor Sarah James made a statement on item 10, the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report – Quarter four 2023/24, and item 12, the Review of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. On item 10, she sought Cabinet's support for there to be more data presented in the climate action plans as she believed the additional quantitative data would make the reports clearer to residents. The Leader responded by saying that the next report would be taking a new format and would account for these recommendations.

On item 12, Councillor James agreed that the current form of the FOP was difficult to follow from the outside due to its lack of transparency and welcomed the recommendations to seek engagement with all members on the partnership. In response, the Leader agreed with the desire to see more members comment on the FOP report and that she encouraged members to address the Scrutiny and Joint Audit and Governance Committees when they discuss the item. She was also keen to see the FOP reports become public, rather than taken to the private advisory groups.

- 3) Councillor Katherine Foxhall made a statement on item 10, the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report – Quarter four 2023/24. She spoke to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and sought Cabinet's support for the programme. She also spoke to the role that her ward of Watchfield and Shrivenham had played in accepting a large number of people who used the scheme. She requested Cabinet acknowledgement of this, that there had been some recent unrest from some residents at a parish council meeting, and the Cabinet help support the building of community relations in her ward.

In response, the Leader indicated that the scheme was a positive thing for the district and that she would discuss a way forward with the relevant Cabinet member and officers and produce the member a written response.

Councillor Katherine Foxhall also spoke on item 14, Recommendations and updates from other committees, during that item.

The Leader thanked the speakers for their contribution and noted that their questions and comments would also be discussed under the relevant agenda items.

## **29 Delivery of public space CCTV**

Cabinet received the delivery of public space CCTV report from the head of communities. The report sought agreement for Cabinet to enter the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership and for the creation of the Oxfordshire CCTV hub.

The cabinet member for community health and wellbeing, Councillor Helen Pighills, presented the report and highlighted that there was a shared desire for a collective CCTV control room, and that the local Police and Crime Commissioner had outlined a new vision for a shared station in Abingdon. The Cabinet member indicated that ownership of the cameras would be given to Thames Valley Police, including for their repair, maintenance, and replacement. However, she noted that the columns and assets on which they were mounted, as well as the electricity and fibre costs would be the responsibility of the Council.

The partnership would provide benefits for all partners, including more real time monitoring and future investment from the police. In addition, the Cabinet member emphasised that it would bring the Council revenue savings and reduce its administrative burden, although it would require an ongoing contribution. On the governance of the partnership, a board would be put in place to govern it. That board would be chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and would assess the need for new cameras.

Cabinet discussed the proposal and whether the town and parish councils had been consulted on the proposal. In response, the licensing and community safety manager indicated that they had been informed and that no concerns had been raised. Members also noted that town councils had chosen to voluntarily contribute to the CCTV in their areas in the past and that it was reasonable to expect that to continue, as they would continue to see benefits from the systems.

Overall, as Cabinet were satisfied with the suggested approach, they agreed to the proposal about the delivery of public space CCTV in the Vale of White Horse.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet:

- (a) Agree to the proposed approach for the delivery of public space CCTV in the Vale of White Horse.
- (b) Authorise the Head of Communities to negotiate and agree the agreement with Thames Valley Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the future provision on public space CCTV making any

minor changes they deem necessary, and undertaking and considering any consultation required.

### **30 Local Authority Housing Fund: Round 3**

Cabinet received the Local Authority Housing Fund: Round 3 report, from the head of finance. The report sought agreement from Cabinet to allow the Council to accept additional grant funding which had been made available from the latest round of Local Authority Housing Fund funding.

The Cabinet member for finance and property, Councillor Andrew Crawford, presented the report and highlighted that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities introduced a partial grant for the purchase of local authority housing and that the Council had participated in both previous funding rounds. The Cabinet member indicated that officers had submitted validation for the third round of funding which would be used for the purchase of four homes and recommended that Cabinet accept the grant.

Members discussed the Local Authority Housing Fund and noted that additional funding was available in the scheme for the purchasing of new houses rather than existing ones. In addition, on a question about if the purchasing of these homes would reduce the Councils revenue expenditure in the long term, the Cabinet member indicated that this would be expected as it would be better to house residents in purchased houses rather than hotels.

Cabinet, satisfied with the report, agreed to accept the additional Local Authority Housing Fund funding and recommend that Council approve the additional funding for the capital programme to purchase four additional homes under the scheme.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) To accept the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' grant of £747,000 (indicative Local Authority Housing Fund 3 allocation) to deliver four homes that meet the eligibility criteria outlined within the Local Authority Housing Fund 3 prospectus, and to authorise the head of finance in consultation with the chief executive or their nominated officer to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which sets out the understanding between both parties for the use of funding.
- (b) to recommend to Council to add £1.644 million to the capital programme, part funded by Local Authority Housing Fund 3 funding of £747,000 to purchase four homes under this scheme.

