

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21 February 2023 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.05 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Glynis Phillips
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Duncan Enright
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Mark Lygo
Councillor Andrew Gant

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors David Bartholomew, Donna Ford, Ian Middleton, Eddie Reeves

Officers:

Whole of meeting Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development & Resources; Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance; Kathy Wilcox, Head of Financial Strategy; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee 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.

19/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Calum Miller and from Stephen Chandler, Interim Chief Executive and Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance.

20/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

21/22 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes were approved and signed with two amendments:

page 3: line 2: replace "consultations" with "engagement"

page 3: para 3: amend penultimate line

replace

"the objectives of ensuring the ongoing success of Oxford United"

with

"the objectives adopted by the Cabinet in March 2022 and of supporting the ongoing success of Oxford United"

22/22 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See Annex

23/22 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to speak were agreed by the Chair:

7 Pan Regional Partnership for the Oxford-Cambridge Area

Cllr Ian Middleton

9 Response to the recommendations of the Citizens' Jury

Richard Parnham

10 Verge and Vegetation Policy

Cllr Ian Middleton

24/22 FORMAL APPROVAL OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2023/24

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet was recommended to set a funding formula for 2-year-old and for 3 and 4-year-old provision in 2023-24.

Councillor Liz Brighouse, Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Young People's Services, introduced the report. Early Years Providers and the Schools Forum were consulted on the Early Years Funding Formula before this report was compiled and the overwhelming response was to pass on the increase in hourly rate in full to providers. There were around 800 providers of Early Years services.

Councillor Brighouse moved the recommendations, Councillor Enright seconded and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers in full and approve the 2023-24 Early Years funding formula for 3 and 4- year old provision with an underlying hourly rate of £4.58 (excluding the supplements, SEN Inclusion Fund and Contingency).**
- b) **Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers in full and approve the 2023-24 Early Years funding formula for 2- year old provision at an hourly rate of £6.21.**

25/22 PAN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE AREA

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet was asked to consider County Council membership of a new pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge area being proposed by local authorities and other regional partners and supported by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Before discussing the report, the Chair had agreed to a request to speak.

Councillor Ian Middleton stated that he was all for regional cooperation but did not think that it necessarily needed to be formally constituted in the way proposed. He was concerned that the partnership would largely speak for landowners, developers and the universities and could see little benefit for the County Council in getting involved. He urged Cabinet to reject the proposal.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, summarised the report. Following the folding of the previous Oxford Cambridge Arc proposal, it was still felt that there was a need for a pan-regional body. The Government had provided £250,000 to establish such a body with the possibility of £2.5m if it is organised and agrees a programme.

Councillor Leffman noted that the city and two districts had already indicated that they wanted to be part of it and it will be linked to England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Board so it was important that Oxfordshire County Council be a part of it as well.

Councillor Tim Bearder proposed an amendment. He believed that Cabinet needed to see the objectives and governance of the proposed body before making a final decision to join. He proposed to add a condition at the end of recommendation a) and to reword recommendation b):

- a) Agree that the County Council will be a participant in the proposed pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge area subject to recommendation b;
- b) To engage positively and proactively with the proposed pan-regional partnership's shadow board to establish the governance structure,

leadership and constitution. Prior to accepting formal membership of the pan-regional partnership, the Leader and Chief Executive will bring back to a future Cabinet meeting the set of guiding principles, covering both governance and this Council's objectives for its participation in the partnership.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Gant and agreed.

Other Cabinet Members added the following comments including from a written statement from Councillor Miller which was read out:

- The body needed to have a transformative vision, shifting the emphasis from consumption to wellbeing.
- The independent positions on the Board should be filled by experts on environment, climate change and circular economy.
- It will not be a statutory body or joint committee – the member local authorities will retain autonomy.
- It was imperative that Oxfordshire County Council is represented on the board of the partnership.
- It should be clearly stated the objectives we are pursuing through the partnership and the activities we will not support.
- Voting on substantive issues should be by elected members only.
- The UK had one of the most centralised forms of government and there was a need for more regional cooperation.
- This presented an opportunity to work more closely with the universities.

The recommendations as amended were agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Agree that the County Council will be a participant in the proposed pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge area subject to recommendation b;**
- b) To engage positively and proactively with the proposed pan-regional partnership's shadow board to establish the governance structure, leadership and constitution. Prior to accepting formal membership of the pan-regional partnership, the Leader and Chief Executive will bring back to a future Cabinet meeting the set of guiding principles, covering both governance and this Council's objectives for its participation in the partnership.**

26/22 NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a proposed Network Management Plan to assist those working on the network, developers, utilities and the highway service, to plan, coordinate and implement works.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, introduced the report which gives operational commitment to the Council's key priorities. For example, it outlined how the Council will manage the on-street parking asset and manage works on the highway. It was not a statutory requirement but advisory to have such a plan. It was an iterative process and will evolve and change over time.

Cabinet Members gave examples of where works had overrun their scheduled time or had appeared with little notice. It was to be hoped that the management plan would help improve coordination.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Gant, seconded by Councillor Enright and agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Approve the adoption the 'Oxfordshire Network Management Plan 2023-2028' at Annex 1**
- b) **Approve the Oxfordshire Network Management Plan Summary document at Annex 2**
- c) **Approve the delegation of authority to amend the Network Management Plan to the Corporate Director of Environment and Place in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Highway Management for the life of the Plan to ensure it is kept up to date with related Council policies and any government guidance or legislative changes.**

27/22 RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITIZENS' JURY

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet was requested to agree its response to the Citizens' Jury called Street Voice, convened by Oxford University and held over several weekends in June and July 2022, to explore issues related to transport, health and climate change in Oxford.

Before considering the response, the Chair had agreed to a request to speak.

Richard Parnham addressed the Jury's Recommendation 19 and called on Cabinet to endorse it rather than reject it. It advocated asking the universities and hospitals to give over some of their land to provide safe walking and cycling routes at no cost to them. He outlined some examples and provided maps of these to Cabinet Members in advance of the meeting.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance, responded that under the legislation cited, Section 26 of the Highways Act 1980, the Council would

have to demonstrate a need for a path and compensation would be payable to the landowner.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, emphasised that the Council was in discussions with the universities all the time about improving walking and cycling facilities. He would provide a written response to Mr Parnham's proposals.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, proposed the recommendations. She thanked the jurors and researchers for their time and work. She noted that this method of public engagement was resource intensive and the proposal was that it should be used very prudently and only when the policy agenda and democratic cycles lent themselves to such an approach.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, seconded the recommendations and summarised the response to the Jury's recommendations. He said that the Council was trying not to over-promise but give a realistic understanding of where things stood.

Councillors Enright and Gant proposed that an updated response be brought to Cabinet at a later date to take account of the latest Council budget and assess progress on the recommendations.

The recommendations were agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) **approve the council's response to the recommendations resulting from the Citizens' Jury;**
- (b) **support the development of a policy on the future use of juries and their place within the council's decision-making process, as resolved by the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

28/22 VERGE AND VEGETATION POLICY

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered amendment of the verge maintenance policy to improve alignment with the current Council's key priorities and to include improved references to the management of roadside nature reserves and support for areas of local community managed biodiversity.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery & Environment, introduced the report. It was aimed at achieving improvement in biodiversity at relatively low cost. The Council benefitted from an evidence-based review conducted by HERO (Healthy Ecosystem Restoration Oxfordshire). He recommended Annex 5 as an excellent one-page summary of what everyone should do.

Councillor Glynis Phillips added that the one-pager would be an excellent guide for Town and Parish Councils to follow.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Sudbury, seconded by Councillor Enright and agreed.

RESOLVED to:

- (c) **Approve the updated interim Highway Verge and Vegetation Management Policy and Service Aims at Annex 1.**
- (d) **Support use of guidance produced by www.plantlife.org.uk and **HERO** (Healthy Ecosystem Restoration Oxfordshire), including approach at Annex 4, to help further develop an incremental approach to the County Council's management of highway grass and vegetation assets.**

29/22 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 11)

The Forward Plan and update were noted with an additional item for Cabinet on 21 March 2023:

Proposal from Oxford United Football Club to Oxfordshire County Council as Landowner: Engagement and Communications Strategy, Timeframe and Memorandum of Understanding

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>1. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>On the January 15th, 2023, I reported a pothole outside 52 Prescott Avenue by a traffic calming road hump via FixMyStreet.</p> <p>Nothing was marked up for repair in January 2023. Early February 2023 as local councillor for Banbury Ruscote I escalated to the North Oxfordshire Area Officers and was told due to number of potholes reported it would be a while until the pothole was marked up for repair, essentially a capacity issue as officers were investigating not just Banbury rural Villages</p> <p>At the time of writing the 16th of February 2023 and further emails to officers and two calls on the highway number I am still no clearer when the pothole will be repaired although it has been marked up for repair.</p> <p>I think all county councillors would agree how hard area officers work but there seems a capacity of repair issues with milestone, and this needs to be urgently addressed before</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</p> <p>January has seen a significant increase in defect repairs. For most of the past 12 months we have seen a steady reduction in the number of defects month by month but the numbers in January have seen an approximate 50% increase compared with last year. This is predominantly as a result of the very cold snap in December, followed by a period of wet weather and then the second cold spell in January.</p> <p>We monitor the performance of Milestone through performance indicators and through this spike in numbers, they met and indeed exceeded their targets during this period. They are able to provide resources through directly employed operatives and the use of additional sub contracted suppliers to manage the peaks in demand.</p> <p>During January there were 1156 potholes that were recorded and issued for repair within a 24 hours period, all of these were completed in the required timeframe. A further 1549 were recorded and issued for repair within 28 days.</p>

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>members of the public have make compensation claims to the council or worst a cyclist hits one of the potholes and ends up in hospital.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please advise when the pothole will be repaired?</p>	<p>The pothole outside 52 Prescott Avenue was logged for repair on 1 February with a 28 day repair time. The contractors therefore have until 1 March to undertake the repair but I understand this may be completed sooner subject to scheduling. I apologise however that you did not receive a more timely and accurate update. This is being reviewed and officers have been reminded of the need for prompt and accurate responses.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>I have received reports from local hunt monitors that The Heythrop Hunt recently rode with hounds through Dean Common which is part of the Wychwood Project which I understand is owned by OCC. Could the Cabinet Member confirm that we do not allow hunting on any of our land and specifically within Wychwood Forest?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Could I have confirmation that it is County Council policy that hunting of any kind is not permitted on any County Council owned property?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SADBURY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>I can confirm that no permission was sought/given for hunting on OCC's land.</p> <p>I want to thank Cllr Middleton for bringing this to our attention, and we will write to all parties to remind them of our procedure in requesting access to OCC land.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>Yes. It is Council policy.</p>