

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

**HELD ON THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 PM
MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON,
OX14 4SB**

Present:

John Cotton (Chairman), Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Tony Harbour, Lynn Lloyd and Robert Simister

Officers: Pat Connell, Steve Culliford, John Dobson, Andrew Down, David Hill, William Jacobs, Alice Lynch, and Margaret Reed

Apologies:

Anna Badcock and Jane Murphy tendered apologies.

69 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

70 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

71 Public participation

Will Hamilton of Henley Town Council addressed Cabinet on the following matters:

- He asked that the leader of South Oxfordshire District Council met with Henley Town Council in December to discuss a number of matters.
- He asked what had been done to address the removal of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- He asked what could be done to raise the level of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The leader, in response, agreed to meet with Henley Town Council in December if a suitable date could be found. On the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the council would be consulting on its budget in around one months' time. The leader agreed to write to the Town Council on the Community Infrastructure Levy.

72 Removal of section 157 restriction

Cabinet considered the report of the head of HR, IT and technical services regarding the removal of restrictions affecting former council houses. All former council houses sold by South Oxfordshire District Council under the right to buy legislation within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty had been affected by a restrictive covenant made pursuant to either section 19 of the Housing Act 1990 or section 157 of the Housing Act 1985. The original purpose of the restriction was to stop former council owned properties being acquired as second or holiday homes in an attempt to keep them available for local people as far as possible.

The report summarised the arguments for and against the removal of the restriction. The arguments in favour were that there was evidence of impact on the ability of owners to sell affected properties because mortgage lenders were reluctant to lend on them; such houses might take longer to sell; and it was difficult for owners to find buyers who would “qualify” to buy under the restriction.

The report set out the results of a public consultation and the evidence gained for and against removing the restriction. The options open to Cabinet were:

1. Retain the restriction and policy in place. Cabinet considered that it was likely that purchasers would continue to have difficulties in a tight mortgage market, and vendors would argue that the restriction was making their homes more difficult to sell.
2. Relax the application of the policy. Cabinet considered that this would be confusing to residents and would further exacerbate the historic inconsistency in enforcement; policy and practice should be aligned.
3. Change the policy so that the restriction was removed. Cabinet preferred this option as the owners of the affected homes would no longer be presented with the difficulties in selling their properties.

Cabinet considered that the section 157 restriction no longer met its original purpose and was placing obstacles in the way of owners selling their former council houses. Cabinet asked officers to discuss the best way of publicising the decision with the council’s communications team.

RESOLVED: to remove the restrictions arising from the application of section 157(3) of the Housing Act 1985.

73 Berinsfield community investment scheme

Cabinet considered the report of the interim head of development and regeneration. This updated Cabinet on the recent engagement with the local community on the Berinsfield community investment scheme. The public was asked to identify which range of projects they would like to see in the village and the scale of new housing development they would find acceptable to pay for the community facilities.

Cabinet noted the feedback from the local public that indicated support for large scale improvements with higher levels of new housing. Cabinet considered that this feedback provided sufficient local support to move to stage 2, which would include preparation of a detailed masterplan, design and strategy and would:

- complete all technical studies and surveys
- engage with landowners and their agents to negotiate land acquisition

- develop detailed cost plans for all components of the project
- carry out appropriate market testing analysis for housing and other components
- carry out financial modelling and risk analysis including scenario testing
- complete specific planning, housing and economic strategies
- develop briefs and specifications for new community facilities and open space
- provide delivery options
- carry out governance and funding proposals
- develop a masterplan suitable to support planning applications

Most residents had favoured the higher levels of facilities provision and associated larger numbers of new housing. However, Cabinet considered that the council should obtain a larger sample of respondents to support a future planning application. This could be done by testing which of the following two high level development scenarios would be regarded as a preferred option by local residents:

- (i) 2,000 to 2,100 new homes and:
 - a viable all-through school for primary age and up to 14 year olds
 - a large community hub with health centre
 - protection and enhancement of green space
 - street and parking upgrades
 - a new sports and leisure centre
- (ii) 1,700 to 1,999 new homes and:
 - new primary schools – refurbish current school and provide one new primary school
 - a large community hub with health centre
 - protection and enhancement of green space
 - street and parking upgrades
 - a new sports and leisure centre

The leader agreed to further discuss the detail of the survey questions with the officers.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) authorise commencement of Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme Stage 2 including preparation of a detailed masterplan, design and strategy for the delivery of social, environmental and economic improvements sought by the community of Berinsfield; and
- (b) carry out a survey amongst local people to decide on which of the following (i-ii) will become the preferred option for level of improvement and scale of development:
 - i) either 2,000 to 2,100 new homes to make viable a range of improvements including an all-through (primary and up to 14 years) school
 - ii) or 1,700 to 1,999 new homes to make viable a range of improvements including refurbishment of current primary school and provision of a new primary school.

74 Council tax base

Cabinet considered the report of the head of finance on the council tax base for 2017/18. Before the council tax could be set by the council, a calculation had to be made of the council tax base, which was an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area.

Cabinet agreed to recommend the council tax base to Council for adoption.

RECOMMENDED: to Council that:

- (a) 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 2017/18 be approved;
- (b) 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 2017/18 be 55,557.2; and
- (c) 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 2017/18 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 1 December 2016.

The meeting closed at 6.31 pm

Chairman

Date