

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 May 2010 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.51 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Keith R. Mitchell CBE – in the Chair
Councillor David Robertson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Arash Fatemian
Councillor Ian Hudspeth
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Louise Chapman
Councillor Michael Waine
Councillor Rodney Rose
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Anne Purse)
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale) Agenda Item 6
Councillor Charles Mathew)

Councillor Jean Fooks (Agenda Item 7)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Chief Executive, S. Whitehead (Corporate Core)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

	Officer Attending
6.	P. Day (Environment & Economy)
7.	S. Corrigan, S. James (Strategic HR &OD, Corporate Core)

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.

48/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Jim Couchman.

49/10 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2010 were approved and signed.

50/10 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

Councillor Jean Fooks had given notice of the following question to the Deputy Leader:

“There is still a problem with the new phone system in County Hall. I rang the main County Council number, 792422, the other day and the phone just rang and rang – then cut off, with no message or opportunity to leave a message. I was told that this is happening to other people too. Could the Cabinet member follow this up, as it is extremely poor customer service?”

Councillor Robertson replied that general enquiries were going to be transferred to the new contact centre on 5 July. Whilst all new systems had some teething troubles he understood the frustrations felt particularly by members of the public. The problem had been reported to IT support services for resolution and he would be upset if similar problems occurred in the future.

Councillor Jean Fooks had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement:

“The most recent Admissions figures for September 2010 show that the County Council is very short of reception class places, particularly in the city of Oxford. It is very clear that new school places will be needed for September 2011 and the currently planned increases look to be inadequate. If the bulge is repeated in subsequent years, which looks extremely likely, more places are going to be needed right through the primary schools, putting huge pressure on existing schools and causing huge problems for parents.

What plans are being developed to meet this growing school population? The review of the city catchment areas is urgently needed as well as provision of new places, probably new schools, across the county. When will the review take place and when could it be implemented? Where does the cabinet member hope to be able to provide new school places throughout the primary phase?”

Councillor Waine:

- Through the strenuous efforts of officers, working very closely with headteachers and governors, it has been possible, once again, to ensure that every child whose parents have requested a school place has been offered one; the overwhelming majority (c.90%) have received the offer of a place at their first preference school. This has required a number of tough decisions but I am committed to ensuring that the Council continues to meet its statutory duty to ensure an overall sufficiency of school places.
- It is indeed the case that if you add up all the Published Admission Numbers of our schools there was a shortfall of places for Reception age pupils, but for September 2010 we have managed to create and additional 530 or so places. This has been achieved through a combination of installing temporary classrooms (as a precursor to permanent buildings), bringing classrooms back into use as teaching spaces, and schools being flexible about how they group children. In Oxford (and immediate vicinity) alone 220 places have been created.
- Population forecasts suggest that the current levels of demand will continue for the next 2 - 3 years to be followed by a slow decline, reaching pre-2008 levels within about a decade.
- Schools which can be adapted/expanded to accommodate larger intakes on a permanent basis have been identified and schemes to deliver additional classrooms are at various stages of development; some have already been subject to the necessary statutory expansion consultations. Headteachers and governors of schools which may have the potential for permanent expansion, but which have yet to agree to this, will be approached in order to further increase the number of additional school places that can be created.
- Where there are to be substantial new housing developments we will take the opportunity either to create brand new schools or secure funding to expand local schools; the Council's developer contribution team is working hard to secure funding from developers (S.106 contributions).
- Changes to catchment areas obviously don't create any additional school places but they can help to better match 'supply and demand' and help parents to reach an informed view about the likelihood of obtaining a place at their preferred school. Preparatory work for a review of Oxford catchment areas will be undertaken during the summer in order that any possible changes can be subject to the fullest consultation in the autumn/winter as part of the annual statutory consultation on school admission arrangements. The earliest that catchment area changes (other than those already subject to consultation such as that for Wolvercote School) can be implemented is for September 2012 admissions.
- As far as it is possible so to do, additional primary school places will be created close to where the additional children live as part of our 'Primary Strategy for Change' commitment to creating an 'outstanding school at the heart of the community'.

51/10 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Speaker	Item
Cllr Purse (Shadow Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure)) Cllr Mathew Cllr Lindsay-Gale Julie Hankey - Oxfordshire Upper Thames Residents Against Gravel Extraction (OUTRAGE) John Taylor - Parishes Against Gravel Extraction (PAGE) David Scott - Burcott and Clifton Hamden protection of river Thames (BaCHporT)	Item 6 - South East Plan: The Secretary Of State's Proposed Changes to Policy M3 Primary Land-Won Aggregates and Sub-Regional Apportionment, March 2010
Councillor Jean Fooks	Item 7 – Establishment Review

52/10 CONSULTATION ON THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO SOUTH EAST PLAN POLICY M3 (PRIMARY AGGREGATES PROVISION AND APPORTIONMENT)

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered a response (**CA6**) to the consultation by the Government Office for the South East on the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (South East Plan) Policy M3 – Primary land-won aggregates and sub-regional apportionment.

Councillor Anne Purse supported the points made in the report and the recommendations. She commented that it did not appear fair for Oxfordshire to have increased totals whilst the South East saw reductions and that the approach referred to in paragraph 16 of not protecting anything below national designations was a threat to bio-diversity.

Councillor Charles Mathew spoke in support of the recommendations, thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their work and spoke in particular about the level of production against the national annual usage and sustainability issues connected with transporting the additional materials outside Oxfordshire.

Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale broadly supported the recommendations and referred to the threat to parishes in her Division of Dorchester and Berinsfield. She supported the views of local groups PAGE and BaCHporT. She stated that she would wish to see an even lower figure being pursued than the 1.58m tonnes/annum to reflect supply and demand. She wished to see the County do its own predictive modelling and to become one of the leading recyclers of aggregates.

Julie Hankey, **Oxfordshire Upper Thames Residents Against Gravel Extraction (OUTRAGE)** spoke endorsing the report, commenting that the increase was unsustainable in travel miles and that the proposals would destroy archaeology and diverse habitats.

John Taylor - **Parishes Against Gravel Extraction (PAGE)** referred to the impact on the quality of life for residents of Dorchester on Thames. The Group had spoken to people in local parishes who had raised key questions such as the basis for the raise to 2.1m tonnes when demand was less; why Oxfordshire would see an increase when other areas in the South East would see reductions and why the County was not developing a forecasting system.

David Scott - **Burcott and Clifton Hamden protection of river Thames (BaCHporT)** supported the points already made and highlighted that the increase was against a backdrop of decreasing demand. He queried the validity of Option 3 and commented that it was the County's duty to seek a reduction in apportionment.

The Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure responded to the comments made and drew attention to the additional point to be included in the response.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) agree the following response to the consultation by the Government Office for the South East on the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (South East Plan) Policy M3 – Primary land-won aggregates and sub-regional apportionment:
 - (i) the County Council objects to the proposed changes to the sand and gravel figures in Policy M3, particularly the regional figure of 11.12 million tonnes a year and the Oxfordshire figure of 2.10 million tonnes a year, for the reasons set out in paragraph 20 of this report;
 - (ii) the County Council believes that, in the light of the proposed reduction in the regional sand and gravel figure, the Oxfordshire apportionment should be reduced from the current level of 1.82 million tonnes a year; the County Council

supported the lower figure of 1.58 million tonnes a year for Oxfordshire proposed by SEERA in March 2009.

- (iii) the County Council supports the proposed changes to the crushed rock figures in Policy M3;

the County Council supports the other proposed changes to the wording of Policy M3, in particular the inclusion of a statement that apportionments will be subject to testing of deliverability in the preparation of Mineral and Waste Development Frameworks;

- (b) authorise the Head of Sustainable Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure, to submit a response to the consultation based on this report.

53/10 ESTABLISHMENT REVIEW - MAY 2010

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered a report (**CA7**) that gave an update on activity since the implementation of the Establishment Review and associated Recruitment Approval process on 1 August 2005. Details of the agreed establishment figure at 31 March 2010 in terms of Full Time Equivalents was provided, together with the detailed staffing position at 31 March 2010. The report also contained information on grant funded posts and those vacancies which are being covered by agency staff and at what cost.

Councillor Jean Fooks, Opposition Deputy Leader, stated that she was still unclear about the true vacancy and agency staff figures; suggested that there was a danger of double counting with regard to long term sickness and that it might be useful to have a column showing unfilled posts.

Councillor Robertson responded to the comments made and in particular stressed that the balance between agency and permanent staff was always monitored to ensure value for money. He noted that any vacancies held for more than six months had to be justified for the post to be retained. He added that he was pleased to see the reduction in advertising costs and commented that he felt that the report was useful and that the information was now being reported earlier.

RESOLVED:

to:

- (a) note the report;
- (b) confirm that the Establishment Review continues to meet the Cabinet's requirements in reporting and managing staffing numbers.

54/10 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 8)

(Agenda Item)

The Cabinet considered a list of items (CA8) for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

RESOLVED: to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

55/10 PLANNING OBLIGATION NON PAYMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

(Agenda Item. 9)

In accordance with Regulation 16 of the The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended), the Chairman of the Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (since this is a finance related item) has agreed that the need to take the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

The Chairman agreed that the report be considered as a matter of urgency because of the urgent need to address a local community concern, the financial risk to the Council if further house sales fall through and to meet a Council commitment that the matter would be dealt with by the end of May.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) write off the debt of £74,667.09 in connection with this planning obligation; and
- (b) request confirmation of the write off in the next financial monitoring report to the Cabinet.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing