

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

**HELD ON THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER 2014 AT 6.00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD**

Present:

John Cotton (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, David Dodds, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Lynn Lloyd, Judith Nimmo-Smith, Angie Paterson, and Robert Simister

Apologies:

Bill Service tendered apologies.

Officers: John Backley, Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Suzanne Malcolm, Ian Matten, Margaret Reed, and Anna Robinson

Also present: Eleanor Hards and David Turner

9 Apologies

Councillor Bill Service had sent his apologies for absence.

10 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

Elizabeth Gillespie reported that she was chairman of the local action group involved in the Oxfordshire LEADER programme but was not the council's representative. Therefore, she declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Oxfordshire LEADER programme item (minute 16 refers).

11 Minutes of the previous meeting - 9 October 2014

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 October 2014 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

12 Public participation

Councillor David Turner had requested to address Cabinet on four agenda items:

- Review of mixed recycling bring sites
- Oxfordshire LEADER project

- Council tax base
- Council tax reduction scheme grant to towns and parishes

13 Future of corporate services

Cabinet considered the strategic director's report on the future delivery of corporate services. Since Cabinet's last meeting, the council's consultant had informally tested the market to identify which services should be market tested in 2015. The report sought Cabinet's approval to confirm the services that should be market tested in 2015, confirm those that should not, approve two service package procurements, authorise approval of the procurement strategy, and negotiate an agreement with other partner councils.

Cabinet questioned the consultant, John Newton, on the recommendation to have two service package procurements. Mr Newton suggested that this would give the council more flexibility and a greater chance of achieving value for money by packaging together similar services that were likely to be attractive to the market.

Cabinet agreed the recommendations, believing that this presented an opportunity for the council to achieve efficiency savings, improved resilience, and improved service quality.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) confirm the following services should be jointly market-tested in 2015: revenues, benefits and associated financial services in the current contract; accountancy, internal audit, land charges, licensing, debt recovery legal activity, car park administration, data capture, human resources, street naming and numbering, IT applications support, IT helpdesk, IT infrastructure support, IT security, facilities management, procurement, engineering and property services;
- (b) confirm that the following services should not be jointly market tested in 2015, but included in the procurement as potential future contract additions: canteen, democratic services, professional legal services, mobile home parks management, CCTV operations, public conveniences cleaning and treasury management;
- (c) approve two service package procurements, being one package comprising 'citizen, corporate, support services', and, one package comprising 'technical, asset and location-based services';
- (d) authorise the Strategic Director in consultation with the leaders to approve the details of the joint procurement strategy; and
- (e) authorise the Strategic Director in consultation with the leaders to negotiate an agreement with other council partners and to approve it.

14 Review of mixed recycling bring sites

Cabinet considered the head of corporate strategy's report that sought approval to remove the mixed recycling bulk bins from the council's bring sites. Officers had carried out a consultation on the proposal that would see the mixed recycling bins

removed but textile recycling bins retained. This proposal resulted from problems of fly-tipping and regular illegal disposal of trade waste at some bring sites.

David Turner, chairman of Scrutiny Committee, addressed Cabinet, seeking assurance that where bins had been removed in the past, this had not resulted in increased instances of fly tipping. He also sought assurance that the textile bins would be retained.

The Cabinet member for waste reported that instances of fly tipping had reduced since the bring site bins had been removed. He confirmed that textile bins would be retained and informed Cabinet that residents would soon be able to recycle textiles at the kerbside, as well as small electrical items.

The consultation results showed that the majority of respondents supported the proposal. Cabinet agreed, as residents were now able to recycle at the kerbside, recycling the same materials at the bring sites was no longer required. Residents could also put out additional recycling in clear bags or cardboard boxes at the kerbside on their recycling collection day.

RESOLVED: to approve the removal of the mixed recycling bulk bins from the council's bring sites throughout the district.

15 Car park fees and charges

Cabinet considered the report of the head of HR, IT, and technical services. This sought Cabinet's views on whether to increase car parking fees and charges in 2015/16 and set out options to do so.

The car park pricing policy balanced the requirement for users to meet the costs of the car parks, with the need for charges to be economically viable having regard to the impact they had on the local economy. With this in mind and the fact that the costs were being covered, Cabinet agreed not to increase fees and charges for 2015/16.

Cabinet recalled that the council offered a half day free parking on one day in December to encourage Christmas shopping locally. The Cabinet member responsible for the car parking service proposed that this should be increased to a whole day free parking. Cabinet agreed. The local communities should be asked which was the most appropriate day.

