

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

HELD ON THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 6.00 PM

THIS WAS 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: Paul Bateman, Pat Connell, Andrew Down, Suzanne Malcolm, Margaret Reed, Mark Stone and Adrianna Partridge

Apologies:

None

Also present:

David Wilde

19 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2020 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

20 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

21 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None.

22 Public participation

None.

23 Recommendations from other committees

Cabinet considered recommendations from other committees

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee on 14 September 2020

Power Purchase Agreement

Cabinet noted the recommendation from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) that officers join discussions with other Oxfordshire councils and commercial partners to identify the feasibility of entering into a power purchase agreement.

Cabinet had been advised by CEAC that the committee wished to understand what flexibility would be allowed in such a contract. There was concern that the council would have to commit to a fixed amount of electricity purchase, when the council's aim was to reduce use. The committee also wished to understand the contractual arrangements pending any local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire.

Cabinet also noted the committee's intention to review the opportunity to enter into negotiations with the Low Carbon Hub and other Oxfordshire Councils on a potential Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The Chair of CEAC, Councillor Sue Roberts, advised Cabinet on progress, informing the meeting that no recommendations had been made at this time as discussions on the possible agreement were still proceeding.

The Chair of CEAC also reported that the Vice Chair of CEAC, Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, who had also been working closely with officers of the council, had been liaising with the five other Oxfordshire councils. Progress had been slowed by the Covid 19 situation, which had introduced an element of uncertainty into the councils. However, the negotiations themselves were extremely complex, involving multiple intermediaries. At the present time, working with a given provider, rather than entering into a full power purchase agreement, seemed attractive, particularly as most PPAs were of 15 years' duration and difficult to withdraw from during the term. Councillor Roberts hoped that the forthcoming appointment of a council environment officer could assist in clarifying issues and progressing matters.

The Leader advised Cabinet that moving the council offices to a new site would also have implications for energy purchase and consumption. Therefore, it might be sensible not to conclude a new approach to energy consumption until the full implications of new accommodation and any agreement became clearer.

The Cabinet member for Finance considered that this delay and uncertainty offered the council the opportunity to undertake innovative energy saving work at the council's leisure facilities, which consumed the largest proportion of all council energy needs. This could involve ground-breaking approaches to direct energy generation, such as overnight usage and the installation of state-of-the-art technology and equipment.

Councillor Roberts advised Cabinet that, typically, the negotiation process for PPAs lasted a year, so any delay might be to the council's advantage in this uncertain era.

Cabinet concurred that in view of the negotiation timeframe, and issues of new council office accommodation, the urgency of this issue had been reduced and that therefore CEAC should continue to consider the matter with a moderated sense of urgency.

RESOLVED: to refer the proposal that officers join discussions with other Oxfordshire councils and commercial partners, to identify the feasibility of entering into a power purchase agreement, back to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee for further consideration.

Councillor Roberts reported on an energy-related topic of great interest to her committee; the Flexible Home Improvement Loan. The scheme assisted in retro-fitting home insulation, which could incorporate council loans for this work. Officers supporting CEAC had been asked to undertake research work into this area. She emphasised the importance of climate and environment to the corporate plan, which contained metrics on this subject.

24 Treasury outturn 2019/20

The Cabinet member reported on the treasury outturn 2019/20 with reference to the report by the Head of Finance. This reporting fulfilled the legislative requirements to ensure the adequate monitoring and reporting of the treasury management activities and that both councils' prudential indicators were reported to the council at the end of the year. The report provided details of the treasury activities for the financial year 2019/20. This action also complied with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA's) Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Cabinet were advised that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report and were satisfied with the council's financial performance.

Cabinet noted with approval the performance demonstrated in the Yield table (page 9 of report) which depicted an actual investment income of £3.243m against a budgeted investment income of £2.087m. Including the property investment income, the overall total for 2019/20 was £3.634m, with a rate of return of 1.99%.

RESOLVED;

- (a) The referral of the report from Joint Audit and Governance Committee and their recommendations are noted;
- (b) The treasury management outturn report for 2019/20 is approved;
- (c) The actual 2019/20 prudential indicators as outlined in Appendix B of the report are approved.

25 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.

26 Commercial negotiations with Capita and the review of Exchequer Services and Finance IT systems

Cabinet noted negotiations with Capita and agreed to consider an option to provide Exchequer Services and Finance IT systems.

27 Office accommodation

Cabinet noted a review of potential office accommodation sites and agreed to proceed with a particular site.