

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Mrs Ann Ducker, MBE (Chairman)

Ms Anna Badcock, Mr David Dodds, Mrs Judith Nimmo-Smith, Reverend Angie Paterson and Mr Bill Service

Also present

Mrs Celia Collett
Mrs Eleanor Hards
Mr D Turner

Officers:

Mr Steve Bishop, Mrs Kathy Fiander, Mr P Howden, Mr William Jacobs, Mr Matt Prosser, Mrs Margaret Reed, Mr Bob Watson

Officer apologies

Mr David Buckle and Mrs Anna Robinson

15 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

Mr David Turner stated from the public gallery that he was a member of the Culham local liaison committee. The code of conduct did not require that he took any action as a result of this declaration so he addressed Cabinet on *delivering accelerated housing growth in Science Vale*.

16 Minutes of the previous meeting, 17 October 2013

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2013 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

17 Delivering accelerated housing growth in Science Vale

Cabinet considered the report of the Strategic Director that sought approval for a project that will accelerate housing growth across the Science Vale area of South and

Vale and asked that both councils established budgets to allow the project to proceed. Both councils had been successful in securing a total of £2.06 million in grant funding from the Large Sites Capacity Fund.

Mrs C Collett addressed Cabinet. In response to Mrs Collett's question, Mrs Ducker confirmed that she had noted the request for district and parish councillors to be given an opportunity to provide information on infrastructure and community needs across Science Vale.

Mrs E Hards addressed Cabinet. In reply to the questions, Mrs Ducker stated that the grant funding could be used to speed up the processing of section 106 agreements, the resourcing of financial appraisals, providing training for developer technical and legal teams and providing extra staff to put deals together within weeks. The split of the funding would be reviewed as expenditure progressed. Responses to the remaining questions would be provided outside the meeting.

Mr D Turner addressed Cabinet. In response, Mrs Ducker advised that overall housing numbers would not increase and that whilst Culham formed part of the promotion of Science Vale UK, it was not part of the enterprise zone. Therefore it did not fall within the scope of this project. In terms of the employment of officers to deliver the projects, contracts would be subject to review and extension depending on success in the role.

Cabinet agreed the recommendations to deliver a 30 per cent increase in the rate of housing delivery across the Science Vale area, which would also provide the councils with an opportunity to understand the barriers to housing development and put in place actions to overcome such barriers to speed up housing delivery. In so doing it would help to meet housing need for those working in the knowledge economy in Science Vale and for those on the housing waiting list that need affordable housing.

RESOLVED: to

- a) recommend to Council the approval of a revenue budget, in 2013/14, of £525,000, funded from a £1.025 million capacity fund grant;
- b) recommend to Council the approval of a revenue budget, in 2014/15, of £500,000 funded from the second tranche of capacity fund grant;

Subject to Council approving the budget, **that Cabinet:**

- c) approves the project to accelerate housing growth in the Science Vale Growth Area, funded by the DCLG capacity fund;
- d) authorises the strategic director, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, if necessary as an exception to contracts procedure rules, to use the fund to commission and pay for works necessary to deliver the core objectives of the project as set out in the offer letter attached as an appendix to the report of the strategic director to Cabinet on 5 December 2013;

- e) approves South Oxfordshire District Council as the accounting body for the administration of the capacity fund and as the accountable body to DCLG for appropriate use of the fund.

18 Council tax base 2014/15

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance that asked Cabinet to recommend Council to approve the council tax base for 2014/15.

Mr D Turner addressed Cabinet. In response, Mr William Jacobs, Head of Finance and Mr Paul Howden, Revenues and Benefits Client Manager, advised that two inspectors that worked for Capita would inspect properties on a three-monthly basis, sometimes seeking access via the owners. Mr Howden explained situations in which adult residents qualified for a reduction in council tax. Mr Jacobs explained the factors that determined the non-collection rate of council tax and advised that a collection rate of 98 per cent was considered appropriate in spite of the possible effect on collection as a result of the spare room subsidy.

Cabinet agreed the recommendations thus meeting legal requirements in the calculation of the council tax base as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Council:

1. to agree that, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) and the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended)
 - i. from 1 April 2014 the council tax discount to be applied on unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings (Class C in the Regulations) be 100 per cent for one calendar month and zero per cent thereafter. Where an unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling has already received the current 25 per cent discount for more than one calendar month on 1 April 2014, it shall receive zero discount. Where an unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling has received a 25 per cent discount for less than one calendar month on 1 April 2014, it shall receive a 100 per cent discount for the number of days required to reach one calendar month and then zero per cent discount thereafter. In considering whether a dwelling has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for any period, any one period not exceeding six weeks, during which it was not unoccupied and substantially unfurnished shall be disregarded.
2. to 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 2014/15;
3. to agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District

Council as its council tax base for the year 2014/15 be 53,217.1;

4. to agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District Council as the council tax base for the year 2014/15 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 5 December 2013.

19 Council tax reduction scheme grant for town and parish councils

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance that asked Cabinet to recommend to Council the total amount of council tax reduction scheme grant that will be passed down to town and parish councils for 2014/15, how the amounts for individual town and parish councils will be calculated, and the actual amounts for town and parish councils.

Mr D Turner advised that he had wished to address Cabinet on the matter of advising parish councils about the scheme but that he was now satisfied that the matter was being communicated very clearly.

Taking into account the views of the Scrutiny Committee and those of town and parish councils, Cabinet agreed the recommendations set out in the report to mitigate the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on their taxbases.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Council:

1. that the total council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed down to town and parish councils for 2014/15 be **£212,252**;
2. that the individual amounts for town and parish councils be calculated based on their relative need after considering the negative impact of the council tax reduction scheme on parish taxbases;
3. that the individual grant amounts for towns and parishes are as set out in Appendix 2 to the report of the Head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2013.

The meeting closed at 6.35 pm

Chairman

Date