

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 January 2022 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Glynis Phillips
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Calum Miller
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Mark Lygo

Cabinet Member attending remotely:

Councillor Duncan Enright

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors David Bartholomew, Yvonne Constance, Ted Fenton, Donna Ford, Andrew Gant, Andy Graham, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Kieron Mallon, Ian Middleton, Michael O'Connor, Eddie Reeves, Nigel Simpson, Liam Walker

Officers:

Whole of meeting Steve Jorden, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets and Investment; Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director for Adult & Housing Services; Corporate Director Environment & Place; Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director for Children's Services; Anita Bradley, Director for Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh and Lucy Tyrrell, Committee Secretaries.

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.

1/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were no apologies. Councillor Duncan Enright attended remotely.

2/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

Councillor Calum Miller declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 11 as he was a coach with Gosford All-Blacks Rugby Club.

3/22 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2021 were approved and signed.

4/22 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

The questions received from County Councillors and responses are set out in an Annex to these Minutes.

5/22 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The Chair agreed the following speakers.

Speakers

Item 6: Budget and Business Planning Report

Graham Jones

Bernadette Evans

Cllr Eddie Reeves

Cllr Michael O'Connor

Cllr David Bartholomew

Cllr Yvonne Constance

Item 7: Kidlington LCWIP

Christiaan Monden

Cllr Ian Middleton

Cllr Andrew Gant

Item 8: A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor

Cllr Dan Levy

Cllr Ian Middleton

Item 9: Traffic Management Act

City Cllr Alex Hollingsworth

Item 11: Land at Stratfield Brake, Kidlington

Jo Sandelson

John Hill

Cllr Ian Middleton

Cllr Andrew Gant

Cllr Nigel Simpson

Petition:

Caroline Raine presented a presentation on the discontinued No. 16 bus route. She stated that statistics showed that Littlemore and Donnington were among the most deprived areas, with an older population and a lack of facilities. The number 16 bus was important to the community for accessing health and community services, leisure facilities and schools. Many users described the bus service as a 'lifeline'. The lack of a bus service will force many to drive causing congestion and increased emissions, contrary to the policies being pursued in the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. She asked that the Council provide a subsidy to allow the route to operate.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, thanked Caroline Raine for the petition which highlighted important points. He emphasised that the city services were run by independent companies. Services had been impacted by Covid and they had to reduce costs to stay in business. The government had cut the funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan. However, this administration's goal was to increase bus usage and provide more reliable services that can be profitable.

6/22 BUDGET & BUSINESS PLANNING REPORT - 2022/23 - JANUARY 2022

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet had before it proposals for the Strategic Plan and related revenue budget for 2022/23, medium term financial strategy to 2025/26 capital programme to 2031/32 plus supporting policies, strategies and information. Before discussing the report, the Chair had agreed to hear a number of speakers.

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, reported the views of the scrutiny committee's discussions over two meetings. The points were agreed cross-party.

Their meeting on 10 December agreed recommendations which were outlined in the supplementary document attached to the Agenda. These included:

- the administration's priorities should be more clearly defined
- there should be Key Performance Indicators to ensure ongoing monitoring.
- the Corporate Plan should provide greater clarity around its environmental ambitions at strategic and measurable levels

It was unfortunate that the Committee's discussion on the capital programme had only taken place the day before this meeting however he summarised the nine main points agreed by that meeting:

- Climate Change and decarbonisation needed to be mainstreamed in the Capital Programme;
- Maximising social value should be part of the procurement policy;

- More to tackle economic and gender inequalities and possibly a future generations policy
- Consider allocation of unused borrowing and use of capital resources to improve SEND provision.
- Assess deliverability of capital projects before committing to them.

Councillor Michael O'Connor, Deputy Chair of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, added that there would be a written report produced on the Committee's views on the Strategic Plan.

The Chair agreed that Cabinet would consider that report before finalising the proposals for Council on 8 February.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, expressed disappointment that the papers for this item included a report from the Cabinet Member for Finance in the same standard format as officer reports which he described as a political and subjective document that should be clearly identified as such.

Councillor Bartholomew in particular noted the comment that the administration had 'inherited underfunding'. He stated that the universal expectation at the time of his administration had been that the pandemic would result in deflation and unemployment whereas the opposite had been the case.

He stated that he had a long record of drawing attention to financial concerns around the Kennington Bridge project. He welcomed the proposed re-assessment of major projects and hoped that the Cabinet would be consistent in its approach between its own projects and those it had inherited. Councillor Bartholomew also asked where the costs in unpicking the partnership with Cherwell District Council were taken account of in the budget.

Councillor Yvonne Constance stated that she wanted to correct the record in relation to comments in the report from the Cabinet Member for Finance on the previous administration in which she was Cabinet Member for Environment (including Transport) and which she believed implied incompetence.

Councillor Constance described the way in which costs on Kennington Bridge escalated as significant changes were made to the bridge design and the funding arrangements. An outline business case, such as that produced in Summer 2020, was expected to change. This was not due to over-optimism.

On the HIF1 project (Housing Infrastructure Fund), an increase in scope, uncertainty and delays led to increases in costs. She wanted to make it clear that officers were diligent and complete in their work at all stages.

Bernadette Evans addressed the meeting on behalf of Jericho Traders Association in opposition to the proposal to increase the charge for 3 hours parking in the area to £18. She believed that this would be the most expensive parking in Oxford and possibly the most expensive in the UK outside of London. She noted that parking for three hours in Summertown is £3.50, in Worcester Street £9.50, St Clements £4 and the Westgate £5. Putting up parking to £18 for three hours in Jericho

Jericho was probably the only high street in Oxfordshire with no empty shops. If this charge went ahead there would be economic consequences. It put the Westgate hospitality businesses at a huge commercial advantage over Jericho for day time custom. She asked Cabinet to delay this decision until it had a chance to discuss it properly.

Graham Jones stated that many businesses in Oxford had disappeared due to the pandemic. Those remaining need all the help they can get. Public transport, cycling and walking may be the main effective modes of transport but they cannot cover all needs. Use of these parking places had dropped significantly already because of the existing exorbitant charges. Further excessive charges will reduce, not increase the revenue from parking as customer resistance grows.

At the Westgate, primarily a location for multi chain shops, the parking charge for up to 2 hours was £4.00. Yet elsewhere in the city centre, the on street car parks, serving mainly the independent shopping, restaurant and cultural quarters, were more expensive already.

He asked Cabinet to defer a decision and come up with alternatives that will help businesses and jobs in Oxford and, possibly, improve the County's income at the same time.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the reports. This was the first budget for the Fair Deal Alliance and followed a consultation process that drew 1392 responses – more than twice last year. He thanked officers for all the work on the budget and consultation.

He had participated in the scrutiny committee discussions and a response to the recommendations from the first meeting was published just before this meeting. The Strategic Plan was being developed alongside the budget process and he believed that the links between priorities and spending will be made clear.

Councillor Miller added that the impact of the pandemic meant that it was a very hard time to set a budget. It had been hoped that the central government in its budget would respond, in particular to the challenges facing adult social care, but the Chancellor instructed that there be an increase in council tax and the adult social care precept. This will come through to residents next April.

Councillor Miller stated that the report in his name was intended to provide a narrative to accompany the more technical budget papers and explain the administration's intentions more clearly. In response to criticism of his comments that they had inherited underfunding, he stated that there were significant liabilities and debts left so that they inherited a negative position.

The new administration had ideas on how capital funding might be used to improve the situation for residents of Oxfordshire but instead they were going to have to provide extra funding for existing projects.

Councillor Miller drew attention to an improvement in the budget outlook of £6.8m as a result of grants and revenue updates however he emphasised that this was a one-off situation and these funds could not be used on anything that involved recurrent expenditure.

Councillor Glynis Phillips moved recommendation 1 a) emphasising that the version of the Strategic Plan in front of this meeting was a draft. She welcomed the engagement of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee and looked forward to seeing the written report on their comments. She would like to ensure that their comments were reflected in the version of the Plan put to Council on 8 February 2022.

The Chair proposed that recommendation 1a) be approved on that basis. This was agreed.

Councillor Tim Bearder thanked speakers for their comments on parking charges. He reminded Cabinet that they were committed to reducing car journeys in the city by 25% by 2030. However, he could understand the concerns raised in this case and was open to debate on the matter.

Councillor Pete Sudbury proposed an amendment to Annex A: on Agenda Page 63, the second set of charges under Oxford City Centre – Central Area to increase to £5 per hour and £15 for three hours instead of £6 and £18. This was seconded by Councillor Mark Lygo.

Councillor Miller responded that he did not have an estimate as to the financial effect of the amendment but he was happy to accept it.

The Chair further proposed that the Council engage in discussions with Oxford City Council who are responsible for setting many of the parking charges in the city. This and the amended charges were agreed.

Councillor Miller proposed recommendations 2 b) to 2 i) individually and they were agreed. He then proposed recommendations 3 j) to o) and they were agreed,

RESOLVED:

1. In relation to the draft strategic plan (Section 2);

To RECOMMEND Council to:

- a) adopt the strategic plan.

2. In relation to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4);

To:

- b) approve the Review of Charges for 2022/23 and in relation to the Registration Service, charges also for 2023/24 (Annex A – **as amended**);
- c) approve the final schools funding formula for 2022/23 subject to the decision by the Secretary of State for Education regarding permission to transfer 0.5% (£2.2m) from the Schools block to support High Needs expenditure (Annex B)
- d) Receive and thank the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their Budget Scrutiny report and note the response as set out in Annex C (to follow);
- e) approve the Financial Strategy for 2022/23 (Section 4.5);
- f) approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2022/23 (Section 4.6);
- g) and to note that the Leader of the Council will, following consultation with the Director of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance, make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget following receipt of information relating to the outstanding matters at paragraph 9 of this report

to RECOMMEND Council to:

- h) approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2025/26 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);
- i) agree the council tax and precept calculations for 2022/23 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £435,816,475;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,651.61.
 - (iii) approve a revenue budget for 2022/23 as set out in Section 4.4

3. In relation to the Capital and Investment Strategy and Capital Programme (Section 5);

to recommend Council to:

- j) approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2021/22 - 2031/32 (Section 5.1) including;

- (i) the Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement (Section 5.1 Annex 1);
- (ii) the Prudential Indicators (Section 5.1 Annex 2)
- (iii) the updated Pupil Place Plan (Section 5.1 Annex 3) and
- k) approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23 (Section 5.2); and
 - (i) continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Director of Finance;
 - (ii) approve that any further changes required to the 2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance;
 - (iii) approve the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; and
 - (iv) approve the Specified Investment and Non Specified Investment instruments as set out in Section 5.2 paragraphs 55 to 60;
- l) approve the Investment Strategy for Property Investment (Section 5.3);
- m) approve the Property Strategy (Section 5.4);
- n) approve the new capital proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme (Section 5.5)
- o) approve the capital programme (Section 5.6);

7/22 KIDLINGTON LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP)

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet was asked to approve the Kidlington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which set out a cycling and walking network plan for the village including links to neighbouring rural settlements and measures to improve the network over a ten-year timescale to 2031.

Before discussing the item Cabinet heard from a number of speakers:

Christiaan Monden was speaking as a Kidlington resident, a father of three school-aged children, a former school governor and trustee of Cycling Without Age. He believed that a people-centred approach was needed with infrastructure that gave all, regardless of age and ability, a genuine choice to walk or cycle. He urged Cabinet to approve these plans as a first step.

He emphasised three things: 1) redevelopment of the junctions and roundabout on the Oxford/Banbury road have to be top priority; 2) not to spend money on the canal path; 3) a system more connected and joined-up across the many developments around Kidlington.

The first lockdown showed that the people of Kidlington will cycle if it is a safe and convenient option. Also, people needed safe and convenient bike storage which should be provided in all developments.

Councillor Ian Middleton, Kidlington South, broadly supported the document though he hoped that it could continue to evolve. He was not keen on shared-use paths and had concerns about development of the canal towpath. He would like to see a firm commitment to a cycle path on the Bicester Road by Edward Field School.

Councillor Middleton was also concerned that there was not yet a position adopted on Kidlington roundabout and noted that it would be impacted by the proposed stadium. He was hoping to meet with officers to discuss improvements in the plan.

Councillor Andrew Gant, the Council's Cycling Champion, supported the comments of other speakers. He stated that it was unclear how consultation responses to the Plan had been factored in. He asked Cabinet to make sure that they were. He believed that access to schools and connectivity were the key factors in the Plan.

Councillor Gant believed that the Active Travel proposals in the Oxford North development were unsatisfactory and Plans such as this one needed to provide options for them. He urged Cabinet to adopt the plan and allow further development of it.

