

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.30 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 Duncan Enright
Councillor Calum Miller
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Mark Lygo

Other Members in

Attendance:

Councillor David Bartholomew

Officers:

Whole of meeting

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive; Anita Bradley, Director for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

Part of the meeting:

Item 6

Robin Rogers, Programme Director Covid Response

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.

45/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were no apologies.

46/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

47/21 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

48/21 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

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

49/21 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed by the Chair:

Item 13 – Releasing Development Strategy in Didcot and Surrounding Villages in the Vicinity of HIF 1 Schemes - Councillor Sally Povolotsky

Item 14 – Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 - In Principle Use of Statutory Powers – Councillor Sally Povolotsky

50/21 COVID-19: PROGRESS AND PLANNING UPDATE

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet had been asked to consider a report describing the current local COVID-19 situation, summarising the response to COVID-19 over the past six months, describing ongoing activity, including a description of the recovery status of Council services, setting out the requirement to maintain and adapt COVID-19 capacity and management structures and recommending that the local and organisational lessons learnt from the pandemic should be used to help direct long-term recovery planning and inform future corporate direction.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, prefaced the discussion by acknowledging that everybody had been impacted by the pandemic and that everybody knew somebody who has been seriously ill or sadly died as a

result. She was aware of the particular impact of the lockdown on children and young people.

The Leader thanked all the people around the county who had contributed to the tremendous community efforts to support the vulnerable and isolated. There was much to learn in how communities pulled together to look after each other.

The Council and its staff had worked tirelessly to limit the spread of the virus and to support our colleagues in the NHS. The Council had to innovate and adapt to continue to deliver essential services and the Leader commended all those involved.

Robin Rogers, Programme Director Covid Response, introduced the report which looked back on the last phase of the pandemic, from late 2020, and looked ahead at the road map out of lockdown. It was reporting on the response of the Council and its partners in the Districts, City, NHS, voluntary sector and the business sector.

While responding to the pandemic, the Council was continuing to deliver essential services – sometimes in a different way. The report summarised the resource implications and also outlined plans for further recovery and how the lessons learned could be incorporated into long-term planning and strategy.

RESOLVED: to note:

- (a) the latest public health situation with regard to COVID-19, the management arrangements in place and the resource impact of the pandemic as set out in this report;**
- (b) the joint Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council programme of activity underway that continues to respond and adapt to the pandemic as set out in Appendix 1;**
- (c) the summary of COVID-19 service impact set out in Appendix 2;**
- (d) the plans set out from paragraph 35 for recovery planning and for further understanding the lessons learnt for the organisation from the pandemic and agree that a programme of engagement with the Performance Scrutiny Committee, all council members and key partners should be developed in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.**

51/21 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - MARCH 2021

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered a report setting out Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) progress towards Corporate Plan priorities for 2020/21 – March 2021.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report which showed that the Council performed very strongly last year in very difficult circumstances and he thanked officers for their exceptionally hard work. Of the 27 performance indicators in the Corporate Plan, 17 were rated Green, 9 Amber and one could not be reported due to Covid-19.

At 31 March 2021, there had been an underspend of £5.9m on directorate services largely due to lower demand for some services due to the pandemic. It was proposed that this balance be transferred to general reserves. At the year end, there was a balance of £14.2m remaining of the COVID-19 budget and this was proposed to be transferred to the COVID-19 reserve.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, praised the exceptional work of staff, particularly in the Customer Services Centre, who provided an extended hours service to vulnerable people who were shielding. She also highlighted the work of the IT teams in providing superfast broadband across the county, enabling employees to work from home almost immediately when the lockdown happened and finding innovative ways to allow Cabinet and committee meetings to continue.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, thanked his predecessor Councillor Yvonne Constance and former Councillor Suzanne Bartington, who championed active travel, and committed to bringing forward and enhancing their work. He confirmed that the Zero Emissions Zone was due to be launched in August and there were plans to extend the e-scooter hire scheme which had been successful in Headington to other areas. He thanked bus providers and workers for improving services, even during the pandemic, particularly in regard to access to the Westgate Centre.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, noted the difficulties created for rural villages with the reduction in bus services in 2016 and stated that there was now an opportunity to redefine how the bus system worked. He was looking to expand the School Streets pilots to other areas as well as other measures to reduce traffic, thereby cutting emissions and pollution and making the streets safer.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, described how the Council continued to help more people to receive care in the home and live more independently, working in partnership with Oxford University Hospitals, Oxford Health and Age UK Oxfordshire. 90.4% of people with learning disabilities were living on their own or with families compared to the national average of 76%. She also noted that 94% percent of care homes were rated good or outstanding.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, expressed concern about the long-term effects of Covid-19 on the mental health of young people in particular. The Mental Wellbeing Hub for Young People had been launched in March 2021 and was intended to support young people suffering from psychological challenges. Family Solutions Services have been strengthened and have brought the numbers on Child Protection Plans to the lowest level since 2012/13. However, due to the pandemic, there had been a hold-up in court hearings to get children off plans. She drew particular attention to the magnificent work of social workers, family support workers and teachers and staff in schools.

Councillor Mark Lygo, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equality, noted the joint framework with Cherwell District Council on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion, setting out the vision to be leaders in this field. He welcomed the local government declaration by Oxfordshire councils and NHS partners on tobacco control. He stated that there was a need to re-focus on physical activity which was impacted during the lockdown, for example with young children missing out on swimming lessons.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment, acknowledged the work done by Councillor Yvonne Constance and in particular the green homes grant, the Climate Action Framework and the fact that the county was the best performing on recycling. He wanted to step that work up to move to a circular economy and accelerate decarbonisation and he intended to work together with all partners on a themed programme to achieve that.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) note this month's business management and monitoring report;**
- (b) note the annual review 2020/21;**
- (c) note the virements set out in Annex C-2b;**
- (d) note the summary of financial position for 2020/21 along with the year-end position on general balances and earmarked reserves as set out in Annex C;**
- (e) approve the underspend £5.9m should be transferred to balances.**

52/21 PROVISIONAL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2020/21

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the performance against the planned capital programme for 2020/21. Figures shown in the report reflect those to be included in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.

Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, summarised the report. He drew attention to the table on Agenda Page 122 which listed the underspends on the programme but noted that these were mostly cases of expenditure delayed and not foregone.

The Finance team was currently managing capital to minimise borrowing costs so grant or S106 funding was used first. The biggest risk ahead lay in the management of the Housing Infrastructure Fund monies as these were time bound and claimed in arrears. These elements were being tracked closely by Cabinet and officers.

RESOLVED: to note the performance against the capital programme for 2020/21 as set out in the report.

53/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2020/21 OUTTURN

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the Treasury Management performance in the financial year 2020/21 including Debt and Investment activity, Prudential Indicator Outturn, Investment Strategy, and interest receivable and payable for the financial year.

Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, noted that the Treasury Management team achieved an average in-house return for the year of 0.84%, above the benchmark. The fund was £1 million ahead of budget, a creditable performance in a challenging year.

The Council's average interest rate on its long-term debt was 4.46%, lower than for most local authorities. The team kept under review the possibility of restructuring this but the current view was that it would not be advisable to replace older debt with newer.

The Council was active in medium-term lending to other local authorities as it could offer lower rates than the Public Works Loan Board. Councillor Miller thanked his predecessor Councillor David Bartholomew for his stewardship of the finances over the last term.

RESOLVED: to note the report, and to RECOMMEND Council to note the Council's Treasury Management Activity in 2020/21.

54/21 REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE LGA PEER REVIEW OF LIBRARIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for the development of a clear vision and strategic framework for the planning and delivery of libraries and heritage services to strengthen the contribution they make to wider community outcomes.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety, thanked all the staff and volunteers who had engaged positively with the peer challenge as well as the peer review team. As the Council developed its services it was important that they take account of the recommendations. The report contained a lot of good ideas and advice as well as signposting good practices elsewhere.

Councillor Fawcett drew attention to the statistics in Appendix 1 showing how use of library services in Oxfordshire was well above the national average. He also noted as an example the 5,400 hours of voluntary support given to Oxfordshire Museum.

The Council's own review will take place later this year. Councillor Fawcett was keen that it be a listening exercise and that as many councillors as possible take part.

Councillor Mark Lygo added that he was aware of many messages of appreciation from people who were isolating and who wanted to thank volunteers without whom they would not be reading.

The Leader reiterated how important libraries were in their communities and stated that it was this Cabinet's intention to support them as much as possible.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **consider the LGA Cultural Services Peer Review feedback report (Annex 1);**
- b) **note the recommendations set out within the report;**
- c) **agree the proposals set out at paragraph 10 for incorporating the report's recommendations into the service planning and Libraries and Heritage Strategy development process.**

55/21 NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY - PROPOSAL FOR AN OXFORDSHIRE ENHANCED BUS PARTNERSHIP

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a proposal to establish an Enhanced Partnership across Oxfordshire under the Bus Services Act 2017.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, stated that the Council wanted an enhanced partnership with bus operators to get more people using buses. He favoured this over the alternative franchising system. There was a need to reach out to rural communities as well as improving the already excellent services in the city. The partnership could deliver improved ticketing across bus and train services. This was a commitment in principle, the detail would still need to be worked out with the bus companies.

Councillor Duncan Enright welcomed the move while understanding people's nervousness about public transport under Covid-19. There was no substitute for a great bus system and linking it to an expanded rail network was very exciting.

Councillor Liz Brighouse noted that services needed to be fit for everyone. She was particularly concerned that so many children around the county were not able to get a scheduled bus to school, leading to an increasing

budget for Home to School Transport. She also asked that consideration be given to people with mobility issues who cannot get to a bus stop and suggested reinstating something like the previous Pick-Me-Up service.

Councillor Pete Sudbury noted that with so much development going on in the county it was vital to get more people to switch to public transport as road building would not be able to keep up. This was a vital part of the transport policy. Most car miles took place in rural areas so there was a much greater saving in emissions from putting services into those areas. Services needed to be regular and reliable with safe places to park bicycles.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) commit to establishing an Enhanced Partnership across Oxfordshire under the Bus Services Act 2017; and**
- (b) give formal notice of the Council's intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership and invite all local bus operators to confirm their intention to participate.**

56/21 ZERO EMISSION BUSES REGIONAL AREAS (ZEBRA) SCHEMES

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet considered a report recommending that officers finalise and submit an Expression of Interest for the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas funding initiative with a capital allocation of up to £6m in 2022/23 to provide additional council grant to bus operators, if operators can demonstrate this is required to make the scheme feasible.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, summarised the proposal as aimed at ensuring that all buses operating within the city and immediately surrounding areas will be electric. It would make Oxford an exemplar city in this regard. He agreed with comments made earlier on making buses accessible to all people. He described this proposal as an important milestone in developing the bus network.

Councillor Pete Sudbury welcomed the government support for this scheme. New technologies often needed a push from central government and the Council needed to encourage the government to do more in this respect.

Councillor Duncan Enright welcomed the proposal which was necessary to achieve the Zero Emissions Zone in Oxford City. He hoped to see the area covered expand as the bus network is developed.

Councillor Calum Miller also supported the provision of electric buses in the city and surrounding areas but hoped that the displaced more-polluting buses would not simply be deployed on our rural roads. He noted the commitment of up to £6m to support this scheme and expected that Cabinet Members and officers will work hard to ensure that the amount we agree to contribute in the end will be taken in the round as they work with bus operators to make the best use of tax payers' money.

Asked by the Leader if there were long-term plans to expand the electric bus fleets across the county, Councillor Bearder responded that there were currently technical limitations on the range that electric buses could achieve but these may be overcome with the development of hydrogen buses for example.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) authorise officers to finalise and submit an Expression of Interest for the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas funding initiative;**
- (b) agree a capital allocation of up to £6m in 2022/23 to provide additional council grant to bus operators, if operators can demonstrate this is required to make the scheme feasible.**

57/21 RELEASING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN DIDCOT AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES IN THE VICINITY OF HIF1 SCHEMES

(Agenda Item. 13)

Councillor Sally Povolotsky withdrew her request to speak.

Cabinet had before it recommendations to implement a strategy to assist with the delivery of new development in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire districts to allow some growth to come forward in a controlled manner prior to HIF 1 funded infrastructure being open for public use based upon specified requirements.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, introduced the first of three items relating to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to provide for the new housing needed over the coming decade. This proposal dealt with the Didcot Garden Town area.

The Council had opposed further housing in this area on the basis that there was insufficient transport infrastructure. Blanket refusal would risk appeals and uncontrolled development whereas in this proposal, for some of the development, the Council's approval can be timed so that they are built when the infrastructure has been delivered.

Councillor Tim Bearder welcomed the proposal and noted that officers were working on ensuring that the plans in this area will incorporate promotion of active travel.

Councillor Pete Sudbury noted that carbon emissions needed to be reduced by 50% by 2030 according to the United Nations. The houses in these developments were not yet built to the best standards and would need to be retrofitted. He was committed to working with the building industry to ensure that emissions were counted properly and ultimately reduced.

RESOLVED: to implement a strategy to assist with the delivery of new development in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire districts to allow some growth to come forward in a controlled manner prior to HIF 1 funded infrastructure being open for public use based upon the following requirements:

- Development site housing build programmes / trajectories / occupations being aligned with (or after) the delivery of HIF 1 which will require occupation thresholds / controls on development sites.
- Development sites to provide agreed sustainable / active travel infrastructure at the beginning (early occupations) of development sites to reduce traffic impact on the highway network prior to HIF 1 delivery.
- New services or enhancements to existing bus service arrangements being implemented at the beginning (early occupations) of development sites.
- Local off-site and on-site highway works to be delivered at the early stages of development to lessen the direct impact of a development site on the highway network.
- Travel Plans prepared and approved by the council's Travel Plan team with deliverable and monitored targets.
- Strategic transport / highway contributions will be sought in accordance with Regulation 122 and the three Section 106 tests.

58/21 HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND 1 - IN PRINCIPLE USE OF STATUTORY POWERS

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet was asked to consider a series of proposals to facilitate this programme the primary focus of which was to provide additional highway capacity and connectivity to resolve long-standing capacity constraints that were preventing new homes and jobs allocated in local plans from coming forward in a timely manner.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, described the proposal, which also applied to the Didcot area, as rather technical, giving officers the tools they needed – for example Compulsory Purchase Orders – to move to the next stage of development. There were no detailed plans to be decided at this point.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve in principle the development of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x]. Negotiations for private acquisition will be conducted in parallel to the compulsory purchase process. Powers of compulsory purchase will be used only as a matter of last resort, in order to bring forward the timely development of the Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 (HIF1) project. Formal

- authority for the making of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] will be reported to Cabinet following the submission of a planning application for the scheme;
- (b) approve the preparation and service of statutory notices for the Requisition of Information pursuant to Section 16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended) to assist with determining the interests in the land required for the delivery of the scheme;
 - (c) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] in draft , together with a draft Order Map, draft Order Schedule, draft Statement of Reasons and all necessary land referencing activity in advance of seeking formal authority to make the Order;
 - (d) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot to Culham Thames Bridge) Scheme 202[x] in accordance with section 106(3) of The Highways Act 1980 (as amended) in relation to a new road overbridge crossing of the River Thames, being a navigable waterway;
 - (e) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) – A4130 Improvement) (Side Roads) Order 202[x] (or multiple Side Roads Orders as may be necessary), and The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot Garden Town Highways Infrastructure – A4130 Improvement) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] to enable the stopping-up, diversion, amendment, improvement and creation of new lengths of highway or reclassification of existing highways. Please note that the final titles of the orders will be determined as the project progresses and will be updated in this report accordingly. This includes the stopping up of private means of access as necessary where the scheme design necessitates. Formal approval for the making of Side Roads Order(s) will be reported to Cabinet, and necessary approval sought, following the submission of a planning application for the scheme.

59/21 HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND 2 - IN PRINCIPLE USE OF STATUTORY POWERS

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet had before it a series of recommendations related to the provision of additional highway capacity and connectivity to encourage/facilitate modal shift, enabling more sustainable forms of travel to meet the Council's zero carbon transport network ambitions focussing this around public transport and active travel.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy, noted that this was similar in nature to the previous technical

proposal but related to development of the A40 and the provision of cycling and bus lanes.

Councillor Tim Bearder stressed that officers were looking at future-proofing the designs to allow for the provision of rail services to Witney and Carterton. This needed to be done without delaying development as that could cost millions of pounds.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve in principle the development of The Oxfordshire County Council (A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] in parallel with negotiations for private acquisition, with such powers of compulsory purchase used only as a matter of last resort, in order to bring forward the timely development of the A40 HIF2 Project. Formal authority for the making of The Oxfordshire County Council (A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] will be reported to Cabinet, and necessary approval sought, following public engagement on preferred options and submission of a planning application for the scheme;**
- (b) approve the preparation and service of statutory notices for the Requisition of Information pursuant to Section 16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended) to assist with determining the interests in the land required for the delivery of the scheme;**
- (c) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] in draft , together with a draft Order Map, draft Order Schedule, draft Statement of Reasons and all necessary land referencing activity in advance of seeking formal authority to make the Order;**
- (d) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (HIF2 Smart Corridor – A40 Classified Road) Side Roads Order 202[x](or multiple Side Roads Orders as may be necessary) to enable the stopping-up, diversion, alteration, improvement and creation of new lengths of highway or reclassification of existing highways. This includes the stopping up of private means of access as necessary where the scheme design necessitates. Formal approval for the making of Side Roads Order(s) will be reported to Cabinet, and necessary approval sought, following public engagement on preferred options and submission of a planning application for the scheme;**
- (e) subject to the confirmation that the required due diligence has been completed to manage programme and financial risk to the Council, authorise the Corporate Director Environment and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law & Governance, Director of Finance, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy and Cabinet Member for Finance to approve the amended Grant Determination Agreement (GDA);**

- (f) **subject to the satisfactory completion of recommendation (e) approve the additional £4.745m Housing Infrastructure Fund grant for an overall budget provision of £106.756m for the A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor project within the capital programme, subject to the implementation of the Grant Determination Agreement with Homes England.**

60/21 DELIVERY OF SUPPORTED LIVING UNITS THROUGH INVESTMENT IN THE RESONANCE SUPPORTED HOMES FUND

(Agenda Item. 16)

Cabinet had before it a report outlining a proposal to invest £5m capital funding in the Resonance Supported Homes Fund in order to deliver up to 25 units of supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities and autism.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, introduced the report. She thanked officers Gillian Douglas, Kathy Wilcox, Karen Buckingham, Robyn Noonan and Stephen Chandler as well as Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Calum Miller.

Councillor Hannaby emphasised that Resonance was an experienced social impact investment and property fund manager with a track record of delivering accommodation for vulnerable groups on behalf of local authorities. The proposed investment of £5m would provide 20 to 25 units. It was to cover an initial period of 8 years with a possible further 8 years. This scheme will be monitored to ensure that it is delivered as planned.

Councillor Hannaby added that she wanted to ensure that all of the units provided would be used to accommodate Oxfordshire residents.

Councillor Pete Sudbury welcomed the proposal. Having worked in Mental Health he had seen the disabling effects of institutions, however well run. The ability to live in a normal house on a normal street was very important.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse noted that this was being delivered using a social capital fund and she hoped this type of vehicle could be used more often. Councillor Hannaby responded that they were looking at other ways of providing as many units again because they were needed.

Councillor Calum Miller outlined the financial aspects of the proposal which should provide a return of around 6% per annum. The main risk was related to the 8-year cycle which could mean that the property market might not be in the best place when we wanted to withdraw. He judged that risk to be low and there was an appetite for Oxfordshire to initiate more innovative projects like this one.

Councillor Mark Lygo stated that the project was much needed. He asked if in future projects the residents could be involved in the design stages. Councillor Hannaby welcomed that suggestion.

RESOLVED: to approve an investment of £5.0m by the County Council in the Resonance Supported Homes Fund for the delivery of supported living accommodation units for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism.

61/21 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 4 - JANUARY-MARCH 2021

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on key HR activities during Quarter 4, details of key people numbers and analysis of main changes since the previous report.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, thanked Karen Edwards and her team for the report. Staff were in lockdown for the period of this report and largely working from home. The team updated Covid-19 advice continuously over the period.

The Council produced its first ethnicity pay gap report for 2019/2020. The data identified a small ethnicity pay gap in terms of the mean hourly rate of 1.1% and there was a lower proportion of BAME staff in the lower middle quartile and the upper pay quartile. The Council was seeking to narrow and eliminate these gaps.

Councillor Phillips added that an Apprenticeship Manager post was being created to support the development of an apprenticeship strategy, improve optimisation of the apprenticeship levy, the development and embedding of career pathways, to support work with our communities around skills gaps and social mobility and to help establish better links with young people across Oxfordshire who are experiencing barriers to employment.

Councillor Phillips was concerned that Stress, Anxiety and Depression remained the top reason for sickness absence. The report described a number of ways in which the Council supported staff but more will be done to raise the profile of the Employee Assistance Programme. They remained conscious that working from home has had different impacts on individuals and this needed to be kept in mind in the move to more hybrid working.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

62/21 APPOINTMENTS 2020/21

(Agenda Item. 18)

Cabinet was asked to consider member appointments to a variety of bodies which in different ways supported the discharge of the Council's executive functions and to agree arrangements for filling the councillor places on those bodies.

RESOLVED: to agree the appointments to the bodies set out in the Annex to this report.

63/21 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 19)

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.

The Leader commented that she found the document cumbersome and asked for views on a better way to organise it. Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer, responded that she was happy to make some suggestions and receive suggestions from Members on better ways of presenting the Plan.

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

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Answers
<p>1. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW</p> <p>The Third Reading Bridge – which would extend the A329(M) into Oxfordshire – is an environmentally damaging proposal driven by Berkshire authorities and is contrary to all our climate change objectives.</p> <p>In 2019 I brought a motion to Full Council stating that should it be built, it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians – it was passed overwhelmingly.</p> <p>Since then, there have been many developments. Of particular interest is Reading Borough Council's desire to link this bridge to an equally environmentally damaging 'North Reading Orbital' which, despite its name, would be located entirely in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>What is the current status of the joint statement by the Cross Thames Travel Group that was due to be issued last January but was put on hold because of an admirably robust objection from the SODC Leader Sue Cooper, and what is the status of the Outline</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>This project has paused due to a number of reasons but mainly due to feedback from the DfT on details within the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The DfT wish to see updated transport data and also a refresh of the original SOBC. An update of the SOBC is expected to be quite costly and will not be funded by the DfT. Therefore there is a need to identify funding locally and this has not been forthcoming. The DfT is also keen that any future bids/SOBC which will be submitted have the support of all of the authorities affected. Further work on the SOBC would give the authorities the opportunity to continue to work together to look in detail at the options being assessed.</p> <p>Now local elections have happened officers can see if Members would like to discuss this issue again with the view of getting further updates on the project and also have another Cross Thames Officers working Group.</p>

Questions	Answers
<p>Business Case funding bid which ground to a halt because of Sue's objection?</p> <p>Supplementary</p> <p>Councillor Bartholomew thanked the Cabinet Member for the response. He asked if Oxfordshire County Council will join South Oxfordshire District Council in stating that it will not support the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) Update unless a car-based bridge solution is removed and that it, if the bridge is built, it should be limited to buses, cyclists and pedestrians and therefore comply with our climate change objectives.</p>	<p>Councillor Enright confirmed that the thrust of Councillor Bartholomew's points was very much in line with the approach being taken by this Cabinet in putting active travel first – walking and cycling – with public transport as an important component. However, he would need to consult with officers before committing to a position on the bridge.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS</p> <p>Can Cllr Bearder assure me that changing the speed limit to 20 mph for the whole of the Botley Road Corridor Scheme from the City 20 mph zone to the Eynsham Road junction with West Way will go out to consultation before phase 6 is started?</p> <p>Can Cllr Bearder agree that a bus service between Oxford and Newbury, preferably using green</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS MANAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Yes, this will go out to consultation.</i></p> <p><i>In regard to the bus service between Oxford and Newbury. A roundtable event, hosted by the MP for Newbury, was held on 15 June to discuss the potential for a bus service between Newbury and Oxford. This was attended by Cllr Roberts, officers from Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Councils, and representatives from bus operators and the Berkshire LEP.</i></p>

Questions	Answers
technology, will be evaluated as part of the evolving Bus Strategy?	<p><i>Following the event, officers are investigating the possibility of undertaking a joint feasibility study into the potential costs and revenues associated with such a service and are awaiting a response from West Berkshire as to whether they are willing to contribute. In addition, the Council has secured Section 106 funds from Harwell Campus to provide such a link which could be supplemented by funds through the forthcoming Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).</i></p> <p><i>Over the summer both councils will be considering options for our respective BSIPs and there was broad agreement at the roundtable that this would be a potential candidate for inclusion, possibly as a jointly-funded project.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst the potential for future hydrogen operation of services in the Didcot area was discussed at the roundtable, the significant associated costs mean that this could only be done on a depot basis and not for individual routes, and battery electric buses would be unsuitable for the range and terrain. Therefore diesel buses will need to be used, at least for an initial period.</i></p>