

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet

HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 AT 6.00 PM

THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL, ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

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

Officers: Emma Baker, Pat Connell, Steve Culliford, Adrian Duffield, Simon Hewings, George Jackson, Suzanne Malcolm, Lucy Murfett, Margaret Reed, Mark Stone, Vivien Williams, Ken Arlett, Anna Badcock, David Bretherton, Stefan Gawrysiak, Lynn Lloyd, Jo Robb and Ian Snowdon

Also present:

Councillors: Ken Arlett, Anna Badcock, David Bretherton, Stefan Gawrysiak, Lynn Lloyd, Jo Robb and Ian Snowdon

James Goudie QC and Robert Walton QC

52 Apologies for absence

None

53 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

54 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

55 Public participation

Cabinet received statements from ten members of the public.

- (1) Ann Prichard, chairman of Chalgrove Parish Council, spoke against the local plan, in particular its inclusion of the strategic housing allocation at Chalgrove Airfield.



Listening Learning Leading

- (2) Andrew Waite-Brown, chairman of Forest Hill and Shotover Parish Council, spoke against the local plan and urged Cabinet members to reject it and produce a greener local plan.
- (3) Ginette Camps-Walsh, chairman Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, urged Cabinet to develop a greener local plan.
- (4) David Adams, a parish councillor for Risinghurst and Sandhill Parish Council, asked Cabinet to revise the local plan, in particular by protecting the Oxford Green Belt and by removing the Bayswater Brook housing site allocation.
- (5) Angela Dickinson spoke on behalf of Beautiful Barton and Friends of Bayswater Brook, opposing the local plan and urging Cabinet to protect the green belt and not allocate houses at Bayswater Brook.
- (6) John Walsh urged Cabinet to vote against adoption of the local plan and to protect the green belt. There were other sites outside of the green belt more suitable for strategic housing allocations.
- (7) Paul Boone, on behalf of Chalgrove Airfield Action Group, believed that the local plan was unsound, and that Chalgrove Airfield was an unsustainable location for a new strategic housing development.
- (8) Caroline Baird spoke against the local plan and the inclusion of a strategic housing allocation at Culham. This was in the green belt, which should be protected.
- (9) Eugenie Buchan urged Cabinet to vote against the local plan's adoption as the plan would do irreversible harm to the local environment.
- (10) Anne-Marie Sweeney believed that the adoption of the local plan would be disastrous for the environment and local communities, and urged Cabinet to reject the plan, protect Bayswater Brook and the green belt.

The chair thanked the speakers for their contributions.

56 Recommendations from other committees

The Scrutiny Committee had met on 7 December 2020 to discuss the Cabinet report on the local plan. The committee noted the report but offered no recommendation to Cabinet.

57 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 adoption

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan to 2035.

The Cabinet member for planning introduced the report and reminded Cabinet of some key events leading to this point. The local plan had been submitted by the previous administration in March 2019 after full Council had approved it in December 2018. This included the strategic housing site allocations. In April 2019, the council declared a climate emergency, and in May 2019 a new administration was elected at the district council elections. The new administration sought to understand the rationale behind the

plan, sought expert advice, and reflected on whether a more climate-aware plan could be developed at a pace to protect the district from speculative development.

The council's consideration of options on a revised local plan were halted by the intervention of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's direction prevented full Council considering the options and instructed the council to progress the plan through examination to adoption by the end of December 2020.

The examination was carried out in the summer 2020, during which some councillors suggested improvements to the local plan to recognise the reality of the climate emergency and better reflect the local housing market. The inspector had agreed with some of these suggestions and included in these in his suggested modifications, such as a policy on zero-carbon housing. Cabinet welcomed this. Overall, the inspector found the local plan to be 'sound'. The report recommended that the council adopted the local plan.

The Cabinet member reported that the local plan was not the plan of the administration's choosing, but it was in the interests of the council, local residents and businesses that the council moved forward with certainty and clarity. The choice was not whether this was the perfect plan, nor whether this was the plan councillors might have hoped for. It was a binary choice between progressing this local plan to full Council for its adoption, or not. The Cabinet member expressed concerns over the process and proposed an alternative recommendation to that within the officer's report:

1. That Cabinet resolves to record that:
 - (a) the council has been under a Direction to progress the local plan from the Secretary of State for many months;
 - (b) officers have been required to facilitate and support the Plan submitted by the council in March 2019 throughout the examination process with regular monitoring of progress and their approach by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;
 - (c) the Inspector has found the plan to be sound despite the objections and additional information provided by residents, councillors and a wide range of local partners;
 - (d) the Direction remains in place.
2. Cabinet proposes to Council that it:
 - (a) adopts the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the head of planning to Cabinet on 8 December 2020, and modified by the Schedule of Main Modifications in Appendix B and the Schedule of Minor Modifications in Appendix C, and the updated Policies Map in Appendix D;
 - (b) delegates authority to the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for planning, to make any necessary further minor modifications prior to publication of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, and any further updates to the Policies Map.

Cabinet debated the alternative recommendation. Some disquiet was expressed at the process leading to the local plan being brought to this Cabinet meeting, including the Secretary of State's intervention in local democracy and not allowing the new administration to pursue its own plans. However, Cabinet accepted that the inspector's report, which had improved the local plan, taking into account changes suggested at the examination. The inspector had included several changes in his main modifications, but these changes had not gone far enough to satisfy all of Cabinet. For example, some members of Cabinet considered that the 27 per cent housing buffer, which had been included in the plan by the inspector, was too high and unnecessary. However, Cabinet believed that the council must follow the legal process and act within the law. Some members supported the alternative recommendation, others reserved their position to the full Council meeting.

1. That Cabinet **RESOLVES** to record that:
 - (a) the council has been under a Direction to progress the local plan from the Secretary of State for many months;
 - (b) officers have been required to facilitate and support the Plan submitted by the council in March 2019 throughout the examination process with regular monitoring of progress and their approach by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;
 - (c) the Inspector has found the plan to be sound despite the objections and additional information provided by residents, councillors and a wide range of local partners;
 - (d) the Direction remains in place.

PROPOSALS to Council on 10 December 2020:

2. Cabinet **PROPOSES** to Council that it:
 - (a) adopts the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the head of planning to Cabinet on 8 December 2020, and modified by the Schedule of Main Modifications in Appendix B and the Schedule of Minor Modifications in Appendix C, and the updated Policies Map in Appendix D;
 - (b) delegates authority to the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for planning, to make any necessary further minor modifications prior to publication of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, and any further updates to the Policies Map.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm

Chairman

Date