### **31 Oxfordshire Councils Charter**

Cabinet received the Oxfordshire Councils Charter from the head of policy and programmes. The report updated Cabinet on the development of the charter and recommended it be endorsed and that Vale of White Horse District Council become a signatory party.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bethia Thomas, presented the report and highlighted that the Council had maintained strong working relationships with its town

and parish councils on important local issues. The Charter would sit alongside what the Council had been doing, however, it would formalise that process between these councils and Oxfordshire County Council. As it was a complement to the work the Council was doing, the Leader recommended that the Charter be endorsed.

Cabinet, satisfied with the report, agreed to endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter and agree to be a signatory.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet endorses the Oxfordshire Councils Charter and agrees to be a signatory.

### **32 Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report - Quarter four, 2023/24**

Cabinet received the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report, quarter four 2023/24 from the head of policy and programmes.

The Cabinet member for policy and programmes, Councillor Andy Foulsham, presented the two documents and highlighted that the reporting on these documents would change for the new plans, reflecting the information that needed to be known and also accounting for the comments from Councillor James.

Cabinet discussed the reports and noted the highlights, specifically the bid for a trial of Electric Vehicle refuse vehicles and for new route software. Members also agreed that the new reports should provide more quantitative data in order to provide more clarity to residents.

Cabinet, satisfied with the performance reports, agreed to note the documents.

**RESOLVED:** to note the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Reports – Quarter four, 2023/24.

### **33 Blewbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review Adoption**

Cabinet received the Blewbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review Adoption from the head of planning. The report summarised the representations received during the consultation on the draft Blewbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review and sought Cabinet's approval for changes to the document that had been made as a result.

The Cabinet member for policy and programmes, Councillor Andy Foulsham, highlighted that the appraisal document had received good community engagement and that, if approved, it would help preserve the historic character of the area whilst also serving the community.

Cabinet discussed the appraisal and boundary review documents and were satisfied with the proposals. For these reasons, they agreed to adopt the documents as per the officers' recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Blewbury Conservation Area boundary is adopted as per the proposed revisions shown at Appendix 1 to the head of planning's report.
- (b) That the Blewbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as amended following public consultation is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of the Development Plan evidence and is a material planning consideration.
- (c) To delegate to the Head of Planning in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member to make minor changes, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the Blewbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document prior to formal publication and statutory notification requirements.

## **34 Review of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership**

Cabinet received the Review of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) from the deputy chief executive – place. The report sought Cabinet's view on the future of the partnership and set out potential options for moving forward with the statutory joint committee.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Bethia Thomas, presented the report and highlighted that, as the housing growth deal was almost complete, the leaders of all the Oxfordshire Councils had agreed to the need to review the FOP. Overall, she believed that the organisation would benefit from being more open and transparent, with the elected members setting the remit, and with the removal of the private advisory groups.

The Leader noted that the Council contributed both financially and through staff resources and they needed to assess how to get best value for money back from the partnership. She highlighted that the proposal outlined in the report would be for the Council to write to Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council to stress that each council in the partnership should be given time to consider any proposal for FOP's future before FOP discussed it themselves.

Members agreed in the value of partnership working. However, they noted that technical reports had been presented to the advisory groups with minimal notice and did not believe meeting in private was transparent enough. Given the amount of officer time used on the partnership, Cabinet welcomed the reassessment of the FOP, how it operates, and of the topics that it covered. Members indicated that the partnership needed to be led by members and supported by officers, and that more transparency in decision making was also necessary. These reforms would help the Council work on its own priorities, such as on the Joint Local Plan.

Overall, Cabinet was satisfied with the report and agreed to approve the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet:

- (a) Consider the future remit of Future Oxfordshire Partnership, a statutory joint committee, and to seek engagement from all councillors on that remit in order to assist the Leader in representing the Council's views

- (b) To note that the Leader had advised the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, via officers, of the council's preference for matters affecting the future of the Vale of White Horse District Council to come directly to the council.

### **35 Exclusion of the public, including the press**

**RESOLVED:** to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item 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 paragraph 3 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.

### **36 Recommendations and updates from other committees**

Cabinet received the recommendations and comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on 4 June 2024, about the Five Council Partnership item. Cabinet also received the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee, held on 11 June, about the New Waste Depot item.

Councillor Katherine Foxhall spoke to each of these recommendations.

The committees' suggestions and recommendations were considered under each relevant item on the Cabinet agenda.

### **37 Five Councils Partnership**

Cabinet received the Five Council Partnership report from the deputy chief executive – partnership.

Cabinet discussed the report, noting the comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and agreed to the officers' recommendations.

### **38 New Waste Vehicle Depot Site**

Cabinet received the new waste vehicle depot site from the head of development and corporate landlord.

Cabinet discussed the report, noting the comments from the Scrutiny Committee, and agreed to the officers' recommendations.

The meeting closed at 12.36 pm