

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 5.00 pm
at 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors Emily Smith (Chair), Debby Hallett (Vice-Chair), Neil Fawcett and Helen Pighills
Officers: Steve Culliford and Mark Stone

Remote attendance:

Cabinet members: Andy Crawford, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber
Officers: Harry Barrington-Mountford, Pat Connell, Adrian Duffield, Lucy Murfett, Susie Royse and Chris Traill
Number of members of the public: 4

Ca.12 Apologies for absence

Councillor Judy Roberts had sent her apologies for absence.

Ca.13 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record both the public and exempt Cabinet minutes of 28 May 2021 and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

Ca.14 Declarations of interest

None

Ca.15 Urgent business and chair's announcements

Four Cabinet members were present in the meeting room; therefore, the meeting was quorate and could proceed. Two officers were also present in the meeting room. Three Cabinet members joined the meeting remotely and were allowed to participate but not vote.

Ca.16 Public participation

Cabinet received statements from two members of the public.

- (1) Heneage Legge-Bourke, the Chair of the Vale of White Horse Campaign to Protect Rural England, made a statement in support of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, in principle. He believed that the plan was a good start but could be improved. For example, the plan was silent on how meeting climate change, the preservation of nature, and economic growth were compatible. The Oxfordshire Plan should not be dominated by the Oxford to Cambridge Arc project. The plan might also undermine the roles of local councillors. There were tough choices to be made; it was a balance. The council should set out its own views on how the plan would affect the Vale. Environmental constraints must be the key consideration, not just in designated areas such as the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but in all areas across the district, including towns and villages. He urged the council to protect the beauty of the Vale of White Horse.
- (2) Mr Euan Hall, Chief Executive of The Land Trust made a statement about the future management of the public open space at Great Western Park in Harwell and Didcot. He proposed that, by using the section 106 commuted sum from the developer of the site, the Trust could manage the open spaces on the council's behalf. It would do this by investing the commuted sum and using the return on that investment to fund the maintenance of open spaces in perpetuity. It would work with the local community to achieve this. He believed that the Trust could achieve more through this method.

The Chair thanked the two speakers for their statements and informed them that their views would be considered before decisions were made on these two subjects.

Ca.17 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet noted that on 13 July 2021, members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee had met informally to discuss the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. They had made a series of suggestions, which had been circulated to Cabinet members in advance of the Cabinet meeting.

Ca.18 Oxfordshire Plan 2050

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The report sought Cabinet's approval for the Regulation 18 Part 2 version of the plan to be subject to public consultation for ten weeks from 30 July 2021 until early October.

All principal councils in Oxfordshire were meeting during this week to consider the same report and recommendations. Two councils had already approved the plan for consultation, three more were meeting today, including this meeting, and a further council would meet tomorrow.

Appended to the report was the Statement of Community Involvement, which Cabinet was also asked to approve. This set out how the consultation would be conducted. This included two Vale community webinars for local residents on 19 August and 22 September.

A briefing had been held on 17 June for all councillors. Also, members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee had met informally on 13 July to consider the plan and had made suggestions, which had been circulated to Cabinet members in advance of this meeting. The suggestions were to improve clarity in the plan and to improve the consultation process. These had been fed back to the Oxfordshire Plan team.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Cabinet minutes

The Cabinet member reported that Regulation 18 Part 2 was the stage at which different options could be tested through public consultation. Following the Regulation 18 consultation, the Regulation 19 stage would be held where the plan would take shape with policy detail. Following the adoption of a motion at the Council meeting on 14 July, this council would be submitting its own consultation response about the sustainability challenges facing Oxfordshire. The Cabinet member encouraged other councillors to promote this consultation to their communities and to respond to the consultation if they wished.

Cabinet supported the recommendations to commence the consultation. The major challenge for the Oxfordshire Plan would be to set out how ongoing growth could be compatible with climate change objectives. The plan had defined what green growth could look like but the policies in the plan were unlikely to meet it in their current form. For Oxfordshire the climate change threats were from increased incidences and severity of flooding, and extreme heat. Every new house added to the carbon footprint. Generally, development in Oxfordshire had resulted in patterns of large numbers of people commuting from their towns and villages into and out of Oxford for work, which also added to the carbon footprint. Any growth should avoid this scenario in future and should be decided on the basis of what Oxfordshire could afford in terms of its natural resources.

Cabinet also noted that there was a separate consultation being undertaken on the government's Oxford to Cambridge Arc project. Councillors believed that it was important that the Oxfordshire Plan was a strong document, which would give Oxfordshire more control over the decisions affecting its future, rather than being driven by the Arc's policies. Hopefully some of the Oxfordshire Plan policies would be replicated across the Arc.

It was noted that the Office of National Statistics had recently downgraded its predictions for population growth. It was suggested that this point should be made as part of the consultation response so that the latest population prediction figures were used as the basis for defining future levels of growth in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The growth figures in the plan should be based on actual, natural need, not on the method of employment growth estimates that had been used in the past.

Cabinet was optimistic that the council, councillors and the public could influence the Oxfordshire Plan policies. It was hoped that the plan would be an exemplar for the country. Cabinet therefore urged the public to respond to the consultation.

Cabinet thanked the Cabinet member, the Oxfordshire Plan officer team, and Vale officers for their work on this plan.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the Regulation 18 (Part 2) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 document for public consultation, as attached at Appendix A to the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 21 July 2021;
- (b) authorise the head of planning to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the documents, and to agree the final publication style, in liaison with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, and subject to agreement with their counterparts in the other four partner local planning authorities; and

- (c) adopt the updated Statement of Community Involvement, which will become the formal basis for the forthcoming Regulation Part 2 consultation.

Chair:

The meeting closed at 5.50 pm