Councillor Tim Bearder thanked the speakers and agreed that the Plan would have to evolve, particularly with new developments arising such as the potential stadium. These plans were very important given the huge growth in housing that was planned across the county. It was necessary to have these plans in place in order to avail of funds such as S106 monies when they become available.

Councillor Bearder noted speakers' concerns that consultation feedback had not been sufficiently incorporated and was happy to have discussions with them and officers to ensure that it was.

Cabinet Members provided further comments:

- supporting the calls to ensure that it be made clear how consultation feedback was incorporated into the plans being adopted.
- emphasising the link between promoting active travel to schools and the review of the Home to School Transport policy.
- agreeing that the Plan be considered a living, evolving document.

RESOLVED: to approve the Kidlington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

8/22 A40 HIF2 SMART CORRIDOR - COMPULSORY PURCHASE AND SIDE ROAD ORDERS

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval of the Statement and Orders Plans and approval to make the Compulsory Purchase and Side Road Orders. Before discussing the report, Cabinet heard from a number of speakers.

Councillor Dan Levy, Eynsham, shared the concerns of local residents that this scheme was more about providing for more development around Eynsham and was probably not going to improve bus reliability but may increase traffic by providing a dual carriageway. This would not help with climate change. The plans involved a lot of new junctions and roundabouts that would provide difficulties for cyclists and pedestrians and may also encourage rat-running. Eynsham roundabout in particular was badly designed.

Councillor Levy accepted it was an inherited project and officers had greatly improved it but there was still a long way to go. Residents of Eynsham and Cassington would bear the brunt of the construction work and see fewest benefits from the scheme. He asked that the cycle lane be kept open during works with a good surface.

Councillor Ian Middleton, Kidlington South, agreed with the points made by the previous speaker. He believed that the scheme would do little to ease congestion but just attract more traffic as had been the case with development of the A34. He hoped that the new Park & Ride at Eynsham would have more provision for cyclists and electric vehicles.

Councillor Middleton asked that dialogue continue on making improvements to the scheme and on ensuring that temporary facilities for Active Travel during construction were better than those provided at the Oxford North development.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, thanked the speakers and agreed that the scheme would be quite different if the current administration had been responsible for the design. He emphasised though that there were benefits for residents of areas out beyond Eynsham in terms of improved bus service because the stretch from Eynsham to Oxford provided a bus lane and did not increase the space for cars.

The scheme, he added, should be seen in conjunction with other improvements such as increased capacity on the North Cotswold railway line, development of Oxford Railway Station to increase its capacity and possibly re-opening the Witney branch.

Councillor Enright stated that this provided an opportunity to make the proposed Park & Ride a transport interchange improving connectivity for residents of villages in the area. He took on board the points made regarding roundabouts, rat-running and temporary cycle lanes.

He also noted that this project did not take account of the Salt Cross development but transport aspects of that development would clearly need to take account of this scheme. The application for planning permission had already been made and this proposal was about the next step and the provision of CPOs if needed.

The Chair put the recommendations and they were agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Confirm that the acquisition of the land identified on the map attached to this report (Annex B) (“the Order Map”) being the map accompanying The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure - A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor (Hill Farm to Dukes Cut)) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (“the CPO”) is necessary for highway purposes;**
- b) **Approve the Joint Statement of Reasons (Annex A) for the CPO and The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure – A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor (Hill Farm to Dukes Cut)) (Side Roads) Order 2022 (“the SRO”), together with approving the CPO, the Order Map, the SRO and the plans accompanying the SRO (“SRO Plans”) all substantially in the form annexed to this report but to delegate to the Corporate Director Environment & Place following consultation with the Monitoring Officer, authority to modify them as necessary;**
- c) **Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure – A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor (Hill Farm to Dukes Cut)) (Side Roads) Order 2022 (“the SRO”) to enable the stopping-up, diversion, alteration, improvement and creation of new lengths of highway or reclassification of existing highways, and giving authority to the acquisition of necessary land pursuant to the CPO. The SRO also enables the stopping up of private means of access as necessary where the scheme design necessitates and re-provision of private means of access.**
- d) **Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure - A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor (Hill Farm to Dukes Cut)) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 pursuant to Sections 239, 240, 246, 250 and 260 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended) and Schedule 3 to the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 for the purpose of acquiring the land and interests shown on the Order Map and described in the Schedules to the CPO (or such lesser area of land should this in his opinion be appropriate) to facilitate the construction of new highway on such land and that the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to the CPO and to the Order Map;**

