

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Cabinet

Held on Thursday 21 December 2023 at 9.30 am
Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors David Rouane (Chair), Robin Bennett, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Pieter-Paul Barker, Sue Cooper, Andrea Powell and Anne-Marie Simpson
Officers: Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader) and Simon Hewings (Head of Finance)

Remote attendance:

Officers: Andrew Down (Deputy Chief Executive - Partnerships), Mark Hewer (Infrastructure and Development Team Leader), Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive - Place), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive - Transformation and Operations) and Richard Spraggett (Strategic Financial Manager)

Guests: Councillor Mocky Khan

52 Apologies for absence

Councillor Freddie van Mierlo had sent his apologies for absence.

53 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

54 Declaration of interests

None

55 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

56 Public participation

Cabinet noted that one member of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

- (1) John Salmons asked a question to the Leader of the Council regarding the agenda item 8 on the Climate Action Plan Performance Report. He asked whether the
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Leader had any empathy for residents as a result of ongoing uncertainty over the council's intentions in relation to the Great Western Park depot 'scandal', particularly when those residents' trust in the council had been damaged by the council's actions to date?

In response, the Leader undertook to look at the question asked by Mr Salmons at the Cabinet meeting on 9 November and the answer provided. He did not accept Mr Salmons' characterisation of this matter as a scandal. An application was put in for a development on a site in the Vale of White Horse. Following wide feedback the application was then withdrawn. He did not see what else could have been done within that process that would have allayed suspicions from local people. He repeated that he would look again at the question and the answer from the previous Cabinet meeting to see whether it addressed the questions that were raised.

57 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet noted updates from the Scrutiny Committee, the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee.

In response to a point raised by the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, the Cabinet member for corporate services reported that the consideration would be given to how the council could support wildlife projects (suggested by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)) during the council's review of its corporate plan.

58 Community Infrastructure Levy Grants Policy

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, which sought approval of a one-year pilot grant scheme for the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

The report had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 6 December, which supported the draft policy and made the following suggestions for consideration of the officers and Cabinet member:

1. There needs to be clarity on point 19 and its table – showing income and expenditure.
2. On the scoring matrix, check with the Climate Action Team on the addition of "climate adaptation" to column G scoring.
3. On the scoring matrix, column B, include gaps in provision, such as active travel.
4. Consider how the pilot scheme would be communicated.

Cabinet thanked Scrutiny Committee for its suggestions and noted that these points had been taken into account in the head of finance's report.

In answer to questions from members, Cabinet noted that the pilot scheme could be operated within existing staff resources. Any unspent grant fund would be returned to the Community Infrastructure budget at the year end.

Councillor Cooper left the meeting at this point.

Cabinet supported the proposal for a one-year pilot grant scheme to support the delivery of local infrastructure. This would help local groups and parish councils, who should be

encouraged to use the grants scheme. It was intended that £750,000 would be allocated to the scheme in 2024/25, subject to Council's approval of the budget.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve the pilot scheme policy to award grants for delivery of infrastructure funded by the council's Community Infrastructure Levy allocation, attached in appendix 1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 21 December 2023; and
- (b) authorise the relevant head of service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member to make minor amendments to the standard terms and conditions of the scheme.

59 Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2023/24

Cabinet considered the corporate performance report and climate action plan performance report for quarter 2, 2023/24, being the period July to September 2023.

Cabinet welcomed the reports and highlighted areas of the council's achievements.

In answer to a question about how the council publicised the reports, it was noted that parish councils were always encouraged to read the performance reports. However, the council was always reviewing how it communicated with others and would continue to look for improvements. The format of the performance reports was also under review; it was intended to shorten the reports and make them clearer with more focussed on targets. It was suggested that using the terminology 'quarters' was confusing and should be replaced by dates.

RESOLVED: to note the Corporate Performance Report and Climate Action Plan Performance Report for quarter 2, 2023/24.

60 Budget monitoring - quarter 2 2023/24

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being the budget monitoring report for April to September 2023.

Cabinet noted that there was a forecasted overspend at the financial year end of £1 million, but estimated increases in treasury income should offset this. Members noted the report.

RESOLVED to note the Budget Monitoring Report for April to September 2023.

61 Budget setting 2024/25

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, being the budget setting update report for 2024/25.

The report informed Cabinet of progress made in compiling a draft budget for 2024/25. There would be inflationary pressures, hopefully balanced with increased treasury income from high interest rates. A revenue and capital budget challenge was underway, to

analyse the draft figures in detail before Cabinet would be required to recommend its draft budget to Council in February 2024.

The government had published its draft settlement figure for South Oxfordshire at an increase of 4.63 per cent, although there was no clarity for later years. This left uncertainty in compiling the medium term financial plan, which covered the next five years, resulting in an increasing reliance on the council's reserves, as costs would rise with inflation and treasury income reduce as interest rates were likely to fall.

In answer to a question about whether the council could borrow funds, members noted that the council would need to be clear what it was borrowing for, such as to support the housing delivery strategy or other major projects. Given the council's reliance on borrowing to fund the capital programme, all existing capital programme schemes and any growth proposals would need to comply with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Prudential Code, and also the Public Works and Loans Board from whom the council was likely to borrow in future.

Members thanked the officer for his report.

RESOLVED to note the budget setting report 2024/25.

The meeting closed at 10.35 am

Chair

Date
