

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.35pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors David Bartholomew, Donna Ford and Eddie Reeves

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Stephen Chandler, Executive Director (People, Transformation and Performance), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ansaf Azhar (Corporate Director Public Health & Community Safety), Bill Cotton (Corporate Director Environment & Place) Karen Fuller (Corporate Director Adult Social Care), Lisa Lyons (Corporate Director Children's Services), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet 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.

1/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury.

2/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

3/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record.

4/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

5/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

8 Future Council Governance Group – Final Report

Cllr Charlie Hicks

14 Oxford City Centre Accommodation Strategy

Cllr Susanna Pressel

6/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were none to report.

7/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, presented the reports and recommendations on:-

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

Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

8/24 FUTURE COUNCIL GOVERNANCE GROUP - FINAL REPORT

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report and recommendations from the Future Council Governance Group. It had been presented to the Audit and Governance

Committee on 29 November 2023 by Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, chair of the cross-party group. Members of the committee welcomed the findings and recommendations.

The group's recommendation relating to the formation of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was supported at the full Council meeting on 12 December 2023. The terms of reference for the new committee were developed ahead of Council and were approved at the meeting.

The other recommendations made by the group, including the inter-relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny, participatory process, locality working and futures planning, would need to be taken forward by the Cabinet, Leader of the Council and individual Cabinet Members.

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, Chair of the Future Council Governance Group, presented the report. He welcomed the establishment of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the implications for future generations was now being taken into consideration in the Council's governance processes. Councillor Gawrysiak then summarised the Group's other recommendations. He referred, particularly, to the proposals for a Citizens Panel.

During discussion members commented on the following:-

- The challenges and benefits of Cabinet and Scrutiny functions working together more effectively
- The work that had taken place on Citizens Juries

Councillor Fawcett moved, and Councillor Gant seconded the amended recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED:-

- a) to note the work undertaken by the Future Council Governance Group including the following recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet:**
- b) to review the inter-relationship between the Cabinet and Scrutiny and introduce an integrated forward plan which brings together the individual work plans of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.**
- c) to evaluate the cost and processes for a citizens' panel with a view, subject to budget, to selecting one topic in 2024-25 for**

review by a citizens' panel and review its success or otherwise before committing to any future panels.

- d) to reinvigorate locality meetings by inviting local stakeholders as necessary and undertake a wider review of locality working including the practicalities of delegating some budgets and allowing recommendations to be made to the Cabinet and Cabinet Members.**
- e) to take steps to embed 'futures planning' across the Council and for it to become integral part of the decision-making process and scrutiny work plans.**

9/24 PEOPLE AND CULTURE STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report introducing the "Our People and Culture Strategy" which set out the vision for developing and maintaining high performing, innovative, highly engaged, and agile teams, employing the best people, and reflecting the communities that the Council served. The strategy referred to the importance of nurturing an environment that supported diversity, equality, and inclusion, and allowed all employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents.

The strategy focused on four priorities:

- (a) Attracting, recruiting, and retaining talented people
- (b) Enabling our people to thrive and perform.
- (c) Enabling our people to grow and evolve for the future.
- (d) Enabling our people to lead and transform for the future.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report.

The Director of Workforce and Organisational Development then referred to the four priorities set out in the strategy. In response to questions, she explained the reasoning for the KPI measurements in the strategy and that these would be subject to further development. She confirmed that monitoring of statistics on maternity leave returners would be included within the performance monitoring statistics.

The Chair welcomed the report and noted the ambitious objectives during the initial year.

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

RESOLVED to

- a) **approve the “Our People and Culture Strategy” annexed to the report outlining four priority areas of focus:**
 - a. **Attracting, recruiting, and retaining talented people**
 - b. **Enabling our people to thrive and perform.**
 - c. **Enabling our people to grow and evolve for the future.**
 - d. **Enabling our people to lead and transform for the future.**

- b) **note the programme in place to support the delivery of the strategy.**

10/24 REPORT ON THE AUTHORITY'S POLICY FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATION OF THE INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 , THE USE OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THIS ACT AND THE RECENT INSPECTION BY THE INVESTIGATORY POWERS COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report providing a summary of the covert activities undertaken by the council between April 2022 and March 2023 under the provisions of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and supporting Codes of Practice. The Council's existing Policy for Compliance with the Investigation of Regulatory Powers Act 2000 was updated annually but had not been subjected to a full refresh since 2017. The report provided Cabinet with an opportunity to review and approve the council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy. The policy required Cabinet approval in the absence of a delegation in the Constitution to another body or committee for approval.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report.

The Director of Law & Governance explained that, when the Council used the powers in the RIPA act, there was an additional level of oversight by the magistrates courts.

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

RESOLVED to :

- a) **consider and note the use of activities within the scope of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act by the Council, and**

- b) **approve the revised Policy for Compliance with the Investigation of Regulatory Powers Act 2000 included in the annex of this paper**
- c) **note the comments provided by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office regarding assurance of ongoing compliance with RIPA 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and that a further inspection is not required until 2026.**

11/24 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2023

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the September 2023 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.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

Councillor Levy moved, and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the report and annexes.**
- b) **note the virements set out in Annex 2b to the report**

12/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - JANUARY 2024

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out requests for changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next quarterly update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

In response to a question, the Executive Director of Resources confirmed that funds had been allocated to rail feasibility studies for a number of routes within the County.

Councillor Levy moved, and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **approve the inclusion of 'Great Mead', a Children's Residential Home, into the Capital Programme, releasing £3.1m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023.**
- b) **approve the inclusion of 'Willow Bank', a Children's Residential Home, into the Capital Programme, releasing £1.8m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023.**
- c) **approve the inclusion of a new Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) School for Social and Emotional High Needs (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), located in Didcot, into the Capital Programme, with an indicative capital budget of £14.4m to be met by section 106 funds and High Needs grant 2021/22 to 2023/24.**

13/24 FREEHOLD DISPOSAL CHILTERNES END FORMER CARE HOME, HENLEY ON THAMES

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed disposal of land comprising the former elderly persons' home at Chilternes End.

The property was let to the Oxfordshire Care Partnership under a project agreement dated 20 December 2001, for a term of 60 years, for use as an elderly persons' home. The property had been empty since 2016 when the residents moved to a new facility elsewhere in Henley. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) took back occupation in October 2019.

The property had been considered for several uses within OCC since late 2019, but with no viable business case forthcoming. It has been allocated in the Henley on Thames Neighbourhood Plan for a mix of open market and affordable housing.

The property had been formally declared surplus and been marketed for sale for the last two months.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) approve, as a key decision, the freehold sale of land comprising the former elderly persons home at Chilterns End to a named purchaser in consideration of the Council receiving a capital receipt.**
- b) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to consider officer recommendations and agree the final purchaser and sale price.**

14/24 OXFORD CITY CENTRE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet agreed that there was no need to go into private session for this item.

Cabinet had before it a report regarding the options for the Council's office accommodation in Oxford City Centre which were being considered as part of the Property and Assets Strategy approved in November 2022. This strategy set out the Council's 10-year ambition for its property portfolio driven by the need to repurpose the estate to enable new ways of delivering services, support agile working and decarbonise existing buildings.

The Strategy had confirmed the continued need for a core central office and democratic facilities in Oxford city centre based on its central location, historical significance, strong public transport links, access to a larger workforce and the range of facilities in the city. A cross party Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) was established in February 2023 to provide guidance and feedback to the Cabinet Member for Finance, on the development of options and a business case to deliver the objectives.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

The Director of Property Services referred the benefits of the move to a Council-owned property and the associated regeneration of an area of Oxford City Centre which were explained in the report.

During discussion, members referred to the need for careful consideration of the future use of the County Hall site in view of its historic social and value

and the benefits for residents and staff resulting from the move to a refurbished building more suited to present day needs. Members also referred to the economic factors involved in the consideration of the options and the need to ensure that best value was taken into account.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Gant seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) progress Option 2: ‘Consolidation in Speedwell House and disposal of County Hall’ as the preferred option and progress the project through the Council’s capital governance and reporting processes, noting the financial position.
- b) To engage the market to assess interest in both New and Old County Hall to inform a final decision on Old County Hall’s future.

15/24 DELEGATED POWERS REPORT FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2023

(Agenda Item. 15)

RESOLVED to note the executive decision taken under delegated powers, set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

16/24 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 16)

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.

17/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet noted the following response to the Scrutiny report:-

SEND and staffing changes

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

