

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet



held on Friday 1 October 2021 at 10.30 am
in the First Floor Meeting Space, 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), Neil Fawcett, Judy Roberts, Bethia Thomas and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steve Culliford and Mark Stone

Remote attendance:

Cabinet member: Councillor Andy Crawford

Officers: Patrick Arran, Harry Barrington-Mountford, Pat Connell, Angela Cox, Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, Simon Hewings, Jeremy Lloyd, Catrin Mathias, Adrianna Partridge, Cheryl Reeves, Cathie Scotting, Toby Warren, and Alison Williams

Guest: Councillor Nathan Boyd

Ca.25 Apologies for absence

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

Ca.26 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as correct records the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 21 July and 6 August 2021 and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

Ca.27 Declarations of interest

Councillor Emily Smith declared a personal interest in item 12 – revision of the Science Vale Enterprise Zone accountable body memorandum of understanding – in so far as she was a director of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Ca.28 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ca.29 Public participation

None

Ca.30 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received and noted an update from other committees. The paper, also published alongside the agenda, contained some recommendations, which Cabinet considered under each relevant item below.

Ca.31 Community infrastructure levy charging schedule adoption

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report, which proposed the adoption of the community infrastructure levy charging schedule. A review of the charging schedule had taken place, including stages for public consultation and independent examination.

The Cabinet member reported that the independent planning inspector had concluded that the council had provided sufficient evidence that showed the proposed rates would not threaten delivery of the local plan. The inspector also concluded that the draft charging schedule would provide an appropriate basis for the collection of community infrastructure levy in the Vale and therefore recommended that the draft charging schedule should be approved.

Cabinet also noted that Scrutiny Committee had supported the proposals.

Cabinet concurred and looked forward to the charging schedule taking effect and bringing community infrastructure benefits to the Vale.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (set out at Appendix 2 to the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 1 October 2021) and the Community Infrastructure Levy Instalments Policy (set out at Appendix 3 to the report), with an implementation date of 1 November 2021; and

RESOLVED subject to Council approval of (a) above, to:

- (b) authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, to make any necessary further minor changes to the documents or a change to the implementation date for the new Community Infrastructure Levy rates.

Ca.32 Developer contributions supplementary planning document adoption

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report, which proposed the adoption of a revised developer contributions supplementary planning document. The report set out the outcome of the consultation on the revised draft document. Changes had been made, as a result of the consultation. Scrutiny Committee had supported the proposed document.

The Cabinet member recommended that the developer contributions supplementary planning document was adopted so that it could come into force alongside the revised community infrastructure rates within the charging schedule. This would help the council deliver the necessary infrastructure to support development across the Vale, as set out in

the local plan. Cabinet agreed, noting that the document would form a supplement to the adopted local plan.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) adopt the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
- (b) authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, to make any necessary further minor changes to the document; and
- (c) agree the proposed approach to preparing a separate section 106 internal protocol document, for use by councillors and officers.

Ca.33 Strategic property review

Cabinet considered the interim head of development and regeneration's report on the strategic property review. This provided an overview of all council assets and the alignment of council business, capital and property asset strategies to ensure that property assets were optimised to meet the council's corporate plan objectives.

Underpinning the delivery of the review outcomes was a land and property asset disposal policy to provide a documented process to support dealing effectively with the council's land and property assets. The Cabinet member believed that the policy would allow the council to:

- take transparent decisions on its land and property assets
- implement the corporate plan's aims
- maximise capital and/or revenue from existing assets
- reduce costs associated with managing the portfolio
- understand potential financial risks/liabilities in holding council-owned assets in the short, medium and long term
- improve efficiency in running the estate, thereby contributing to financially effective delivery of services

The Cabinet member also believed that there was a need to ensure that all relevant services were included in property-making decisions. Setting up an asset management group would provide internal governance and enable inclusivity for cross-council service delivery. Formal decisions would be taken in accordance with the council's constitution, following advice from the asset management group.

Cabinet supported the proposal as this would allow the council to better manage its assets, improve the use of those assets, improve the energy efficiency of the buildings, and support the corporate plan.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the update on the strategic property review;
- (b) approve the Land and Property Asset Disposal Policy;
- (c) approve the council approach to transfer of assets from developers; and

- (d) note that in line with proposed processes set out in the Land and Property Asset Disposal Policy, an Asset Management Group (an advisory non-decision making group) will be set up to review, check and challenge the recommendations from the strategic property review prior to formal decision being taken on disposals of assets.

Ca.34 Tree planting policy

Cabinet considered the interim head of policy and programmes' report on a policy for planting trees on council land. The joint policy outlined how South Oxfordshire and the Vale would protect, plant and manage trees on council land, and how the community would be supported with their tree planting initiatives.

The council had previously sought to increase tree cover, protect trees on their land, and help to achieve their respective carbon neutral targets. The policy also set out how community groups could apply to plant trees on council land.