- e) **Authorise the Monitoring Officer to advertise the making of the CPO and the SRO and to submit the CPO and SRO to the Secretary of State for Transport for confirmation, together with authorising the Monitoring Officer to take all other relevant action thereon to promote the confirmation of the CPO and the SRO;**
- f) **In the event that any Public Inquiry is convened to consider objections to the CPO and/or SRO and/or planning application (by way of a call-in decision), to authorise the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Director Environment & Place to prepare and submit such evidence as is necessary in support of the CPO and/or SRO and/or planning application, including enlisting the assistance of outside consultants, legal advisors and Counsel to assist in the preparation and presentation of such evidence.**
- g) **As soon as the CPO and the SRO have been confirmed and become operative, to authorise the Monitoring Officer to comply with all associated requirements in respect of personal, site and press notices of confirmation and to make, seal and give notice of a General Vesting Declaration (or declarations where more than one is required) under the Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981 and/or to serve Notices to Treat and Notice of Entry in respect of those properties to be acquired compulsorily;**
- h) **Authorise the Corporate Director Environment & Place in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to negotiate terms with interested parties for the purchase by agreement or payment of compensation in accordance with the Compensation Code in respect of any interests or rights in or over any land included in the CPO and, where appropriate, to agree terms for relocation;**
- i) **Authorise the Director of Property in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to complete the acquisition of such interests or rights and their transfer to the Council;**
- j) **In the event that compensation for the acquisition of land and/or rights cannot be agreed between the relevant parties, to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make a reference to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) for determination of such compensation together with such other questions as may be necessary to determine, including the engagement of appropriate external legal advisors and surveyors and other experts, as required;**
- k) **In the event that any question of compensation in relation to the acquisition of land and/or rights is made by way of a reference to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) (whether by the claimant or**

the Council) to authorise the Monitoring Officer to take all necessary steps in relation thereto, including advising on the appropriate uses and compensation payable and issuing the appropriate certificates.

9/22 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT - PART 6 POWERS FOR OXFORDSHIRE (CIVIL ENFORCEMENT OF MOVING TRAFFIC OFFENCES)

(Agenda Item. 9)

The Department for Transport will be inviting applications for a Designation Order to enable a Highway Authority to undertake civil enforcement of site specific Traffic Regulation Orders within a geographical area already covered by Civil Parking Enforcement. For Oxfordshire, this can include the whole County as Civil Parking Enforcement is now Oxfordshire wide. Cabinet was asked to consider approving an application. Before discussing the proposal Cabinet heard from one speaker.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Oxford City Council, Carfax & Jericho Ward, supported the recommendations and asked Cabinet to make a minor adjustment to the wording of Annex 1, the Site Selection Criteria. This was related to the huge growth in the numbers of moped and motorcycle delivery riders. Many of these riders were law abiding and considerate but many were not. In particular, the use of footways and cycle routes by heavy motorised vehicles travelling at speed was a serious risk to cyclists and pedestrians.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked that the Cabinet specifically include in the list of Site Selection Criteria listed in Annex 1, 2(vi) a reference to protecting existing pedestrian and cycle priority facilities.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, agreed that there was a problem as the speaker outlined but did not believe that it was necessary to amend the Annex as described in order to tackle it.

It had been hugely frustrating for the Council to not have the powers now being applied for. This was in the government's gift. Further powers to install cameras to enforce the new plan of 20mph zones would also be welcome. The plan was to consult with the police and focus on a small number of locations initially. Further consultation will take place with city and district councils to maximise the impact.

The Chair put the recommendations and they were agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- **Approve submission of an application to the Department for Transport to apply for a Designation Order for Oxfordshire to enforce moving traffic offences.**

- **Approve the Site Selection Criteria at Annex 1 and Resource Priorisation Framework at Annex 2 to manage decisions for potential enforcement delivery.**

10/22 EXEMPT ITEM

(Agenda Item. 10)

It was agreed that there was no requirement to exclude the public as there was no request to discuss the information in the exempt Annex.

11/22 LAND AT STRATFIELD BRAKE, KIDLINGTON - PROPOSAL FROM OXFORD UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB TO OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AS LANDOWNER

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it a proposal to enter into negotiations as requested by Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) and with Oxfordshire County Council's current tenants to enable the use of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) owned land for the development of a new football stadium, subject to planning permission. Before considering the proposal, Cabinet heard from a number of speakers.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Wolvercote and Summertown, noted that there was a great deal of public interest in this proposal. However, there had been no time for meaningful engagement and he asked Cabinet to delay a decision for perhaps two months to allow for full public engagement. He noted that the proposals included a commitment that the project would be consistent with the Fair Deal Alliance's priorities.

