

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

**HELD ON THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER 2014 AT 6.00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD**

Present:

Councillors: Anna Badcock, David Dodds, Lynn Lloyd, Judith Nimmo-Smith, Angie Paterson and Bill Service

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, Adrian Duffield, Sophie Horsley, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed, and Anna Robinson

Also present: Councillors John Cotton, Eleanor Hards and David Turner

1 Election of chairman

RESOLVED: to elect Ms Anna Badcock as chairman for this meeting.

2 Apologies

None

3 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

Councillors John Cotton and David Turner, who both made statements at the meeting on the Culham Science Centre supplementary planning document, both declared non-pecuniary interests as they were members of the Culham Local Liaison Committee.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting - 8 May 2014

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 May 2014 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

5 Public participation

Councillors John Cotton, Margaret Davies, Eleanor Hards and David Turner had all requested to address Cabinet. Their questions/statements are recorded in the relevant minutes below.

With regard to Margaret Davies' question, this related to Cabinet's consideration of undertaking civil enforcement of on-street parking, which was not on the agenda for

this meeting. The following question was put at the meeting in Margaret Davies' absence.

"As the civil enforcement of parking has been on the Cabinet work programme since 20 December 2013, can an update on progress please be provided?"

The Cabinet member with responsibility for the car parking service responded as follows:

"Since last December, officers have met with parish clerks and councillors representing the four main towns to discuss the implications of civil parking enforcement. Subsequently we have received written confirmation from the towns that they support the council pursuing civil parking enforcement.

In addition, last month officers provided a briefing, updating cabinet members. This included the financial implications, including details from West Oxfordshire District Council from last year which showed that the civil parking enforcement in West ran at quite a considerable loss. Subsequently officers have been tasked with gathering more detail, firstly from the larger villages on how big a problem illegal on-street parking is in their area, and secondly more financial feasibility studies. The plan is then to present this information to the town and parishes at the forum in November.

Also, officers are producing a more general briefing paper on civil parking enforcement that could potentially be distributed to all councillors so they could see the facts for themselves. This should be ready next week."

6 Treasury management outturn 2013/14

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report which monitored the council's treasury management performance in 2013/14. This showed that the investment income was higher than predicted in the 2013/14 budget.

The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee had welcomed the report and was satisfied that the treasury activities were carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy. Cabinet was pleased with the treasury management performance also.

RECOMMEND: to Council on 16 October 2014

- (a) to approve the treasury management outturn report for 2013/14; and
- (b) to approve the actual 2013/14 prudential indicators set out in the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 9 October 2014.

7 Future delivery of corporate services

Cabinet considered the strategic director's report on a proposal to test the market with a view to extending the financial services contract to other corporate services.

Eleanor Hards made a statement to Cabinet expressing concern at the proposal to include democratic services in the list of services for market testing. Councillors were dependent on impartial advice offered by this service and this could be lost if the service was privatised.

David Turner made similar points, expressing concern at the proposal to include democratic services in the corporate services contract. He also questioned whether officers had any knowledge from political parties on the future availability of the new homes bonus to the council. He questioned whether the outsourcing of services was a full Council decision, whether there would be efficiencies and economies of scale, whether the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of contracting out services had taken into account the problems experienced in the early stages of the financial services contract, whether Cabinet would have forecast redundancy figures when it met in December, and whether opposition members could have access to the project board working on this contract.

The strategic director responded to the points made. He believed that all services identified in the report should be market tested and drew comparisons with the high quality outsourced benefits service where the contractor already provided impartial advice to vulnerable people and councillors. He was not aware of any stated intention by the political parties to withdraw new homes bonus funding to the council but explained that all political parties had highlighted public spending including new homes bonus as areas in need of reform. The decision to outsource services was an operational decision, not a change to any council policy, and therefore the decision lay with Cabinet. Efficiencies and economies of scale had not yet been demonstrated but Cabinet would not be advised to outsource if service quality became unacceptable; value for money comprised quality and cost and officers had already given quality a higher weighting in this project in the appointment of our technical consultant (70 per cent quality: 30 per cent cost). Cabinet would not have forecast redundancy figures in December because the council could not know if there would be any redundancies until after it had analysed tenders in 2015. Opposition members could have access to the project board if cabinet allowed it. He added that the option of in-house bids to run the services had been discounted but that in-house teams were being supported to transform during 2015 in order for them to be in the best shape possible when they were compared with market tenders on a value for money basis.