Cabinet welcomed the policy, as it would support communities that wished to plant trees on council land. Cabinet asked that a review of the tree planting policy was carried out in six months' time, or after the approaching tree planting season, to allow the council to learn from its experience.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the policy for planting trees on council land; and
- (b) conduct a review of the policy in six months' time.

Ca.35 Partnership grant scheme - future options for the scheme

Cabinet considered the head of corporate services' report on a review of options for the partnership grants scheme. The options were to:

1. continue with the status quo, funding the three organisations currently in receipt of a partnership grant, delivering information and advice services for 12 months (within the constraints of the budget)
2. commission an organisation to provide the advice and support services currently provided by the existing recipients or some of them
3. develop a policy for the funding that reflected the new corporate priorities and invite all local voluntary and community sector organisations to apply
4. close the current scheme, or reduce the value of the scheme, given the council's other financial pressures.

The Cabinet member recommended a blend of options 1 and 2 to allow the council to continue to support the three partnerships with grants over the next 12 months but allowing the council time to commission advice and support services in the future. Cabinet supported this as it would allow the council to define what services it wished to commission with the voluntary sector.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) commission information and advice services from 2023 onwards (budget permitting); and

- (b) extend the current partnership grants to Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizen's Advice Bureau, Wantage Independent Advice Centre (now known as Vale Community Impact), and Community First Oxfordshire towards the provision of services across the district in 2022/23.

Ca.36 Revision of Science Vale Enterprise Zone accountable body memorandum of understanding

Councillor Emily Smith declared a personal interest in this item as she was a director of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Councillor Smith took no part in the debate on this item. In her absence, Councillor Bethia Thomas chaired the meeting for this item.

Cabinet considered the report of the deputy chief executive – partnerships. This sought an amendment to the Science Vale Enterprise Zone accountable body memorandum of understanding with Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Limited and Oxfordshire County Council. The memorandum detailed the retention and distribution of business rates growth income from the Science Vale Enterprise Zone (also known as EZ1), which covered Milton Park and Harwell Campus.

The Cabinet member recommended that the Cabinet agreed to revise the memorandum of understanding. There had been a number of changes to the governance and corporate structure of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, which were relevant to the memorandum. Its wording no longer accurately recorded the way in which the council worked with the partnership and the county council. Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) enter into a revised memorandum of understanding with Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council for the retention and distribution of business rates growth income from the Science Vale Enterprise Zone; and
- (b) to authorise the deputy chief executive – partnerships, in consultation with the Cabinet member for strategic partnerships and place, to finalise terms of the revised memorandum of understanding and to enter into it.

Ca.37 Procurement strategy

Councillor Emily Smith returned to the meeting room and took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, which proposed a new procurement strategy. This set out guidance on how the council should procure goods and services, whilst at the same time supported the council's priorities and strategic themes.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the council had not had a procurement policy to date. The adoption of the strategy and action plan would give the council clear direction and guidance of matters to be considered and procedures to followed when purchasing goods, services and works. In turn, this would help deliver the corporate plan objectives. Additionally, it would minimise the risk of non-compliant procurements, which could be subject to challenge. This would bring better value for money. The strategy also

included an ethical procurement statement setting out the standards the council would require of contractors and suppliers.

Cabinet welcomed the new strategy, its ethical procurement statement and action plan, noting that these documents could be reviewed and updated in future.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the joint procurement strategy and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 1 October 2021;
- (b) approve the procurement action plan and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report; and
- (c) approve the ethical procurement statement and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Ca.38 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021

Cabinet considered the interim head of policy and programmes' report, which set out the first quarterly performance report following adoption of the corporate plan and adoption of the performance management framework.

The report demonstrated the progress made in the reporting period. Scrutiny Committee had reviewed it and had made suggestions for improvements, which Cabinet welcomed. The report would be adapted and improved over time. It was also hoped that in future, the quarterly reports could be published earlier, within six weeks of the end of each quarter.

Cabinet thanked officers for their work in producing the first quarterly report and looked forward to the second quarter report, after which there would be a further review.

RESOLVED: to approve the performance report for quarter 1 of 2021.

Ca.39 Treasury management outturn 2020/21

Cabinet considered the head of finance's outturn report on the council's treasury management activities in 2020/21.

The Cabinet member reported that, despite a difficult operating environment, the council continued to make investments during 2020/21 that maintained security and liquidity, whilst providing a return that mostly exceeded market benchmarks. The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report and was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

Cabinet concurred, noting that during the year, the council's performance had exceeded its budget target during a difficult year with the Covid-19 pandemic. The strong performance had been the result of cash balances being higher during the year and with better interest rates than expected. In addition, there had been no breaches of the prudential limits. Cabinet welcomed the report and thanked officers for their work.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the treasury management outturn report for 2020/21; and
- (b) approve the actual 2020/21 prudential indicators within the report.

Ca.40 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 paragraphs 1-7 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.

Ca.41 Inter-authority agreement

Cabinet agreed in principle to enter into an inter-authority agreement with South Oxfordshire District Council to share the occupation of office space in the proposed new building at Didcot, and agreed to recommend Council to budget for this council's share of the fit out costs.