

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

# Cabinet

HELD ON THURSDAY 8 APRIL 2021 AT 6.00 PM

THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL, ONLINE MEETING.

## Present:

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

Officers: Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Simon Hewings, Jeremy Lloyd, Suzanne Malcolm, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

## 81 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

## 82 Apologies for absence

None

## 83 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

## 84 Public participation

None

## 85 Recommendations from other committees

Cabinet noted that there were no recommendations from other committees. For future Cabinet meetings, members asked for any updates from other committees to be reported also.

## 86 Strategic vision for Oxfordshire

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships. This set out a strategic vision for Oxfordshire.



Listening Learning Leading

Cabinet recalled that in December 2020 it had received a report detailing the Oxfordshire Growth Board's ambition to develop a strategic vision for Oxfordshire. This provided an overarching framework for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 but also served as an 'umbrella' under which both the Growth Board and its partners could develop the future plans and strategies.

The results of the consultation on the draft strategic vision had been supportive. As a result, the vision had been developed further. It now highlighted the importance of the need to address inequalities, and the role of Oxfordshire and its place as a national and international centre of excellence. Issues such as the need for inclusive growth had also been strengthened, and changes had been made to make the document more Oxfordshire specific, such as references to the rural landscape, the countryside, and the importance of the rural economy. The Growth Board had also commissioned consultants to offer sustainability advice on whether the vision was consistent, both within the document and when compared to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and whether there were any gaps in the sustainability issues identified. This commission had been completed and changes had been made to the final version of the strategic vision now before Cabinet.

Cabinet supported the proposed vision but believed that a short summary version was needed for better publicity. Cabinet was pleased that the vision had been improved in terms of equality, nature recovery, and climate change. Cabinet queried how the council would be able to influence the setting of measurements for the vision. However, generally, Cabinet considered the vision to be a good compromise.

Some concern was expressed that in the vision, good economic growth should focus on productivity growth of Gross Value Added per head of population, rather than on high population growth or mere overall Gross Value Added. It was noted that such detailed changes could be suggested at a later stage.

Cabinet also queried whether any progress had been made on revising the name of the Growth Board. It was noted that this might be re-visited after the County Council elections in May.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) agree the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire; and
- (b) ask that officers consider how to embed the Vision's ambitions for Oxfordshire in future plans and strategies of the council.

## **87 Proposal to establish an Environment Advisory Sub Group of the Oxfordshire Growth Board**

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – partnerships. This set out a proposal for an Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Sub Group.

The Growth Board's review of its own operating arrangements in 2020 had concluded that its work would benefit from a greater consideration of environmental issues. This could be done by strengthening the Board's structure and networks through an environmental work stream. The establishment of an environment advisory sub group was recommended to all principal councils in Oxfordshire. The proposal also supported many Growth Board

partners' declaration of climate and ecological emergencies and supported the environmental aims of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire.

Cabinet supported this move. This aligned with the council's declaration of climate and ecological emergencies, and with its corporate plan objectives. Also, the consultation on the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire had identified the environment as top priority amongst young respondents. This proposal was a step in the right direction. The aim should be to promote environmental ambition, not just mitigation to reduce the impact upon the environment.

There would need to be a Growth Board environment work stream and delivery strategy. The establishment of a local nature partnership was one element of this, upon which some progress had already been made.

Cabinet suggested that the leader, Councillor Sue Cooper, should put herself forward to chair this sub group, as the Growth Board's other sub-groups were chaired by other councils' representatives.

Cabinet also endorsed the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles, set out in appendix 3 to the report, and supported the development of an Arc environment strategy.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) support the establishment of a Growth Board environment advisory group;
- (b) endorse the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles, as set out at Appendix 3 of the acting deputy chief executive's report to Cabinet on 8 April 2021, recognising that this statement of ambition applies to a diverse range of urban and rural communities, and that further evidentiary work will be required at a local level to understand their longer-term implications; and
- (c) support the development of an Arc environment strategy, which will provide for how the principles can be delivered.

## **88 Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy**

Cabinet considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations. This set out a draft strategy to provide the infrastructure for electric vehicles to 2025. This was an Oxfordshire-wide strategy that was being presented to all principal councils for adoption.

The strategy's objectives were to:

- enable and deliver public electric vehicle charging strategically across Oxfordshire
- adopt a common approach to managing electric vehicle charging in the council's car parks
- enable residents without access to private off-road parking to access a range of options for electric vehicle charging
- encourage new developments to install high quality electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- set standards for the quality of public electric vehicle charging in Oxfordshire to support development of a network, which was high quality, open, accessible and future-proofed

- work with partners to encourage other landowners to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure for businesses, residents and other users.

Cabinet thanked Councillor Caroline Newton, the council's representative on the Oxfordshire-wide member steering group, for her work and influence on this strategy.

The options open to Cabinet were to either adopt or not adopt the strategy. Cabinet believed that if it did not adopt the Oxfordshire strategy, the council could develop an alternative strategy to address the needs of South Oxfordshire. However, Cabinet considered this was a much wider issue. There were greater benefits of adopting a county-wide strategy, such as sharing of expertise and learning in introducing an electric vehicle infrastructure, greater access to external funding opportunities, economies of scale in working with others, and increased viability to engage with the private sector. Adopting the Oxfordshire strategy also supported the council's carbon neutral corporate objective to tackle the climate emergency.

Although the strategy was a step in the right direction to promote greener travel, Cabinet did not consider that electric vehicles were the panacea. There were environmental concerns over the production of batteries used to power electric vehicles. The materials used to manufacture batteries were sometimes mined from beneath the ocean floor, potentially causing environmental damage that would be difficult to monitor. The council should support measures to reduce the negative environmental impacts of electric vehicle battery production through, for example, responding to any relevant government consultations and backing research and innovation in new, less damaging technologies. The strategy would need to adapt to developing technology.

Cabinet also considered that the strategy needed to work on supporting electric buses and bicycles, with the aim of reducing reliance on cars. This in turn would reduce traffic congestion.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) adopt the recommended policies and key actions for the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (2020-2025); and
- (b) support measures to reduce the negative environmental impacts of electric vehicle battery production, through for example, responding to any relevant government consultations and backing research and innovation in new technologies.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm

Chair

Date