

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 6 February 2012 commencing at 3.00 pm and finishing at 3.38 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Keith R. Mitchell CBE – in the Chair
Councillor David Robertson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Louise Chapman
Councillor Jim Couchman
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat
Councillor Melinda Tilley
Councillor Rodney Rose

Other Members in Attendance:

Officers:

Whole of meeting Joanna Simons (Chief Executive)
Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of Meeting Item

	Name
6.	Huw Jones, Director of Environment & Economy; Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director, Growth & Infrastructure); Michael Salter, Assistant Head of Property – Delivery
7.	Huw Jones, Director of Environment & Economy; Steve Howell, Deputy Director Highways & Transport; Neil Timberlake, Assistant Public Transport Officer

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

15/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Arash Fatemian.

16/12 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

Cabinet noted that that the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 January 2012 would be submitted to the meeting to be held on 14 February 2012.

17/12 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Item 6 - Councillor Zoé Patrick, Leader of the Opposition, in the absence of the Shadow Cabinet Member.

Item 7 -Councillor Zoé Patrick, Leader of the Opposition, in the absence of the Shadow Cabinet Member.

18/12 PROPERTY AND FACILITIES EXTERNAL SERVICES CONTRACT FOOD WITH THOUGHT AND QUEST CLEANING SERVICES

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered a report the purpose of which was to inform the decision as to whether the proposals put forward by the potential providers in respect of the catering and cleaning services provided by Food with Thought (FwT) and Quest Cleaning Services (QCS) met the requirements of the contract specification for the proposed Property and Facilities external services contract. Cabinet also considered the comments from the Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 2 February 2012 as set out in the addenda.

Councillor Zoe Patrick, Leader of the Opposition, reaffirmed the Liberal Democrat Group recognition of the value of the Food with Thought service to our schools; that they had always called for the Property and Facilities contract to be allowed to have that part of the contract separate.

She commented on the report noting that a lot of work has been done on this and referring to the site visits that had been undertaken. They had taken 10 days in total with 2 overnight hotel stays and she assumed therefore that the investigation was complete.

Whilst noting that there was little doubt that contractors could and should provide good school food and even expand the business there seemed to have been no investigation into whether FwT could do just as well or better. The cost of provision was not mentioned and she supposed this would be in the final contract, but hoped that the food component would be costed separately. She noted the reduction in the cost of the meals and hoped that there would be no cut in the quality of ingredients.

She commented that although school meals could be provided by one of the new large companies, they could also be provided with much closer local,

management and flexibility by the in-house team. FwT had vastly improved the food and the business over the last few years. She argued that if the same contract terms were available to FwT, they might be able to provide what was required, possibly at a lower cost. She also hoped that local suppliers would be sourced.

She stated that the impression had been given that the option for today's meeting would be that a contract would be considered both with and without FwT - however, this now does not appear to be the case according to the recommendations on the paper.

She referred to the additional services provided by Food With Thought particularly in the most deprived areas of the County and noted that the Oxfordshire Music Service also uses Food with Thought and they often cater for the important partnership meetings.

Responding to a question as to whether the Liberal Democrat Group had considered the risks resulting from schools leaving council control Councillor Patrick replied that Councillor Fooks had been involved in the issues as a member of the Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee. They were aware of the uncertainty and so they had certainly considered this. Responding to a further question she advised that a number of her Group had visited schools to get their views.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Property in moving the recommendations clarified paragraph 30 by the deletion of the word 'risks' and its replacement with the word 'opportunities' as there would be opportunities for the provider to go and get additional business. He would be disappointed if the new provider was not able to increase the business. Councillor Couchman added that the report today was not concerned with cost but was all about the quality provided.

Martin Tugwell, informed the Cabinet that the Services and Contracts Committee of the Schools Forum had considered the matter and that there were three main messages: firstly there was a clear message that they welcomed the clarity of provision. He highlighted that the brand would remain the same, with an ability to negotiate the level of service required and then to hold the provider to account. This would give greater local control. Secondly the Schools Forum welcomed the strong performance indicators. Thirdly they were reassured that where service continues staff would remain the same under TUPE provision. The Council recognised the importance of strong local bonds.

During discussion Councillor Chapman in supporting the recommendations referred to the excellent work undertaken by Food With Thought to meet and exceed the business case. The service provided was particularly important for those children for whom it was the only hot meal of the day. She commented that she did have concerns over the issue of local sourcing. In moving forward it was communication with affected staff was important. Training would also be key to the new service. She and Councillor Tilley

highlighted the importance of careful monitoring and that they would be asking for regular reports to ensure standards were met and maintained. Councillor Heathcoat added that her fears had been allayed by the report and thanked officers for the work they were carrying out. Councillor Robertson in referring to the 10 days investigation felt that this should be seen as a positive sign of the determination to ensure that a thorough investigation was carried out.

RESOLVED: to confirm that the proposals put forward by potential providers meet the requirements of the contract specification for the proposed Property and Facilities external services contract and that accordingly it confirms its 'in principle' decision to include Food with Thought and Quest Cleaning Services in the invitation to submit final financial offers.

19/12 DIAL-A-RIDE PROVISION IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda Item. 7)

This report invites the Cabinet to consider recommendations for the creation of, and future funding for, a unified Oxfordshire pre-booked transport service for disabled and mobility-impaired residents replacing the existing separate "Octabus" and "Cherwell" dial-a-ride services.

Councillor Zoe Patrick, Opposition Leader spoke to support the Cabinet in providing a Countywide Dial-a-Ride Service in Oxfordshire. She commented that Dial-a-Ride is a much valued and necessary service enabling mobility impaired and frail people to get out and about to do such things as shopping and visiting friends, etc. and the fact that their carer is able travel free of charge with them makes the service so much easier to use and be enjoyed.

She noted that the previous system required the District Councils to make a contribution and this was not so with the current proposed system. However the District Councils could enhance the basic service being offered and it is for them to prioritise their expenditure and decide on the enhanced level of service.

She added that Councillor David Turner, Shadow Cabinet Member for Transport wished to thank the Cabinet for providing the basic level of service in all District Council areas at no cost to them which means that the residents of South Oxfordshire will now have a Dial-a-Ride service.

Responding to questions Councillor Patrick confirmed the Liberal Democrat Group support for the basic level of service for all Oxfordshire residents. The Leader referred to an email received from Gwynneth Pedler, Deputy Chair Oxfordshire Unlimited which was supportive of the proposals. He noted that the proposals were for one year only.

The Cabinet Member for Transport in introducing the contents of the report highlighted that the proposals were good news, giving uniform provision across the County. The provision was for one year to ensure that it picked up

all those that needed it. Huw Jones, Director for Environment & Economy explained the context of the recommendations set within a time period when partnership funding was cast into doubt. He referred to the innovative procurement process that allowed pricing against options and detailed the option being recommended for approval.

Cabinet welcomed the report and proposals commenting that it was about thinking strategically across the whole County and targeting those most in need. They noted that it was a non-statutory service that the County did not have to provide.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) adopt Baseline Option 5 (one bus per district 5 days per week), with such top-up option as necessary to provide for a 9am to 5pm day, as the appropriate level of service to be provided by the County Council;
- (b) agree to fund Baseline level 5, at 9am to 5pm, across the county by using County Council resources, and £106,067.84 of additional funding from the "Supporting Community Transport Fund" grant;
- (c) award a one year contract to Tender A from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013;
- (d) agree that any district council should be expected to pay the entire contract costs of any further 'top-up' service provision which that Authority requires in its area.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing