

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

## Cabinet

HELD ON THURSDAY 6 APRIL 2017 AT 6.00 PM

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

### Present:

John Cotton (Chairman), Anna Badcock, Elizabeth Gillespie, Tony Harbour, Lynn Lloyd, Jane Murphy and Robert Simister

### Officers:

Jayne Bolton, Gerry Brough, Steve Culliford, David Hill, William Jacobs, Clare Kingston, Alice Lynch, Helen Novelle, Ian Price, Mark Stone and David Turner

### Also present:

David Turner

### 91 Apologies for absence

Councillor Will Hall had sent his apologies for absence.

### 92 Minutes

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 February 2017 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

### 93 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

### 94 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None

### 95 Public participation

Councillor David Turner requested to speak on the item relating to the proposed individual grants scheme. This is recorded under minute Ca.97.



Listening Learning Leading

## 96 Referrals from Scrutiny Committee

Joint Scrutiny Committee had raised two questions to put to Cabinet for consideration regarding the Five Councils' Partnership:

1. How are we monitoring the impact on retained staff of the Five Councils' Partnership?
2. What is the plan if one of the contractors was to fail as a company?

Cabinet noted that Councillor Lynn Lloyd, the Cabinet member with responsibility for the Five Councils' Partnership, would provide a written response to the questions above.

## 97 Proposed new individual councillor grant scheme

Cabinet considered the head of corporate strategy's report on a new scheme to allow individual councillors to award grants. This followed the Council decision in February 2017 to approve a budget for this grant scheme. The report set out a policy for Cabinet's approval.

Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft policy at its meeting on 4 April 2017 and welcomed the proposed scheme but recommended that the policy was amended to:

1. delete 'community festivals and events' from the list of projects/services which could not be funded, and
2. include a deadline or a number of deadlines for submitting applications, rather than limiting applications to a set period during the year.

Councillor David Turner addressed Cabinet, welcomed the new grant scheme but asked Cabinet to consider introducing deadlines to avoid the situation where councillors allocated funds early in the year and had insufficient funds for applications received at a later date.

The Cabinet member with responsibility for grants, Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie, reported that Council had allocated a budget for these grants for one year, the intention being to pilot the scheme in 2017/18 before evaluating its outcomes. Councillor Gillespie had weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of Scrutiny Committee's suggestions and recommended that community festivals and events should be included in the list of projects that councillors should be able to fund. However, Councillor Gillespie recommended that setting a deadline for councillors would be too restrictive and the scheme should leave it open to councillors to decide which applications were most deserving of a grant. This could be reviewed at the end of the pilot year.

Cabinet concurred with this recommendation. The policy would allow the council to pilot the scheme for each councillor to award up to £5,000 to fund community projects benefitting their ward. However, it was considered important that each councillor must attend training on the scheme before allocating any grants.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) approve the individual councillor grant policy, attached at appendix one to the head of corporate strategy's report to Cabinet on 6 April 2017, subject to amending the policy to allow community festivals and events to be funded; and
- (b) authorise the head of service with responsibility for grants to release payments of up to £5,000 in accordance with the ward councillor's decision.

## 98 Commuted sums and affordable housing

Cabinet considered the report of the interim head of development, regeneration and housing. The report suggested an approach to using commuted sums from developers to provide affordable housing. On rare occasions, it was not possible for developers to provide affordable housing on their site. If the council believed that this was for good reasons, and that viability was not the issue, it could require the developer to pay the council a commuted sum that could be used to provide affordable housing on any other appropriate site in the vicinity of the original development site.

Cabinet considered the options to use commuted sums:

1. To meet a shortfall in the delivery of rented accommodation or to increase the range of affordable tenures.
2. To provide new affordable housing that met specialist needs.
3. To provide new affordable housing for people with a strong local connection.

The use of commuted sum payments to assist in the delivery of new affordable housing could be in the form of a direct grant to a registered provider. However in some cases, depending on viability, it might be appropriate to provide commuted sums as a reimbursable investment, so the council received a return on the invested commuted sums.

The Joint Scrutiny Committee had supported the proposed approach but recommended that an annual report was produced on the status of commuted sums payments received and to detail expenditure. Cabinet concurred with this suggestion.

Cabinet considered that there was a need to approve an approach for the spending of commuted sums, which allowed for the use of these payments to provide affordable housing. Cabinet supported the approach and the use of the three options with the intention of primarily increasing the overall housing stock in the district. However, commuted sums should not be restricted to use for new-build properties only. If an opportunity arose to bring an empty home back into use then Cabinet considered that commuted sums should be used to assist such projects.

**RESOLVED:** to use commuted sums primarily for the purpose of encouraging the delivery of new-build affordable housing to:

- (i) meet a shortfall in the delivery of rented accommodation, or increase the range of affordable tenures; or
- (ii) provide new affordable housing that meets specialist needs; or
- (iii) provide new affordable housing for people with a strong local connection.

## 99 Market Place Mews, Henley

Cabinet deferred consideration of a report on land at Market Place Mews, Henley to allow for further discussions.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm

Chairman

Date

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