

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21 September 2010 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.15 pm.

Present:

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

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Armitage (Agenda Items 6 & 8)
Councillor Hannaby (Agenda Item 8)
Councillor Patrick (Agenda Items 10 & 11)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Chief Executive, S. Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of Meeting

Item	
6	K. Wilcox (Financial Planning)
7	Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer
8	Director for Social & Community Services
9	J. Disley, J. Fellows (Transport & Highways)
10	Corporate Performance and Review Manager
11	Head of Human Resources, S. James (Strategic Human Resources)

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.

93/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Louise Chapman.

94/10 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 and 27 July and 10 August 2010 were approved and signed.

95/10 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

Councillor Richard Steven had given notice of the following question to the Leader:

- “1. Recent research reveals that over 40% of GP's believe that the proposed changes contained in the Health White Paper (Liberating the NHS) will lead to a postcode lottery, with services to patients becoming more varied. The research also shows that over 70% of GPs believe the changes will lead to much greater private sector involvement in the NHS. Given these statistics, can the Leader of the Council explain why his government is only consulting on the *implementation* of these changes and not the actual changes themselves?”

Councillor Mitchell replied:

“These figures are taken from a small survey of 300 GPs, compared to over 40,000 GPs in England. From the Government's own discussions with GPs around the country, it is clear that many are enthusiastic about the reforms. Indeed, 92% of GP practices are already part of practice-based commissioning groups, a policy actively espoused by the Labour Government and our proposals for GP-led commissioning simply build upon these.

The actual changes which the Government is undertaking are consistent with the Coalition agreement: a strong local voice for patients through democratic representation and the devolution of commissioning responsibilities to GPs. The reforms the coalition government has announced are simply the most cost-effective way of achieving these changes and that is why the government is consulting on how to implement them. The proposals are to be included in the proposed Health Bill and will therefore be subject to Parliament's approval.”

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, OBE had given notice of the following question to the Leader:

- “2. On Tuesday 14 September Council agreed two motions concerning support for the most disadvantaged. In order to ensure the poorest people in the county are not disproportionately affected by the fiscal policies of the government, will the Cabinet assess each policy change required in relation to its impact on poverty?”

Councillor Mitchell replied:

“The Cabinet will most certainly be assessing the impact of public spending cuts on all of our residents and, particularly, on the most disadvantaged. However, "poverty" can be defined in many ways and is not necessarily synonymous with disadvantage. The Cabinet will be concentrating on assessing the impact of potential decisions on all categories of disadvantaged people throughout its budget deliberations and providing an evidence base for this.”

Supplementary: Councillor Brighthouse referred to news today of cuts to children’s projects across Oxfordshire. She asked that in looking at issues of deprivation consideration also be given to rural isolation. Given that the funding was in budgets she queried how much further the cuts would go and how many more projects would be affected?

Councillor Mitchell replied that the current government cuts were 25% compared to 20% envisaged by the previous government and were the price for years of structural imbalance to bring spending into line with income. Public Sector Borrowing had hit a record high in August 2010. Rural deprivation would be one of the factors considered in action taken.

Councillor Roy Darke had given notice of the following question to the cabinet Member for Finance & Property:

- “3. David Cameron said earlier this year that "This economy is going to recover when we get the private sector going, by boosting enterprise." Given the recent announced job losses at the Cowley BMW plant, and the recent collapse of other local firms, can the Cabinet Member for Finance explain exactly how cutting public sector jobs in Oxfordshire is going to boost the private sector?”

Councillor Couchman replied:

“This question starts from the premise that the country has an alternative to cutting public spending. It does not. The last government spent more than it received in every year since 2001. This was well before a banking crisis and recession. The last government's level of indebtedness meant the country was ill prepared for the measures necessary to counter the downturn. The present government has inherited a structural imbalance which means that there is £4 of spending for every £3 of income. It will inevitably take time to rectify this structural deficit and, until then, we will be adding to the mountain of debt and not reducing it. The question is not "should we be cutting public spending" but "by how much and how quickly must we make the cuts?”.

Labour had already planned to cut public revenue spending by 20% and capital spending by 50%. After seeing the degree of the structural deficit, the coalition has increased Labour's 20% of cuts to 25% on revenue and maintained Labour's cuts on capital at 50%.

Cutting public spending is bound to impact on those parts of the private sector that deliver public services. It is inevitable. Oxfordshire is particularly vulnerable, given our high dependence on public sector jobs. This is why it is vital to promote conditions that will allow the private sector to thrive. This involves improving education and skills provision to equip school and college leavers for successful and well paid careers; to enable workers of all ages to re-skill and up-skill where necessary; and to help those not in education, employment or training to gain confidence, skills and pride in employment. It involves making the planning system more welcoming and supportive of the economy. It means improving our transport system to make movement easier. It means stripping away some of the red tape and blockages that inhibit economic growth. It means welcoming overseas investment to a county with the most exciting science and knowledge transfer facilities anywhere and a living environment of equal quality.

That is why an Oxfordshire City Region Enterprise Partnership is so important to capitalise on our assets, address our shortcomings and support a vibrant and growing private sector as the public sector necessarily declines. The country cannot go on spending more than it earns.”

Supplementary: Councillor Darke referred to the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister expressing concern over the possibility of a further downturn in the economy. Does the County Council have a Plan B in the light of the decline in the economy given that in recent reports Oxfordshire was seen as being particularly susceptible?

Councillor Couchman replied that until the Spending review in October and the local government settlement in late November/early December there was no need for a Plan B. He awaited the outcome with interest.

Councillor John Sanders had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet member for Transport:

- “4. I was astounded to receive notification of the proposed 25% increases in charges to residents for parking in Controlled Parking Zones in Oxford.

The saga of these charges and their unpopularity goes back several years. One of the strong objections put forward by Oxford residents was that once the system was embedded, the Conservative-led County Council would be free to increase charges as it saw fit. At that time an assurance was given that increases would only be in line with RPI inflation. This was put in writing and repeated at public meetings.

For example:

Cabinet report 19 Sept 2006 (page 29) in response to an objection by residents that "The £40 charge will quickly be increased to a much higher figure" the Council officer comment is "The Draft Traffic Order limits increases in the charge to an adjustment once every three years based on inflation over this period."

Proposed Charges for Residents' and Visitors' Parking Permits: Consultation Information (June 2006). "Adjustments for inflation –The charges will be kept the same for three-year periods. After each three-year period the charges would be adjusted for inflation using the Retail Price Index"

There is no mention of slapping on a hefty increased charge.

Will the Cabinet member for Transport explain why, only three years after a firm promise to the people who reluctantly took part in the consultation, he now intends to renege on it?"

Councillor Rose replied:

"When the City council effectively handed over the running of Oxford on-street parking to the County Council, as they were unable to administer the scheme properly, the County were clear that the charge would cover the administration costs. Since then, national legislation increases in Penalty Charges has seen a 25% drop in offences. We could not have foreseen this result, which has been reflected by other Authorities. We finished up with other Council budgets subsidising the administration costs. In the new climate of a National debt of £950,000,000,000 after 13 years of a Labour government the Council can no longer continue to charge at less than the costs involved."

Supplementary: Councillor John Sanders queried how much of the £950,000m could be attributed to running CPZ schemes in Oxford. The level of national debt was comparable to that at the end of the last Conservative government. He asserted that the new charges were to recoup money wasted on a particular scheme and questioned when there would be an admittance of incompetence.

Councillor Rose replied that the question was factually incorrect so he was not going to answer it.

Councillor Richard Steven had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet Member for Transport:

- "5. Can the Cabinet Member for Transport explain why nobody from the County Council is being made available to attend the Area Committees to explain the recently proposed above-inflation increase in parking charges that are to be levied on people in Oxford?"

Councillor Rose replied:

All members whether county or city can put their concerns down in writing to officially object to the proposals and I will take their concerns into account when coming to my decision on this matter. The service is not able to resource officer attendance at all of the Area Committees prior to the decision committee. It would be inappropriate for me to attend as this matter is coming before me to make the final decision at cabinet member decisions.

96/10 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Speaker	Item
Councillor Armitage, Shadow Cabinet Member Jo Philpotts, member of the public	6. Financial Monitoring
Councillor Armitage, Shadow Cabinet Member	7. Service & Resource Planning report for 2011/12 – 2015/16
Councillor Hannaby, Shadow Cabinet Member	8. White Paper: Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS
Councillor Patrick (on behalf of Councillor Fooks who is absent)	10 Performance Management: 1 st Quarter Progress Against Priorities and Targets
Councillor Patrick (on behalf of Councillor Fooks who is absent)	11. Establishment Review

97/10 FINANCIAL MONITORING - SEPTEMBER 2010

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered the monthly financial report (CA6) on revenue and capital spending against budget allocations, including virements between budget heads.

Councillor Armitage, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance & Property referred to the alarmist language contained in paragraphs 30 and 32 and expressed the hope that the position as expressed by the Directorates would turn out to be less severe than reported, as was often the case at this time of the year. He referred to the usual annex relating to Shared Services that was not in the report. Whilst understanding why this was the case he hoped that it would be included in future reports.

Ms Philpotts sought clarification over the reference to Dean Pit in Annex 6 commenting that the costing was unclear and seeking assurance that the decision would not be pre-empted. The Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure replied that the scheme was currently held in the capital moratorium and he was well aware of the planning stipulation about a replacement.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Property highlighted a number of particular concerns relating to pooled budgets for Social & Community Services and to the overspend position for Children, Young People & Families.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) note the report and approve the virements as set out in annex 2a;
- (b) agree the creation of the Customer Services Reserve and transfer of £1.000m to that reserve and the transfer of £1.000m to transfer of £1.000m to Efficiency Reserve as set out in paragraph 51;
- (c) approve the Supplementary Estimate requests as set out in paragraph 56;
- (d) agree that the Unringfenced AIDS/HIV Grant can be used to fund Supporting People service as set out in paragraph 27;
- (e) agree the transfer of impairment losses in relation to Landsbanki to the County fund as set out in paragraphs 64 to 67;
- (f) note that £0.6m of Council funding for the day centre element of the Banbury Day Centre project has been released from the moratorium agreed as part of the Capital Programme Review as set out in paragraph 80; and
- (g) agree to take up prudential borrowing to meet commitments in respect of deferred interest loans as set out in paragraph 81.

98/10 SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING REPORT FOR 2011/12 - 2015/16 (SEPTEMBER 2010)

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered the second in the series of reports (CA7) on the Service & Resource Planning process for 2011/12 - 2015/16 that will culminate in the Council setting a budget requirement for the authority and an amount of Council Tax for 2011/12 in February 2011.

Councillor Armitage queried recommendation (c) commenting that no decision had been made at Council but it had been subsequently dealt with.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) approve the Service and Resource Planning process for 2011/12, noting the integration of Capital and the Asset Strategy;
- (b) endorse the distribution and phasing of the total savings targets between Directorates and support services in paragraph 28;
- (c) note the decision on the date for the budget setting meeting of Council.

99/10 WHITE PAPER: EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE: LIBERATING THE NHS

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered a report (CA8) on the proposed response to the recent White Paper that is out for consultation with responses required by 11 October 2010.

Councillor Hannaby, Shadow Cabinet Member for Adult Services thanked officers for their efforts and commented that the Liberal Democrats supported the proposals in principle. The principles of putting people first and accountability were welcome. She supported the comments of the Scrutiny Committees and particularly supported the continuation of the Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the final point made by the Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services introduced the report and supporting papers and drew attention to the options outlined on page 157. He supported the comments relating to separating the commissioning and scrutiny functions. Concerns around GP commissioning would be included in the response. Generally the proposals did provide an opportunity if the County including partners engaged early and took a holistic approach. The Director of Social & Community Services indicated that there had been a great deal of cross party agreement.

RESOLVED: to note the report of the Director for Social & Community Services and that the comments made be taken into account in the final response.

100/10 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 - DRAFT PLAN FOR CONSULTATION

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet considered a report (CA9) that sought approval to undertake public consultation on the draft third Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2030 (LTP3).

The Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure thanked everyone involved in the production of the draft Plan. He emphasised that it was a long term strategy and that there was a need to be realistic about what was possible in the current financial climate.

Councillor Hudspeth responded to questions:

1. Asked how the Plan would take account of changes to the way in which housing numbers were determined, Councillor Hudspeth indicated that the plan already took some account of the Local Development Framework and as numbers were confirmed these would be worked into the Plan.
2. Given limited funding the County would be very strong in their discussions with developers to ensure that the necessary infrastructure to support development was provided.
3. He explained the process for including the proposals that were being taken forward as set out on page 176 of the report. He stressed the long term nature of the Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Transport added that the Plan was a living document that would be changed and changed again to respond to current circumstances.

RESOLVED: to approve the draft Local Transport Plan for consultation, noting the information contained in the draft SEA Environmental Report.

101/10 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: 1ST QUARTER PROGRESS REPORT AGAINST PRIORITIES AND TARGETS

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered a report (CA10) on Oxfordshire County Council's Corporate Performance for the first quarter of 2010/11 (Quarter 1).

Councillor Patrick, Leader of the Opposition expressed disappointment at the level of detail in the current report but thanked officers for providing the extra detail when she had requested it. She looked forward to the next report including more information.

The Deputy Leader replied that a performance management culture was being developed that would focus on fewer but meaningful targets. The Cabinet would receive the top level of information and he fully expected the next report to provide more information but not to return to the format of previous reports.

RESOLVED: to note the contents of the report.

102/10 ESTABLISHMENT REVIEW - SEPTEMBER 2010

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report (CA11) that gave an update on activity since 31 March 2010. It gave details of the agreed establishment figure at 30 June 2010 in terms of Full Time Equivalents, together with the detailed staffing position at 30 June 2010.

Councillor Patrick, Leader of the Opposition expressed concern that there had been no meeting of the Joint Employees Consultative Committee for some time. She also commented that the spending on advertisements was still quite high. The Deputy Leader noted the comments about the Joint Consultative Committee and gave an assurance that a great deal of consultation was still taking place. He commended the decrease that there had been in the cost of advertising with greater use of the web site.

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.

103/10 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 12)

The Cabinet considered a list of items (CA12) 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.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2010