

# Minutes

## of a meeting of the

# Cabinet



held on Thursday, 18 April 2024 at  
6.00 pm in Meeting Room 1, Abbey  
House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,  
OX14 3JE

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present in the meeting room:**

Councillors: David Rouane (Chair), Robin Bennett (Vice-Chair), Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Vice-Chair), Pieter-Paul Barker, Sue Cooper and Andrea Powell  
Officers: Steve Culliford (Democratic Services Team Leader), Mark Stone (Chief Executive Officer), and Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer)

### **Remote attendance:**

Councillors: Ken Arlett, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Georgina Heritage, and Anne-Marie Simpson  
Officers: Nigel Bower (Housing Delivery Manager), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Charlotte Cottingham (Development Projects Team Leader), Laura Driscoll (Licensing Team Leader), Phil Ealey (Housing Needs Manager), Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment), Diane Foster (Head of Housing and Environment), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive, Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Bertram Smith (Broadcasting Officer), Aileen Sparling (Principal Place Officer), Scott Williams (Environmental Services Manager), Anna Winship (Strategic Finance Manager), and Nicola Wyer (Didcot Garden Town Team Leader)

## **8 Chair's announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

## **9 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Freddie van Mierlo.

## **10 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 15 February and 7 March 2024 as correct records and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

## 11 Declaration of interests

Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson declared an interest in item 12, Housing Enforcement Policy, as she looked after a rented property for a family member.

Councillor Sue Cooper declared an interest in item 12, Housing Enforcement Policy, as she let out a property with a family member.

Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker declared an interest in item 12, Housing Enforcement Policy, as he let out a property with his wife.

Councillors Anne-Marie Simpson, Sue Cooper, and Pieter-Paul Barker would not participate in the discussion, debate, or vote on item 12, Housing Enforcement Policy.

## 12 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

## 13 Public participation

Two members of the public and one member of the council addressed Cabinet.

- (1) Mr Jason Atherton, an owner of a local taxi business, made a statement seeking the cabinet's support to increase the proposed tariff to the alternative level suggested by the South and Vale Taxi Drivers' Association, listed as appendix E to the head of legal and democratic's report. He also clarified that he supported the Guildford tariff, not the model itself.
- (2) Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye spoke to Cabinet in her capacity as Chair of the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee on the climate and ecological impact section of the reports being put to cabinet. She welcomed the new climate tool that had been used in some of the reports but noted that it was not used consistently. In addition, she suggested the climate and ecological implications' section should refer to detail in other parts of the reports, such as appendices. Finally, she indicated that the ecological implications of some of the reports could be expanded.

In response, the leader noted Councillor Casey-Rerhaye's suggestions and indicated that the new reports coming to Cabinet would be using the new environmental tool.

- (3) Mr Raleigh Hullock provided a statement on behalf of the South and Vale Taxi Drivers' Association, seeking Cabinet's support to increase the proposed tariff to the alternative level suggested by the South and Vale Taxi Drivers' Association. He argued that the council's proposed tariff would lead to a reduction in the amount of hackney carriage services available across the district.

## 14 Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received the recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on 25 March 2024, and their suggestions and recommendations were considered

under each relevant item on the Cabinet agenda. Cabinet also received a verbal update from the Democratic Services Officer on the outcome of the Joint Audit and Governance Committee and noted the resolutions from their meeting on the 15 April 2024.

## **15 Hackney Carriage Fares**

Cabinet received the Hackney Carriage Fares report from the head of legal and democratic which outlined the results of the consultation and proposed Cabinet adopted the new proposed fares and agree that the tariff be reviewed annual using the Guildford model.

The licensing team leader and the legal, licensing and community Safety manager drew Cabinets attention to that information included in appendix C to the report on how the proposed tariff had been calculated as well as on the details around their consultation on the proposal.

In response to a question about if the fare allowed for taxi companies to pay their staff minimum wage, the legal, licensing and community Safety manager confirmed that the fare model proposed was a nationally used model and accounted for a range of factors specific to the cost of living in the district, provide by the Office of National Statistics, including average annual salary.

The leader clarified a point about the regularity of the tariff review, highlighting that the council had not set a tariff prior to 2022 and that the recommendation was for it to be reviewed annually.

The leader of the council, Councillor David Rouane, introduced the report and highlighted that the hackney carriage tariff was first set by the council in October 2022 and was a maximum charge that could be applied to all journeys within the district. He also outlined the Guildford method of tariff calculation and informed Cabinet about the details of the consultation. In addition to meeting the legal requirements, the consultation involved an online survey, hard copies, emails to all hackney carriage drivers, notification in the trade newsletter, and on local press, media, and the council's website as well as in person visits to the taxi rank and a drop-in session. He noted that a number of respondents had disagreed with the tariff as they considered it too high.

The leader indicated that the results of the consultation were considered, and some amendments to the new tariff were made as a result. However, he believed that the proposal was a good balance between the interests of the public and those of the taxi drivers.

Members discussed the proposal outlined in the report and agreed with the adoption of the Guildford method of calculating tariffs as it was a widely used, robust method of calculating fares. However, it was raised that the next review should examine the impact of the increased fares in order for them to better understand its consequences. In addition, they agreed that the consultation was conducted appropriately and appreciated that officers had visited the taxi ranks in person.

Overall, the Cabinet thanked the public speakers for their input but believed that the proposed tariff was a reasonable compromise between the interests of the public and

the taxi drivers. For this reason, they agreed to approve the new tariff and for it to be reviewed annually.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) note the results of the consultation on hackney carriage fares, as set out at Appendix D to the head of legal and democratic's report to Cabinet on 18 April 2024;
- (b) adopt the proposed maximum hackney carriage fares, as set out at Appendix G to the report, with effect from 20 April 2024; and
- (c) agree that the tariff is reviewed annually using the Guildford model.

## **16 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan update and next steps**

Cabinet received the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan update and next steps report from the head of policy and programmes. This report updated Cabinet on the progress of the delivery plan, sought approval for the Didcot Wayfinding Strategy and its budget allocation for signage, as well as seeking approval for the Didcot Green Infrastructure Strategy and its budget allocation for short-term green infrastructure enhancements.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration, and Deputy Leader, Councillor Robin Bennett, presented the report and highlighted that the wayfinding improvements would unify the signage appearance around the town and could be implemented in a short timeframe to produce a quick, physical output. He also noted the green infrastructure strategy and indicated that it had focused on several high priority areas that could also be actioned quickly.

Members were pleased to see the item being brought forward and that the project management was being done effectively. They also considered the comments by the Joint Scrutiny Committee and welcomed their feedback. Cabinet also noted that a Homes England report had praised the council's plans for the Didcot Garden Town and they welcomed the greening of the older parts of Didcot.

As Cabinet were satisfied with the plan, noting that the wayfinding and green infrastructure would make a physical difference to the residents of Didcot, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) note the progress against the approved Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan, as set out in appendix 1 to the head of policy and programmes' report to Cabinet on 18 April 2024;
- (b) approve the Didcot Wayfinding Strategy set out at appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) approve the Didcot Green Infrastructure Strategy set out at appendix 3 to the report;
- (d) approve a budget allocation of £100,925 from the unallocated Didcot Garden Town capital fund to enable implementation of the agreed wayfinding improvements; and

- (e) approve a budget allocation of £400,000 from the unallocated Didcot Garden Town capital fund to enable the implementation of the short-term green infrastructure enhancements.

## 17 Joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicle Procurement Strategy

Cabinet received the Joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicle Procurement Strategy report from the head of housing and environment. The report sought to inform Cabinet about the process officers used for the procurement of new waste collection and street cleaning vehicles.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Sue Cooper, presented the report and clarified that the report was not focused on detailing the specific number or type of refuse vehicles that would be needed in the future, or the technology behind them. Instead, the report was used to assess the market and would allow the council to select the best vehicle for the intended job, within budget, and producing the lowest possible carbon emissions. She also mentioned that the timeline was indicative, and that the strategy could be reviewed as the council got more clarity about its direction after the end of the current waste collection and street cleansing contract with BIFFA.

Cabinet noted that the policy set out the process by which refuse and street cleaning vehicles could be assessed for procurement but did not commit the council to buying any vehicle in particular and allowed them to keep their procurement options open.

On a question about a trial for electric vehicle (EV) refuse vehicles and the sources of funding for that trial, the chief executive informed cabinet that the council had made a bid through the Ministry of Transport's Transport Research and Innovation Grants programme. If successful, the council would use these funds to run a 12-week trial for EV refuse vehicles and new route tracking and optimising software, starting in the autumn. The chief executive also highlighted to cabinet that South Oxfordshire would not be in receipt of new national funds for providing a new waste collection scheme as the council had been leading in this area for a number of years and in general was among the best performing districts in the country for waste collection.