Cabinet supported the proposal to test the market but would not determine which services would be outsourced at this stage. Cabinet asked that property management was added to the list of services subject to market testing.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) confirm the re-tendering of financial services rather than seek to bring the services back in-house, with the possible exception of the provision of the financial management system which should be linked to the provision of accountancy services;
- (b) confirm the following services should have detailed specifications written: accountancy, internal audit, CCTV operations, democratic services, land charges, legal, licensing, car park administration, the Poppin operations, data capture, human resources, street naming and numbering, IT applications support, IT helpdesk, IT infrastructure support, IT security, facilities management, procurement, engineering, and property management; and
- (c) ask the consultant to undertake market engagement activities ahead of the formal procurement process to inform the council's procurement strategy.

8 Culham Science Centre supplementary planning document

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report that recommended endorsement of supplementary planning guidance for Culham Science Centre.

David Turner made a statement in support of the supplementary planning document. In doing so, he reminded Cabinet that he was a member of the Culham Local Liaison Committee, his position being a representative as a layman: a non-pecuniary interest. He confirmed that he had not been asked by Culham Science Centre to address Cabinet on this matter and his statement was purely his own. He believed that more effort was needed to mitigate the traffic impact, such as cycle paths to link into the SUSTRANS network to reduce car use.

John Cotton made a statement and in doing so, he reminded Cabinet that he was a member of the Culham Local Liaison Committee, but this represented a non-pecuniary interest. He was content with most of the proposed supplementary planning document but raised concerns at the future of the gateway area near the site entrance. He believed that the document needed to safeguard this area. Replacing the large fusion building with new buildings at the gateway would be inappropriate development. He believed that the document should also tackle the impact of increased traffic that would be generated from the development of the site and that the Local Enterprise Partnership's proposed river crossing should be referred to.

Accompanying Mr Cotton was Chris Neal of Clifton Hampden Parish Council. Mr Neal was supportive of the document with the exception of development at the gateway. The parish council had removed Culham Science Centre from its neighbourhood plan as it believed that there would be no development on the gateway site. He also wished to see more cycle routes to reduce car usage.

A motion to amend paragraph 4.24 of the supplementary planning document was moved and seconded, with additions in bold type and deletions crossed through as follows:

'Any development at the potential new gateway area (as shown in Figure MF7) would need to comply with national guidance on the value and purpose of the Green Belt, and the appropriate policies of the South Oxfordshire District Council development plan. **Specifically, it would need to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances for development in the Green Belt. Development proposals should demonstrate the highest quality of design, and should enhance the setting of the gateway. Important factors which must be considered include the scale and layout of buildings, respect for the built and natural character of the area, the openness of the Green Belt in the setting of the gateway, and the need to avoid overlooking neighbouring homes.** ~~Particular importance will be placed on the quality of design and the scale of proposed buildings in the setting of the gateway. Examples of considerations for proposals will be the built and natural character of the area, building scale, and the avoidance of over-looking.~~'

However, the motion was later withdrawn to allow consultation with Culham Science Centre on the amended wording proposed for paragraph 4.24. Cabinet considered that although the supplementary planning document was not policy in itself, it would form part of the overall development plan for the area and added detail to policies, especially about how policy would be delivered. Culham Science Centre's support

was important. If the Centre supported the wording change, Cabinet was content for the Cabinet member to approve the document; if not, the document should be reconsidered by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To defer consideration of the Culham Science Centre Supplementary Planning Document pending consultation with Culham Science Centre on the proposed changes to paragraph 4.24; and
- (b) That if Culham Science Centre is content with the proposed changes to the supplementary planning document these can be approved by the Cabinet member with responsibility for planning, otherwise the document shall be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

The meeting closed at 7.16 pm

Chairman

Date