

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Cabinet

Held on Thursday 10 August 2023 at 6.00 pm
Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Present in the meeting room:

Cabinet members: Councillors David Rouane (Chair), Robin Bennett (Vice-Chair), Pieter-Paul Barker, Sue Cooper and Andrea Powell
Officers: Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader)

Remote attendance:

Cabinet members: Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Vice-Chair)
Officers: Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic), Nigel Bower (Housing Delivery Manager), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive - Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Bertie Smith (Broadcasting Officer), Richard Spraggett (Strategic Financial Manager), and Mark Stone (Chief Executive)
Guest: Councillor Ken Arlett

19 Apologies for absence

Councillor Freddie van Mierlo and Anne-Marie Simpson had sent their apologies for absence.

20 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the public and exempt minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 22 June and 3 July 2023 as correct records and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

21 Declaration of interests

None

22 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

23 Public participation

None

24 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received updates from the Joint Audit and Governance Committee and the Joint Scrutiny Committee, together with recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the grant funding affordable housing item (minute 25 refers).

25 Grant funding affordable housing

Cabinet considered the head of housing and environment's report on grant funding affordable housing projects.

Members recalled that four affordable housing projects had been financially supported by the council under the current policy. This allowed the council to grant fund applicants by using commuted sums received from Section 106 agreements generated by housing developments in the district. The Housing Delivery Strategy, adopted in November 2022, recommended a refresh of the policy and criteria used to assess applications.

The report set out proposed changes to the policy, which aimed to increase the delivery of affordable housing further and to make the grant application process easier and more transparent. The revised policy had been deferred at the Cabinet meeting on 22 June 2023 to allow Scrutiny Committee to comment on the revised policy.

Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft revised policy on 7 August 2023 and had recommended the following:

1. That under point 4, the first item on the list ('delivers affordable housing') be removed as it is duplicated with the last item ('Delivers affordable housing in perpetuity')
2. That point 7 include reference to the fact that existing dwellings can be included with the category of acquisition.
3. That in the scoring matrix under point 13, an additional point be included under the 'Scheme features' heading titled, 'Geographic link to source'. This will detail how close the proposed dwelling is from the application that delivered the S106 funds.
4. That point 19 be reworded to say that, "...The Key payment stages are up to five milestones".
5. In addition, the committee agreed that point 13 of the officer report, about at what level of funds the application window would be suspended, should be reduced from the proposed amount of £250,000 to £50,000.

Cabinet thanked Scrutiny Committee for its input. Cabinet supported the revised policy and accepted the Scrutiny Committee's suggestions 1, 2, 4 and 5 above as helpful additions. However, Cabinet did not support suggestion 3 above. Members considered that it was better to meet affordable housing need as the priority, rather than any geographic link between the location of affordable housing and the location of the development that provided the Section 106 funding.

The matrix set out in the revised policy would assist and contribute towards officers' assessment of each application for funding. Officers would then make a recommendation to Cabinet on each application and, if approved, Cabinet would make a recommendation to Council to approve the necessary funding.

To allow the amendments to be included in the policy, the Cabinet member proposed an additional recommendation to authorise the deputy chief executive – place, in consultation

with the Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration, to make any minor amendments and corrections to the policy. Cabinet supported this proposal.

Cabinet noted that this was a joint policy with Vale of White Horse District Council, whose Scrutiny Committee had suggested amendments also. These had been largely points of clarification, which would be picked up by the deputy chief executive under the proposed delegation.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) adopt the revised Affordable Housing Section 106 Commuted Sums Grant Policy for the awarding of Section 106 grant funding to affordable housing projects in the district; and
- (b) authorise the deputy chief executive – place, in consultation with the Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration, to make any minor amendments and corrections to the policy.

The meeting closed at 6.27 pm

Chair

Date