Members discussed the developing nature of the waste collection industry and agreed that the council was taking the right approach and welcomed a trial of EV refuse vehicles and route optimisation software.

Cabinet, satisfied with the report, agreed that it be noted.

**RESOLVED:** to note the contents of the head of housing and environment's report to Cabinet on 18 April 2024 on why the council needs to be procuring new waste vehicles, and the factors which influence the future carbon footprint of the fleet and the process that officers will use for the future procurement of waste and street cleansing vehicles.

## 18 Housing Delivery Strategy Update and Action Plan 2024/25

Cabinet received the Housing Delivery Strategy update and Action Plan 2024/25 report from the head of housing and environment. The report updated Cabinet on the

progress of the housing delivery strategy for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and proposed a new action plan for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration, and Deputy Leader, Councillor Robin Bennett, presented the report and highlighted that the first housing delivery strategy was adopted in November 2022 and was the first of its kind for the council. The strategy covered everything that could be controlled by the council and focused on delivering affordable, high quality, housing for the district. Councillor Bennett noted that several houses had also been delivered outside of the plan through the local authority housing fund purchases. He also informed Cabinet that the council was implementing a Section 106 grant scheme for affordable housing provision and was looking at direct provision of affordable housing.

Members noted that the plan would keep the council focused on delivering their goals around housing whilst acknowledging the desire to scale up the provision of affordable housing in the future. Cabinet also highlighted the amount of progress that had been made in that area since they had first adopted the housing delivery strategy in 2022.

Cabinet, satisfied with the report, agreed that it be noted and that the proposed new housing delivery strategy action plan for 2024/25 be approved.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (a) note the changes in the national housing guidelines (or legislation) since the housing delivery strategy and action plan was adopted in 2022 and the associated impact that this has on the housing delivery strategy;
- (b) note the latest progress against the action plan, as well as the significant efforts made in purchasing of property under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) scheme; and
- (c) adopt the proposed new housing delivery strategy action plan for 2024/25.

## **19 Housing Enforcement Policy**

Cabinet received the Housing Enforcement Policy report from the head of housing and environment. The report sought Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Housing Enforcement Policy.

Councillors Pieter-Paul Barker, Sue Cooper, and Anne-Marie Simpson each declared interests in this item and did not participate in the discussion, debate, or vote.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, and statutory Deputy Leader, Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers, presented the report and highlighted that the policy was not related to planning but rather insuring that private rented properties were up to a sufficient standard.

The policy would help the council enforce acceptable housing standards and provide clarity to landlords, tenants, and agents as to what their rights were. Councillor Filipova-Rivers noted the council now had leverage to ensure that rented properties were maintained to good standard.

Cabinet discussed the policy and requested the officers clarify the council's responsibility to renters to ensure they knew what powers the council had in the area of enforcement.

As the policy would ensure renting standards were maintained and would provide clarity as to the rights for landlords, tenants, and agents, Cabinet were content with the policy and agreed that it should be approved.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (a) approve the adoption of the Housing Enforcement Policy; and
- (b) authorise the head of housing and environment to make minor amendments to the policy in the future.

## **20 Budget Monitoring April 2023 - December 2023**

Cabinet received the Budget monitoring April 2023 to December 2023 report from the head of finance. The report updated Cabinet on revenue income and expenditure against the budget and provided the latest year end outturns forecast. It also set out the expenditure against the capital programme.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property Assets, Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, presented the report and highlighted the report covered the period up to the end of quarter three 2023/24 and that there were no large changes between it and the two previous quarters monitoring reports. In particular, Councillor Barker indicated that the revenue turnout was £1.8m better than was budgeted.

Cabinet also noted that another area of difference from budget was that staff retention was higher and vacancy levels were lower than was budgeted. Councillor Barker also highlighted that the slippage in the capital programme was not indicative of a delay in delivering the programme but rather reflected the way accounting presented the grants.

On a question about the budget for current year, Councillor Barker confirmed to Cabinet that these variance figures in 2023/24 had been forecasted and were anticipated in the budget for 2024/25.

Cabinet, satisfied with the report, agreed that it be noted.

**RESOLVED:** to note the contents of the budget monitoring report for April 2023 to December 2023.

## **21 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 paragraph 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.

## **22 116-120 The Broadway, Didcot**

Cabinet received the 116-120 Broadway, Didcot – next steps and phase two report from the head of development and corporate landlord. Cabinet approved the design option for the redevelopment of this site.