

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 19 March 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.35pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Donna Ford

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Paul Grant (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director: People), Lisa Lyons (Corporate Director: Children's Services), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services 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.

35/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dan Levy.

36/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

37/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

38/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

39/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

There were no requests received.

40/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were none to report.

41/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

There were no reports and recommendations from Scrutiny Committees to be considered at this meeting.

42/24 COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a proposed Commercial Strategy which set out the Council's commercial ambition and pathway to embedding commercial thinking as part of its culture and governance.

The strategy set out the vision to leverage Oxfordshire's unique assets and strengths to optimise organisational efficiency, generate sustainable revenue, support the development of a more inclusive local economy and enhance public services through innovative and responsible commercial activities.

To support the delivery of the Commercial Strategy through 2024/25 a Commercial Transformation Programme had been established. A discovery phase was currently underway to look at the current maturity level of the Council's commercial thinking, information, skills and processes, from which an implementation plan can be designed and programme to deliver new commercial ways of working.

The Chair presented the report.

During discussion, members made the following points:

- There was a need to protect the discretionary services that the Council provided, in view of the considerable reductions central government funding of local government

- While members welcomed the opportunities for income generation to support the Council's budget, the introduction of the Commercial Strategy also provided an opportunity to review its ways of working and develop efficient system and processes

The Chair moved and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to approve the Commercial Strategy as set out in the report.

43/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2023/24)

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Treasury Management performance at the end of the third quarter of the year 2023-24 (measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023)

The Chair presented the report which covered the management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

The Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer answered a number of questions on the report and referred, in particular, to the loss of interest as a result of the negative balance held in the dedicated schools grant fund.

The Chair moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to note the council's treasury management activity at the end of the third quarter of 2023/24.

44/24 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - JANUARY 2024

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the January 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

The Chair presented the report and referred to the changes in the performance indicators compared to the previous report. The Chair also referred to the passing of a balanced budget by the Council in February 2024.

During discussion, members welcomed the performance improvements in a number of service areas including

- the library service,
- the number of Education and Health Care plans completed in the SEND service (where performance had exceeded the national average)
- the increase in the number of residents satisfied with the service provided by the customer service centre
- the increase in the number of cycling trips
- the considerable reduction in the number of looked after children

The Chair moved and Councillor Fawcett seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) note the report and annexes.**
- b) note the virements in Annex 2b**
- c) approve the supplementary estimate request of £0.2m as set out in paragraph 92 of Annex B.**
- d) approve the eleven debt write offs totalling £0.2m as set out in paragraph 122 of Annex B.**

45/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE AND MONITORING REPORT

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it the fourth capital programme update and monitoring report for 2023/24 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of January 2024. The report also provided an update to the Capital Programme approved by Council on 20 February 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

The Chair presented the report and outlined the changes and new inclusions in the Council's Capital Programme.

During discussion members welcomed

- The additions to the County's education estate.
- The extension of the number of places at Mabel Pritchard Special School
- The grant towards decarbonisation activity which demonstrated the Council's position at the leading edge of climate action

The Chair moved and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

Capital Programme

- a) Accept the latest capital monitoring position for 2023/24 set out in Annex
- b) Approve the updated Capital Programme at Annex 2 incorporating the changes set out in this report.

Budget Changes / Budget Release

- c) approve the inclusion of a programme of work to replace prefabricated classrooms with permanent provision at North Hinksey CE Primary School into the Capital Programme, at a cost of £1.443m to be funded by s106 developer contributions, the remaining cost of the scheme will be met by the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (paragraph 49)
- d) approve the inclusion of the expansion of Mabel Prichard Special School into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £2.230m to be funded from the Special Educational Needs (SEN) High Needs capital allocation 2021/22-2023/24 (paragraph 50).
- e) approve an increase in budget of £3.6m from £6.897m to £10.497m for the Tramway Road Accessibility Improvement scheme. The increase in budget is funded through the Housing & Growth Deal and was agreed as part of the latest Growth Deal Programme review exercise, included in the Capital Programme approved at Council on 20 February 2024 (paragraph 52).
- f) approve the inclusion of Redbridge Household & Recycling Centre (HWRC) stabilisation works into the capital programme at a cost of £1.400m to be funded by corporate resources, of which £0.7m was agreed by Cabinet on 21 February 2023 and a further £0.7m agreed on 27 February 2024 (paragraph 54).
- g) to note the release of an initial development budget of £1.813m to redevelop Speedwell House (paragraph 56).
- h) To approve the inclusion of the £3.1m Decarbonisation Grant into the capital programme and the release of a total budget provision of £8.2m to commence carbon reduction measures in the Council property portfolio to progress measures towards the 2030 Climate Action Framework (paragraph 58).

46/24 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 12)

The Cabinet considered a list of items 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.

47/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet noted the responses to the following Scrutiny reports:-

Capital Asset Disposal Process
City Centre Accommodation Strategy
Employee Engagement Strategy
Social Value

.....in the Chair

Date of signing