

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 29 November 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), Neil Fawcett, Andy Foulsham and Diana Lugova

Officers: Luci Ashbourne (Democratic Services Officer), Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer) and Mark Stone (Chief Executive).

Remote attendance:

Councillors: Lucy Edwards and Katherine Foxhall

Officers: Carmella Anderson (Leisure Development Officer), Nick Bennett (Head of Legal and Democratic), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), David Cookson (Infrastructure Implementation Officer), Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment), Mark Hewer (Infrastructure Development Team Leader), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Simon Hill (Team Leader (Environmental Protection)), Karen Lister (Strategic Property Manager), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations), Tom Rice (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Bertram Smith (Broadcasting Officer), Ben Whaymand (Leisure Facilities Team Leader) and (Scott Williams (Environmental Services Manager))

73 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the procedure to be followed.

74 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Caul, Andrew Crawford and Helen Pighills. Councillor Lucy Edwards joined the meeting online.

75 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 27 September 2024 and 18 October 2024 as correct record and agree that the chair sign them as such.

76 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

77 Urgent business

The leader of the council provided an update from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) meeting which had been held earlier in the week. She informed Cabinet that the decision had been taken to disband FOP and reduce to a meeting of leaders of each of the member councils. She advised that a review of the terms of reference would be considered at the January meeting.

78 Public participation

Two members of the public had registered to address Cabinet.

- (1) Chris McCarthy made a statement on behalf of Grove Parish Council in relation to the Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy. He noted the responses which had been provided in response to questions raised at Council and Joint Scrutiny Committee. He highlighted that Grove Parish Council's request for a 3G pitch was well documented and that recent rainfall had made local facilities unusable.
- (2) Lorna Berrett made a statement on behalf of Botley and North Hinksey Parish Council in relation to the Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy. She thanked Scrutiny for the changes that had been suggested in response to her comments to them. She reflected that the acknowledgement of the closure of the Harcourt Hill facility was inadequate and requested that there was a commitment to protect and enhance the facilities with a clear statement that facilities will be provided in Botley. She referenced the petition which had been presented to Council on 23 October 2024.

All speakers were thanked for their contribution and Cabinet noted the points raised.

79 Recommendations and updates from other committees

The 'recommendations and updates from other committees' report was received by Cabinet, and it was agreed to note the report.

80 Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy

Cabinet received the Adoption of the Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy report from the head of policy and programmes. The report sought agreement from Cabinet to adopt the strategies.

The Cabinet member for policy and programmes introduced the report highlighting that this was a joint policy with separate strategies for each district but a cross boundary element covering Didcot. He advised that this was a high level assessment which identified need and broadly where that need could be met. The Cabinet member for policy and programmes highlighted that the policy was a direction of travel and not a commitment to deliver and that the document would evolve over time. He advised that the report reflected a point in time and that the subsequent action plan would provide more detail.

Cabinet enquired as to the importance of the document to the submission of the Joint Local Plan 2041. The Cabinet member for policy and programmes confirmed this was supporting evidence and would form part of the examination process.

Cabinet confirmed that accepting the document would not close down consideration of other issues relating to provision. It was confirmed that there were sufficient mechanisms in place through the action plan to review this.

RESOLVED:

- a) To adopt the Vale of White Horse Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy
- b) To adopt the Vale of White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy

81 Council Tax Base Setting 2025/26

Cabinet received the Council Tax Base 2025/26 report from the head of finance. The report sought a recommendation to Council to approve the report, agree the amount calculated as the council tax base and the amounts calculated for each parish.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report in the absence of the Cabinet member for finance and property. He advised the Cabinet that the base was required before council tax rates could be set with a requirement to notify Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner of the figure. He highlighted that the figure was a 1.8 per cent increase from last year's base.

Cabinet reflected on the highly technical nature of the report and thanked officers for their work on the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council to

- a) Approve the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2025/26.
- b) Agree 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 2025/26 be 59,151.5.
- c) Agree 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 2025/26 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 29 November 2024.

82 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme 2025/26 - backdating rules

Cabinet received the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme 2025/26 report from the head of finance. The report sought recommendations to Council to adopt the scheme with an amendment to extend the period in which a new claim can be backdated from six months to 12 months.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report in the absence of the Cabinet member for finance and property. He informed Cabinet that the scheme needed to be adopted by 11 March 2025 and the officer recommendation was to continue to adopt with an important amendment to extend the back dating period to 12 months where good cause could be demonstrated.

Cabinet reflected on the positive impact this amendment would have for those most in need and the minor financial impact it would have for the council. Cabinet thanked officers for the report and the work they do to help the most vulnerable residents.

RECOMMENDED to Council that for the 2025/26 financial year onwards the council continues to adopt the previous 2024/25 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme but with the following amendment:

- a) Extend the period in which a new claim for CTR can be backdated from six months to twelve months, where good cause has been demonstrated.

83 Update to the Joint Public Health Funerals Policy

Cabinet received the updated Joint Public Health Funerals Policy report from the head of housing and environment. The report sought adoption of the updated policy and a delegation to the head of housing and environment to make future minor changes in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report. He informed Cabinet that the policy applied to the provision of funerals where no next of kin had come forward or they were unable to make arrangements themselves. Cabinet were being asked to agree an updated version of the policy which brought it in line with current legislation. The updated policy clarified the level of funeral which would be provided. It was confirmed that only a small number of funerals were provided by the council each year (between two and five) but that the provision was important for the affected families notwithstanding the legal requirement to provide this.

Cabinet thanked officers for the report.

RESOLVED: to

- a) adopt the updated Joint Public Health Funerals Policy
- b) authorise the head of housing and environment to make any minor changes to future versions of the Policy in consultation with the Cabinet member for environmental services and waste

84 Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b Decarbonisation Projects

During this item Councillors Fawcett and Thomas requested that it be noted they were Oxfordshire County councillors due to the joint tenancy arrangements at Wantage Leisure Centre. There was no conflict of interest so they continued to participate in the debate and vote on this item.

Cabinet received the Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b Decarbonisation Project report from the head of development and corporate landlord. The report sought recommendations to Council to create the required budget from S106 funds and approval of the expenditure of over £100k.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report. He confirmed that stage 1 of the project had been successfully completed and the shortfall in

funding sought was as a result of the need to repair three sections of the roof which had not been anticipated. He confirmed that it was more cost effective to carry out the works now in advance of the installation of solar panels than to continue and have to repair the roof at a later date.

Cabinet asked for clarification around the contribution from OCC as joint tenant. It was confirmed that they have been notified of the works and associated costs but that this was not in their current budget envelope.

Cabinet reflected that the S106 money which would be used for this was time limited and therefore by utilising this money now when the money was recouped there was then less time pressure for it to be spent. They confirmed that the money would still be limited to use for similar purposes as set out in the S106.

Cabinet thanked officers for their report and requested that the lettering from the report recommendation be resolved.

RECOMMENDED to Council to

- a) create a budget from S106 contributions and release the funds for the capital expenditure at Wantage Leisure Centre phase 3b decarbonisation project, in accordance with 75 (c) of the council's financial procedure rules.
- b) approve the expenditure of over £100k.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet

- c) authorise the head of development and corporate landlord in consultation with the head of finance to allow approved budgets related to approved Cabinet spend of S106 funds and CIL contributions towards the Stage Two project delivery.
- d) authorise the head of development and corporate landlord in consultation with the head of finance to allow the additional budget from S106 funds to cover the current shortfall to complete the decarbonisation project at Wantage Leisure Centre.

85 Section 106 funding - to consider an application by Drayton Parish Council

Cabinet received the S106 Funding Request – Drayton Parish Council – Towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton report from the head of finance. The report sought a recommendation to Council to create a budget for this.

The Cabinet member for planning introduced the report in the absence of the Cabinet member for finance and property. She advised that the full details of the proposal were clearly set out in the report but that this was the first in a series of applications to ensure that a sporting venue owned and run by the parish council could be established.

Cabinet reflected that Drayton was a rapidly growing village and the current facilities were not sufficient. It was also noted that the facilities would have a wider benefit than to just those who lived in the village.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

- a) a budget is created for £278,860.00 towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton, from the section 106 contribution set out in this report;

RESOLVED: Subject to Council creating the above budget: that Cabinet

- b) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the head of legal and democratic to:
 - agree and enter into a funding agreement with Drayton Parish Council regarding the terms of use of the S106 funding; the instalments in which the funding is paid; the timing of instalments; the conditions subject to which instalments are paid and to otherwise protect the interests of Vale of White Horse District Council as the provider of the funding by undertaking legal and financial due diligence including being satisfied that the funding is lawful and compliant with subsidy control provisions
 - approve the payment to Drayton Parish Council of up to £278,860.00 towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton, subject to and in accordance with the funding agreement.

86 Waste Transfer Station Contract Award

Cabinet received the Waste Transfer Station Contract Award report from the head of housing and environment. The report sought approval of the award of contract to the preferred bidder.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report. Cabinet were reminded that should they wish to make reference to information in the confidential appendix that this would need to be done in closed session. The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste highlighted that it was a statutory requirement to provide this service and that there were no Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in the district to which Dry Mixed Recyclate (DMR) could be transferred directly. Transfer would be carried out by the collection vehicles depositing their loads at a transfer facility, for it then to be bulked and to HGVs for onward transport to the re-processor.

Cabinet thanked officers for progressing this procurement.

RESOLVED: to approve the award of the contract for a new transfer station facility to handle the council's dry mixed recycling (DMR) to the preferred bidder. The contract would run for a minimum of five years, starting in June 2026.

87 Exclusion of the public, including the press

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items 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 3 and 5 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.

88 Waste Transfer Station Contract Award

Not required. The report was considered in public session.

89 Recommendations and updates from other committees

The confidential 'recommendations and updates from other committees' report was received by Cabinet, and the recommendations would be considered at the relevant item.

90 Land Acquisition - see confidential minutes.

Cabinet agreed to the land acquisition.

The meeting closed at 12.06 pm