

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 6 December 2019 at 10.30 am

in the Ridgeway Suite, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BX



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Emily Smith (Chair), Andrew Crawford, Jenny Hannaby, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber

Officers: Deborah Bryson, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillor David Grant

Ca.25 Apologies for absence

Councillors Neil Fawcett and Debby Hallett (Vice-Chair) had sent their apologies for absence.

Ca.26 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4 October 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

Ca.27 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.28 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

Ca.29 Public participation

None

Ca.30 Recommendations from other committees

(1) Joint Audit and Governance Committee – 14 October 2019 Treasury Outturn 2018/19

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee considered the head of finance's report on the treasury outturn for 2018/19. The committee recommended that Cabinet noted:

- (a) the treasury management outturn report 2018/19; and
- (b) that the committee was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

Cabinet welcomed the committee's comments for consideration later in the meeting.

(2) Climate Emergency Advisory Committee – 15 October 2019 Options for the future and next steps

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee had considered a report by the Head of Partnership and Insight, which set out the options for recommendations that the committee could make to Cabinet in response to the climate emergency declaration.

The committee recommended Cabinet to:

- (a) Recommend Target Option Three:
 - Vale of White Horse District Council to reduce carbon emissions by 75% by 2025 and become a carbon neutral council by 2030
 - Vale of White Horse district to reduce carbon emissions by 75% by 2030 and become a carbon neutral district by 2045

The committee believes that the final carbon neutral district date of 2045 is an aspirational target, which can be approved pending further assurance from officers based around ongoing evidence and agreed action. This to be an overarching goal for the council in respect of adopting an early carbon neutral target as outlined in the Council motion put forward on 13 February 2019.

- (b) authorise the committee to review the Climate Emergency Work Programme proposals for further exploration, full evaluation and costing. The activities and actions contained in the themes below be pursued, with a council strategic response being defined in each case:
 - Theme 1, Council Business
 - Theme 2, Partnership
 - Theme 3, Housing
 - Theme 4, Infrastructure
 - Theme 5, Transport
 - Theme 6, Biodiversity
 - Theme 7, Behaviour Change

Points of amendment:

- Theme 5, Transport: Additional point of action to investigate a council project or business partnership, enabling residents, council members and staff access to an electric vehicle hire facility, promoting electric vehicle use in the district.

- Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to review planning options in relation to the location of housing and business developments to prevent the need for long distance commutes.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to work with Oxfordshire County Council to improve and increase the number of cycle paths networks, improving safety and the connection between towns and villages.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to resolve to ask South Oxfordshire District Council to incorporate electric vehicle charging points in the plans for the Crowmarsh council office site.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to review the opportunities for installing charging points at taxi ranks.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to resolve to ask the Planning Department to investigate the requirement for electric car charging points within domestic and business applications.
 - Theme 6, Biodiversity: Additional point to engage and support the community in encouraging biodiversity in their own gardens.
- (c) authorise the committee to support the commissioning of expertise where necessary to define and validate the council's and district's energy consumption and carbon dioxide and equivalent (CO₂e) emissions baselines, and to fully explore, evaluate and cost proposed work programme options. The cost of this scoping exercise should be met within the 2019/20 existing budget. Any increased expenditure outside of the remaining 2019/20 budget will be subject to approval as set out in the council's financial procedures.
- (d) authorise the committee to approve commencement of a communications and engagement plan, to include engagement with members and officers, residents, community groups, businesses, town and parish councils into routine communications by the district councils and the exploration of the creation of a Resident Advisory Group. Additional incorporation of letters to be written to the county council and town and parish councils seeking assistance in meeting carbon targets.
- (e) note that all other Oxfordshire councils have declared or acknowledged a climate emergency and are yet to declare specific actions to achieve targets or publish work programmes.
- (f) authorise the committee to establish a task and finish group to work with officers on putting forward work programme proposals for further evaluation and costing. This will include presenting options back to the committee, to prioritise and recommend to Cabinet for their implementation. Task and finish group appointees were Councillors Alison Jenner, Max Thompson, Eric de La Harpe, Amos Duveen and David Grant.

Councillor David Grant, chairman of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, addressed Cabinet, reporting on the outcome of the committee's first meeting. The committee had recommended some targets, which it believed were ambitious but realistic and achievable. The committee also believed that it was necessary to engage with staff and other councillors to attain the necessary buy-in to tackle the climate emergency.

Cabinet thanked the committee for its recommendations and made several further suggestions for the committee to consider, including:

- promoting alternative transport modes such as public transport
- relying less on electric vehicles that used fossil fuels to generate power
- supporting and encouraging green technologies, such as solar panels
- recommending the fast introduction of greener planning policies by using supplementary planning documents to introduce policy changes quickly, rather than waiting until the adoption of the next local plan
- lobbying government to change building regulations to encourage green technologies
- exploring the use of greener technologies in listed buildings
- encouraging hydrogen technologies
- lobbying for a county-wide cycle network

Councillor Grant welcomed these suggestions and agreed to take them back to the committee for consideration alongside technical advice.

Cabinet supported the setting of climate targets. It was noted that there was an existing budget allocated to tackle the climate emergency. Any work commissioned to assist the council would have to be within existing budget. The committee's recommendations were updated to reflect this. Any proposals for additional budget would have to be considered as part of the council's overall budget proposals for 2020/21. Cabinet also noted that the council would also need to set out its climate emergency policies in its new corporate plan.