Councillor Gant asked that the Council work with the football club to ensure provision and promotion of Active Travel options to access the site. He also suggested that they discuss key issues with Cherwell District Council as the planning authority and report back on their position.

There were aspects of the proposal that were welcome. The site was more accessible than the current stadium and there were assurances that the facilities for local sports clubs would be safeguarded.

John Hill questioned whether Oxford United Football Club Limited should be considered suitable to undertake a multimillion development at Stratfield Brake. If the building of a new United stadium by this Council was thought to be of sufficient priority over other pressing needs, then he believed that the only realistic option in the time scale suggested was to bring in a national commercial developer and for the Council to build the stadium in partnership.

The Council would then own the stadium and it was likely that it would have to meet some of the running costs itself. Whether this was a good use of scarce resources was a matter for debate. He believed that the Council should not be too strongly focused on the end date of United's lease as it

was commonplace for football clubs to share grounds and this option was available if United decided to leave the Kassam stadium.

Councillor Ian Middleton, Kidlington South, spoke as a member of the County Council, District Council and two parish councils affected by the proposals. There were varying views locally on the proposal and there had not been enough time to judge the overall public mood.

He was concerned that the proposed development was on Green Belt, which had already been eroded. The land in question had been acquired by the Council to prevent sprawl. There was already a lot of development in the Kidlington area. He supported calls to provide more time for engagement and emphasised that the leasing structure at the site was complex involving multiple partners.

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Kirtlington and Kidlington North, stated that he was a season ticket holder with the club. He could see the benefits from the sporting side but was also aware of residents' concerns regarding traffic, parking and loss of green belt. He believed that if it was done right it could be a great opportunity but it would have to be done right.

He was aware that the current rugby club facilities at the site, for example, needed a large injection of money to bring up to standard. He emphasised that there were no designs in place yet and the question at this stage was whether the Council wanted to engage in talking to the club about options.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, thanked speakers for their contributions. Oxford United Football Club approached the Council on this about a year ago and he thanked officers for their work so far on bringing this proposal.

He had received representations from a variety of interests since the proposal was announced last week. There had also been an opportunity to brief Cherwell District Council's Executive. He had heard the advice against rushing a decision on this and the warnings around the complex financial structures of football clubs and the complex leasing structure at this site.

Councillor Miller noted the recurring themes of concern around the scale of the development, traffic and parking as well as replacement facilities for the clubs currently on the site. He believed that the principles outlined to which the project would have to adhere were right.

The recommendation from officers was to authorise them to enter negotiations on a lease – it was not, as had been stated by some, a decision to grant a lease. Nevertheless, he agreed that it was better to take time to conduct a public engagement exercise and come back to this issue at the March Cabinet meeting. In recognition of the timeline involved, officers could continue exploratory discussions with OUFC and current tenants.

Cabinet Members supported this proposal on the basis that there were a lot of issues to consider and a holistic view of the use of the site was required. Local communities should not feel that decisions were being thrown at them with undue haste.

Councillor Miller put the alternative proposal and it was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- a) **Officers should hold a 4-week Public Engagement Exercise amongst residents and stakeholders to receive their feedback on the proposal and on the principles/objectives proposed to guide any future Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) negotiation with Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) as set out in paragraph 23;**
- b) **Officers should progress exploratory discussions with OUFC and with OCC's current tenants and, as appropriate, their sub-tenants regarding the proposal from OUFC to enable the use of OCC-owned land for the development of a new football stadium, subject to planning permission.**
- c) **Officers should report the outcomes of the public engagement exercise and of the exploratory discussions to Cabinet on 15 March 2022 with a recommendation on whether to commence formal negotiations and, if so, with which objectives.**

12/22 DELEGATED POWERS - JANUARY 2022

(Agenda Item. 12)

The report was noted.

13/22 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 13)

The Cabinet considered a list of items (**CA13**) for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

The Chair noted that the Cabinet's response to Councillor Middleton's motion passed by Council on 14 December 2021 will be taken at the Cabinet meeting on 15 March 2022.

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

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

