

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet

HELD ON THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2020 AT 6.00 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON, OX14 4SB

Present:

Cabinet members: Councillors Sue Cooper (Chair), David Turner, Pieter-Paul Barker, Robin Bennett, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins and David Rouane

Officers: John Backley, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, Marybeth Harasz, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed, Ricardo Rios, and Mark Stone

Also present:

Councillors Jane Murphy and Sue Roberts

45 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 5 December 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

46 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

47 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

48 Public participation

Ginette Camps-Walsh made a statement to Cabinet on behalf of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Planning Group. She urged Cabinet to retain the council grants to neighbourhood planning groups.

49 Recommendations from other committees

Cabinet received an update from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee chair, Councillor Sue Roberts, on the work undertaken to date and on the committee's plans.

The committee sought Cabinet's support and a budget for its year one work programme. This would take forward the highest impact climate emergency projects within the available budget.

Cabinet welcomed the committee's year one work programme and confirmed that the budget, as requested, had been included within Cabinet's budget proposals for 2020/21. It was noted that there would be a climate emergency conference to which all staff and councillors would be invited. Cabinet also asked that the committee considered engagement with parish councils.

RESOLVED: to support the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's year one work programme.

50 Neighbourhood planning funding

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on changes to the government's neighbourhood planning grants. The report sought approval to end the council's grant support to community groups preparing or reviewing neighbourhood plans.

Cabinet noted that the way the government funded neighbourhood planning had changed. The government grant to district councils had reduced by £10,000 per plan. Instead, the government was offering community group grants directly, rather than through district councils. Cabinet considered that it should no longer offer grants to community groups as these were now being offered directly by the government. The council would continue to support neighbourhood plans with officer advice through the dedicated neighbourhood planning team, and by funding the costs of examination and referendums.

Officers were asked to monitor the impact of this decision. The council could reconsider this if grant funding became available from government once again.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) cease the council's district neighbourhood planning grant support from 1 April 2020; and
- (b) support neighbourhood planning groups in securing alternative grant funding towards developing new and revising neighbourhood plans.

51 Didcot Garden Town

Cabinet considered the head of partnership and insight's report on Didcot Garden Town. The report recommended approval of a revised governance structure and approval of project priorities.

The Cabinet member reported that the revised governance model was simpler and more inclusive, adding a parish council representative to the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board.

It was noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 16 January 2020 and supported the recommendations but had suggested the following changes:

- the parish council representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board be chosen from the five parish councils within the Didcot Garden Town boundary; and

- recommend that the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board considers adding a voting member to increase its environmental representation.

The Cabinet member proposed the recommendations set out in the report, together with Joint Scrutiny Committee's additions. Cabinet supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the operating guidelines, terms of reference and revised governance for the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board and sounding boards, as set out in appendix 2 to the head of partnership and insight's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020, with the following changes:
 - (i) the parish council representative on the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board be chosen from the five parish councils within the Didcot Garden Town boundary;
 - (ii) recommend that the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board considers adding a voting member to increase its environmental representation;
- (b) agree to name the nominated Didcot Garden Town Board as the 'Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board';
- (c) agree the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan project priorities, as set out in the head of partnership and insight's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020; and
- (d) delegate authority to the head of partnership and insight to apply for future funding opportunities that directly align with the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan as appropriate.

52 Treasury management mid-year monitoring

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report, which monitored the councils' treasury management activities during the first six months of 2019/20. This showed that the council had achieved higher treasury management income than anticipated during the period.

The report also set out details of a breach of South Oxfordshire's treasury management strategy resulting from a contradiction in the counterparty limits. The report recommended that the 2020/21 strategy was updated to correct this contradiction; Cabinet concurred.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) note that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy;
- (b) approve the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020; and
- (c) agree the changes to the counterparty limits identified in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the interim head of finance's report.

53 Treasury management and investment strategy 2020/21

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on the proposed treasury management and investment strategy for South Oxfordshire in 2020/21. The strategy included the changes to the counterparty limits discussed under the previous minute.

It was noted that the council's treasury management investments were governed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's code. Any change to the types of investments would need to be part of a review for 2021/22 strategy.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- (a) approve the treasury management strategy 2020/21, set out in appendix A to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020;
- (b) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2020/21 to 2022/23, as set out in appendix A to the interim head of finance's report; and
- (c) approve the annual investment strategy 2020/21, set out in appendix A (paragraphs 41 to 82) to the interim head of finance's report, and the lending criteria detailed in table 5 to that report.

54 Capital strategy 2020/21 to 2029/30

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report, which sought approval of the capital strategy 2020/21 to 2029/30. The strategy outlined the approach to capital spending, based on the council's corporate strategy, and was linked to the corporate objectives, the medium-term financial strategy, and the management of projects and programmes, including property management.

Cabinet supported the capital strategy and recommended its approval to Council.

RECOMMENDED: to Council to approve the capital strategy 2020/21 to 2029/30 which is contained in appendix one of the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020.

55 Revenue budget 2020/21 and capital programme to 2024/25

Cabinet considered the interim head of finance's report on the revenue budget 2020/21 and the capital programme to 2024/25.

In preparing the budget, Cabinet was unable to increase council tax beyond £5 per Band D property, and had to use reserves to balance its budget. Cabinet expressed concern at being unable to plan long term as it did not know what, if anything, would be replacing the New Homes Bonus government grant.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that before Cabinet considered the budget and recommended it to Council, Scrutiny Committee should be asked for its views on the budget as a whole. The budget proposal included the creation of a transformation budget to investigate revenue income generation options during 2020/21. The proposals also included £106,000 for the climate emergency year one work programme. Car parking fees and charges would remain the same, pending a review.

Cabinet discussed the grants budget and agreed to consult Scrutiny Committee on whether the budget for councillor grants should be reduced by 50 per cent from £180,000 to £90,000. However, the council would keep the cost base unchanged and use the officer capacity to help communities find other income sources.

The Chair reported that Cabinet would meet again on 11 February to consider Scrutiny Committee's comments, before recommending the budget to Council.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Cabinet is minded to adopt recommendation 1 and minded to recommend Council to adopt recommendation 2, as set out in the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2020, subject to a reduction from £500,000 to £410,000 in recommendation 2(e) by halving the councillor grants budget from £180,000 to £90,000;
- (b) that Cabinet invites Scrutiny Committee's comments on (a) above; and
- (c) that Cabinet reconsiders the interim head of finance's budget report at a Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2020 at 9.30am and makes recommendations to Council on 13 February 2020.

56 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item 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 1,2 and 3 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.

57 Grounds maintenance and public convenience contract

Cabinet agreed an option for how the grounds maintenance and public convenience cleaning services could be delivered in future.

58 Corporate services contract

Cabinet received an update on the corporate services contract.