Cabinet discussed concessions for low emission vehicles and concluded that this should be considered over the course of the following year, after the air quality action plan had been adopted. The Cabinet member also agreed to investigate encouraging use of out of town car parks.

RESOLVED: to make no increase to the car park fees and charges in 2015/16 but to increase the free parking one day in December from half a day to a whole day to encourage local Christmas shopping.

16 Oxfordshire LEADER Project

Elizabeth Gillespie reported that she was chairman of the local action group involved in the Oxfordshire LEADER programme but was not the council's representative.

Therefore, she declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Oxfordshire LEADER programme item.

Cabinet considered the report of the head of economy, leisure and property. This set out details of the Oxfordshire LEADER (the 'Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de L'Economie Rurale' or 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy') programme, and sought agreement in respect of the financial and legal implications of the project on the council.

David Turner, chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, reported that he was content with the proposal but questioned whether, by hosting staff administering this project, the council had a better chance of receiving funding than other district councils. In response, officers reported that this was not the intention. The council would be the accountable body and would not allocate grant funding. Grants would be awarded by the local action group.

Cabinet considered that this would benefit the district and its rural communities, encouraging economic growth in villages resulting in more local employment and less travelling. Therefore Cabinet supported the project by agreeing to the council being the accountable body. The officer reported that Oxfordshire's bid had been successful but the start date or the actual sums involved were unknown at this stage.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree to the council taking on the role of accountable body for the Oxfordshire LEADER programme, to include the hosting of staff associated with the programme, and
- (b) authorise the head of economy, leisure and property to carry out the day-to-day management of this role.

17 Business rate pooling and business rate distribution

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on business rates pooling and distribution.

The report explained that in the future the council might have the opportunity to form a 'business rates pool' with other principal councils in Oxfordshire and to be a member of a group of councils that shares the surpluses or losses made by the pool. Decisions on whether to be part of the pool and the distribution group would need to be made annually and at short notice as these decisions would be dependent on government information released as part of its settlement announcement each December. The report sought authority for the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make the annual decisions on whether the council should enter into a "business rate pool" and/or whether to join the 'business rate distribution group'. Cabinet agreed with the proposal.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make annual decisions on whether the council should enter into a "business rate pool" with other local authorities if it appears to be financially advantageous to do so; and

- (b) authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to make annual decisions on whether the council should enter into a “business rate distribution group” with other local authorities if it appears to be financially advantageous to do so.

18 Council tax base

Cabinet considered the head of finance’s report that asked Cabinet to recommend Council to approve the council tax base for 2015/16.

Before the council tax could be set by the council, it had to calculate the council tax base: an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area. The council tax base for the district had to be notified to Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner by 31 January 2015. Each parish and town council was also notified of the figure for its area.

David Turner, the chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, questioned why some dwellings qualified for a 50 per cent council tax reduction, and questioned whether the proposals in the report amounted to a policy change. The officer reported that he would respond outside of the meeting to clarify why some dwellings qualified for a 50 per cent council tax reduction. He also reported that the report did not recommend any policy change.

Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council

- (a) That the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 4 December 2014 for the calculation of the council’s tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2015/16 be approved;
- (b) 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 2015/16 be 54,233.6;
- (c) 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 2015/16 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 4 December 2014.

19 Council tax reduction scheme grant to towns and parishes

Cabinet considered the head of finance’s report on the amount of council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed on to town and parish councils. Cabinet was asked to make a recommendation to Council.

The council received an annual grant from the government which could be passed on to town and parish councils to mitigate the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on their tax bases. Passing on the grant could help keep down the town and parish element of council tax bills.

David Turner, the chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, supported the proposal to pass the whole grant on to town and parish councils but asked Cabinet to advise towns and parishes that this grant might reduce in future years and should not be relied on year on year.

Cabinet noted that in December 2013, the government had announced an indicative amount that could be passed on to town and parish councils. Using the methodology adopted for 2014/15, officers estimated that the figure for 2015/16 would be £179,352.

Cabinet considered that the whole grant should be passed on to town and parish councils. This would mitigate the impact on parish precepts. At the same time, Cabinet considered that towns and parishes should be advised that this level of grant was likely to reduce and should not be relied on to keep parish precepts low in future years. In the new financial year, Cabinet would review the methodology to allocate the grant from 2016 onwards.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council

- (a) that the total council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed down to town and parish councils for 2015/16 be £179,352;
- (b) that a review of the methodology for determining the total amount of grant for town and parish councils be undertaken during 2015/16 to assess the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on parish precepts; and
- (c) that the individual grant amounts for towns and parishes are as set out in appendix 1 to the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 4 December 2014.

The meeting closed at 7.12 pm

Chairman

Date