RESOLVED to:

(a) adopt the following targets:

- Vale of White Horse District Council to reduce its own carbon emissions by 75% by 2025 and become a carbon neutral council by 2030
- Vale of White Horse district to reduce district-wide carbon emissions by 75% by 2030 and become a carbon neutral district by 2045

The final carbon neutral district date of 2045 is an aspirational target, which can be approved pending further assurance from officers based around ongoing evidence and agreed action. This to be an overarching goal for the council in respect of adopting an early carbon neutral target as outlined in the Council motion put forward on 11 April 2019;

(b) authorise the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee to review the Climate Emergency Work Programme proposals for further exploration, full evaluation and costing. The activities and actions contained in the themes below be pursued, with a council strategic response being defined in each case:

- Theme 1, Council Business
- Theme 2, Partnership
- Theme 3, Housing
- Theme 4, Infrastructure
- Theme 5, Transport
- Theme 6, Biodiversity
- Theme 7, Behaviour Change

Points of amendment:

- Theme 5, Transport: Additional point of action to investigate a council project or business partnership, enabling residents, council members and staff access to an electric vehicle hire facility, promoting electric vehicle use in the district.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to review planning options in relation to the location of housing and business developments to prevent the need for long distance commutes.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to work with Oxfordshire County Council to improve and increase the number of cycle paths networks, improving safety and the connection between towns and villages.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to resolve to ask South Oxfordshire District Council to incorporate electric vehicle charging points in the plans for the Crowmarsh council office site.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to review the opportunities for installing charging points at taxi ranks.
 - Theme 5, Transport: Additional point to resolve to ask the Planning Department to investigate the requirement for electric car charging points within domestic and business applications.
 - Theme 6, Biodiversity: Additional point to engage and support the community in encouraging biodiversity in their own gardens.
- (c) subject to the availability of sufficient existing budget, to authorise the committee to support the commissioning of expertise where necessary to define and validate the council's and district's energy consumption and carbon dioxide and equivalent (CO₂e) emissions baselines, and to fully explore, evaluate and cost proposed work programme options. Any increased expenditure outside of the remaining 2019/20 budget will be subject to approval as set out in the council's financial procedures;
- (d) authorise the committee to approve commencement of a communications and engagement plan, to include engagement with members and officers, residents, community groups, businesses, town and parish councils into routine communications by the district council and explore the creation of a Resident Advisory Group. This should include letters being written to the county council and town and parish councils seeking assistance in meeting carbon targets;
- (e) note that all other Oxfordshire councils have declared or acknowledged a climate emergency and are yet to declare specific actions to achieve targets or publish work programmes; and
- (f) authorise the committee to establish a task and finish group to work with officers on putting forward work programme proposals for further evaluation and costing. This will include presenting options back to the committee, to prioritise and recommend to Cabinet for their implementation. The Task and Finish Group appointees to be Councillors Alison Jenner, Max Thompson, Eric de La Harpe, Amos Duveen and David Grant.

Ca.31 Wootton and St Helen Without Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on the Wootton and St Helen Without Neighbourhood Plan. The report sought Cabinet's recommendation to Council to make the plan part of the council's development plan.

The Cabinet member for planning, Councillor Catherine Webber, had not taken part in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan but, as local ward member, had encouraged the two parishes to do so. Instead, the Leader of the Council presented the report, pointing out that the plan safeguarded the character of the two parishes and provided for a new development at Dalton Barracks, together with a green buffer.

The plan was compatible with the European Union obligations and complied with the Habitats Regulations Assessment. The independent planning inspector has supported the plan and agreed that it should proceed to referendum.

The referendum, held on 24 October 2019, had resulted in 89.3 per cent support for the plan. Therefore, the Leader recommended that Cabinet supported a recommendation to Council to make the plan part of the council's development plan. Cabinet welcomed the plan and supported the recommendation. The local ward member supported the plan and commended the parish on their work.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) make the Wootton and St Helen Without Neighbourhood Development Plan so that it continues to be part of the council's development plan; and
- (b) authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to correct any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors, together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

Ca.32 Budget monitoring

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on revenue and capital budget monitoring for the period April to August 2019, the first five months of the financial year. This showed a projected revenue overspend of £197,000 at the year-end (31 March 2020), and a projected capital underspend of £164,000.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the council had little control over several elements of the budget, such as the amount of housing benefit that could be reclaimed, the legal costs of planning appeals, and the reduced number of planning applications.

Cabinet noted that work had begun to monitor budgetary performance at the end of November 2019. Officers and Cabinet members were working to ensure there was no overspend at the end of the current financial year to avoid impacting on next year's budget.

RESOLVED: to note the budget monitoring report for the period April to August 2019.

Ca.33 Treasury management outturn 2018/19

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on the treasury outturn in 2018/19.

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Joint Audit and Governance Committee, which was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

Cabinet welcomed the report, noting that performance had exceeded targets.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that he would be investigating the possibility of a more flexible policy to allow the council to switch between treasury investments and property investments. Cabinet noted that any change would have to be part of the 2020/21 budget proposals.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the treasury management outturn report 2018/19; and
- (b) approve the actual 2018/19 prudential indicators within the report.

Ca.34 Council tax base 2020/21

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report regarding the setting of the council tax base for 2020/21. Before the council tax could be set by Council, a calculation had to be made of the council tax base: an estimate of the taxable resources for the whole district and for each parish.

Cabinet noted how the council tax base was calculated and noted the assumptions made as part of that calculation. Cabinet was asked to recommend the council tax base to Council. Once set by Council in December, the council tax base would be notified to Oxfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and each parish and town council, to allow them to set their budgets for 2020/21.

Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- (a) that the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2019 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2020/21 be approved;
- (b) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2020/21 be 52,686.4; and
- (c) that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2020/21 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2019.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm