

## CABINET

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 19 October 2010 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.09 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 Louise Chapman  
Councillor Michael Waine  
Councillor Rodney Rose  
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor Alan Armitage (Agenda Item 6)  
Councillor Liz Brighthouse (Agenda Item 6)  
Councillor Anne Purse (Agenda Item 7)  
Councillor Charles Mathew (Agenda Item 7)  
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale (Agenda Item 7)  
Councillor Don Seale (Agenda Item 7)]  
Councillor Jean Fooks (Agenda Items 8, 10 & 11)  
Councillor Zoe Patrick (Agenda Items 9 & 12)

### **Officers:**

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

Part of meeting:

Agenda Item	Officer
6	K Wilcox
7	M. Tugwell, P. Day, (Environment & Economy)
8	Director for Children, Young People & Families
9	P. Clark (Chief Executive's Office)
10	B. Threadgold (Chief Executive's Office)
11	T. Luck (Chief Executive's Office)
12	J. Clark (Communications & Media)

*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.*

## **104/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Kieron Mallon.

## **105/10 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

## **106/10 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, OBE had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet member for Adult Services:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Services please confirm the following:

The number of people that are currently in receipt of the Alert Service in the County;

The proportion of those people who pay for this service currently;

The proportion of people for who the charges listed in the revenue monitoring report will be ‘new’ charges;

Whether the Council has consulted users on these charges;

Whether these charges have been through the Adult Services Scrutiny Committee?”

Councillor Fatemian replied:

**The number of people that are currently in receipt of the Alert Service in the County**

From 4 October 2010, approximately 3,300 people.

**The proportion of those people who pay for this service currently**

None. All of these people are eligible to receive the service free of charge based on their support need and financial eligibility.

**The proportion of people for who the charges listed in the revenue monitoring report will be ‘new’ charges**

None, as per the eligibility criteria mentioned above. The charges will apply to other people who wish to buy into the service because they believe that it offers a valuable service that they would like to use.

**Whether the Council has consulted users on these charges**

There was no need to consult existing users because they are unaffected by the charges.

**Whether these charges have been through the Adult Services Scrutiny Committee?**

Adult Services Scrutiny Committee has discussed the Alert Service on several occasions although they have not discussed the specific charges. The eligibility and charging policy was signed off by Cllr Jim Couchman and Paul Purnell, Head of Service; and also formed part of the contract award decision taken by Cllr Jim Couchman under the delegated authority in February 2010.

Supplementary: Councillor Brighthouse sought clarification that no one currently receiving the warden service would have to pay. Councillor Fatemian undertook to provide a more detailed written response on people who have the warden service.

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

"I share with residents of Oxford the disappointment that, contrary to clear written promises by the County Council in 2006 that residents parking charges in Oxford would only be increased by the RPI, you have seen fit to approve an increase in these charges by 25% to cover "costs". As these charges and their RPI indexing were part of a Traffic Order which was the result of extensive consultation, how is it that this Traffic Order can be replaced without further similar consultation?"

Councillor Rose replied:

"I too am disappointed that we are in a situation where we have to consider this increase; however the County Council has to cover the administration cost involved, I must remind Cllr Saunders no decision has yet been taken to approve a rise in permit charges. The variation of the Traffic Order has been out to statutory consultation and will be reported back to Cabinet Member Decisions at the end of November for a decision on whether or not to implement, taking into account responses to that consultation. The Council has complied with statutory requirements with regards to the level of consultation required to amend the Traffic Order."

Supplementary: Councillor Sanders questioned whether the Cabinet Member thought it would be more appropriate to undertake full consultations not least because residents may have ideas to suggest. Councillor Rose replied that in future schemes would need to cover costs and that the decision would come before a delegated decision session.

Councillor Roy Darke had given notice of the following question to the Leader:

"Can the Leader please provide some detail on the number of customer complaints received by the Council since the beginning of the year, how that number of complaints compares to previous years, whether he expects the

number of complaints to rise in light of the cuts being implemented by his government and this Council, and whether he will put in place extra resources for dealing with that eventuality?"

Councillor Mitchell replied:

The number of formal customer complaints received by the authority is below.

	12 months to 31 Mar 2010			6 months to 30 Sep 2010		
	Children	Adults	Total	Children	Adults	Total
Statutory social care complaints	80	88	168	45	55	100
Corporate complaints			135			80
<b>Total:</b>			<b>303</b>			<b>180</b>

Customer complaints, as recognised by the Local Government Ombudsman and as included in the statistics above, do not include objections to the government's or to the council's *policy decisions*. Complaints, as recognised by the Ombudsman, are concerned with issues of maladministration i.e. the manner in which the council's services are delivered (e.g. error, delay etc) and not to the decisions about them (unless those decisions are themselves procedurally flawed).

Consequently, objections to policy issues are regarded as part of the general democratic/political engagement with the council, such as the recent Big Debate consultation/listening events. There is therefore no direct consequential link between 'complaints about cuts' and the issue of resources.

I should remind Councillor Darke that what I might describe as "his government" had already pencilled in cuts in revenue spending of 20% and in capital spending of 50%. They just never bothered to tell the public as they approached a General Election. The coalition government, having inspected the national finances and the mountain of debt they have inherited has decided to aim for a reduction in revenue spending in the public finances of 25% and to maintain the previous government's target of cutting capital spending by 50%. I certainly hope it will not be necessary to divert very scarce funds to dealing with complaints or inquiries from the public when we need to concentrate our resources on the front line if we are to help in bringing the national spend back into balance after an unbalanced national budget in every year since 2001.

Supplementary: Councillor Darke sought reassurance that with the likely scale of cuts the Council was prepared for a rise in customer queries. Councillor Mitchell replied that customer complaints was a small service dealing with specific complaints as opposed to customer facing services dealing with customer enquiries. The level of calls would be monitored and

although it was expected they would rise during the budget process this process took sufficient time that queries should be spread out.

## **107/10 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Item 6 - Councillor Armitage, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, OBE

Item 7 - Cllr. Anne Purse (Shadow Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure)

- Cllr Charles Mathew
- Cllr Lorraine Lindsey Gale
- Cllr Don Seale
- Mr John Bowler, AGGROW
- Mr John Taylor for the PAGE Campaign
- Ms Julie Hankey for the OUTRAGE Campaign

Item 8 - Cllr. Jean Fooks (Opposition Deputy Leader for Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families referring to her role as a member of Corporate Parenting Panel)

Item 9 - Cllr. Zoe Patrick (Opposition Leader)

Item 10 - Cllr. Jean Fooks (Opposition Deputy Leader)

Item 11 - Cllr. Jean Fooks (Opposition Deputy Leader)

Item 12 - Cllr. Zoe Patrick (Opposition Leader)

## **108/10 FINANCIAL MONITORING - OCTOBER 2010**

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered the monthly financial monitoring report for the 2010/11 financial year covering the period up to the end of August 2010. It included the Council's forecast position for the 2010/11 financial year with projections for revenue, balances, and reserves and the capital programme monitoring and update.

Councillor Armitage, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance & Property referred to the information that was contained in paragraph 88 relating to early years and Children's Centre projects. He felt that the information was not self explanatory and hoped that in difficult financial times where transparency in decision making was essential this could be improved.

Councillor Brighthouse speaking as a local member commended the finance officers on the paperwork. She would have liked to have been kept more

informed on the position relating to the future of Playbuilder Capital Funding and urged that the scheme for Bayards Hill go forward.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Property highlighted that with 6 months to go the financial position was on track and in year reductions were now all included in the figures. He highlighted areas of concern including pooled budgets and the underlying position of the Children, Young People & Families budget. Cabinet Members responded to the concerns raised and in particular the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families congratulated the Director for Children, Young People & Families on her efforts to bring the budget on track that had resulted in changed ways of working that would sustain the improvement. She confirmed that there had been no news yet from central Government about play schemes.

**RESOLVED:** to:

- (a) note the report and approve the virements as set out in annex 2a;
- (b) approve the Supplementary Estimate requests as set out in annex 2f and the return of £0.071m by CYP&F as set out in paragraph 19;
- (c) approve transfer to reserves as set out in paragraph 14;
- (d) approve the Capital Programme included at Annex 7;
- (e) note the Capital Programme Review Update as set out in paragraph 99 & 100;
- (f) note the reduction of £2.774m in Sure Start, Early Years and Children's Centres (SSEYCC) grant funding and agree the effect on Early Years and Children's Centre projects as summarised out in paragraph 88; and
- (g) approve the proposed fees and charges for the Alert Service as set out in Part 4.

## **109/10 OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY - PREFERRED MINERALS STRATEGY**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered a report setting out the recommendation of the Minerals and Waste Plan Working Group on a preferred strategy approach and containing a timetable for consultation.

Councillor Anne Purse, Shadow Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure, referred to the seriousness of the decision which would have far reaching effects. She expressed concern at the over reliance on West Oxfordshire and hoped that consideration would be given to the concerns of the Highways

Authority and Environment Agency. Everything possible must be done to avoid stockpiling materials and she would have preferred a more hybrid solution taking something from the other options. She expressed concern over the future of the wet meadows which were important habitat.

Councillor Charles Mathew referred to the recent decision on Stonehenge Farm where the Council had been hampered by the land bank and lack of supporting evidence. He referred to the figures and commented that very little extra gravel would be needed for some years to come. Even less was required when builders gravel was taken into account. He felt that residents got no benefit from the option proposed and that any new sites should be based on market proximity. Responding to a question Councillor Mathew highlighted the negative effects on local residents of traffic, environment, noise and dust. This was made worse when routing agreements were ignored.

Councillor Lorraine Lindsey -Gale, speaking as a local member, expressing the anger of local residents who were threatened by gravel extraction when she felt there was no need. Councillor Lindsay-Gale commented that she had consistently supported the option of continuing to work existing areas. Option 1 was the only sustainable option but consideration should be given to the proposals around Nuneham Courtenay which would be an entirely new site.

Councillor Don Seale, speaking as a local member welcomed the proposal to continue with existing sites. He referred to difficulties in his local area with the proximity of RAF Brize Norton. Water based leisure facilities would not be possible. Local roads and bridges were inadequate to handle the traffic. He referred to the planning blight around Bampton and Clanfield and asked that Cabinet consider including a statement that these areas would not be a site for gravel extraction for the foreseeable future. He would like to see this adopted as planning guidance.

Mr John Bowler, for AGGROW, spoke in support of the recommendations referring to the unique characteristics of the flat Upper Thames Valley that would be at risk if either of the other options were agreed.

Mr John Taylor for the PAGE Campaign spoke in support of Option 1. He welcomed the use of consultants to look at need and hoped that his group could be involved. He supported the comments of the Growth & infrastructure Scrutiny Committee concerning the use of recycled aggregates. Responding to a question he explained why Radley Parish Council had not been allowed to join the PAGE Campaign.

Ms Julie Hankey for the OUTRAGE Campaign spoke against further extraction in her area. A lengthy planning process had just been concluded to their detriment and the proposals for more extraction flew in the face of localism. It would be an imposition on local people and would be fiercely opposed.

The Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure in introducing the report stated that he had visited all sites. He took on board issues around reinstatement and agreed with Councillor Mathew with regard to the land bank issue and the problems due to the lack of the strategy document. It was important that figures were robust and evidence based. He emphasised the current central Government view about the allocation figures.

Following discussion it was:

**RESOLVED:** to:

- (a) agree the guiding principles for the minerals strategy (paragraphs 3 to 5 of Annex 1);
- (b) agree that the County Council's preferred approach for mineral working in the short to medium term is:
  - (i) sand and gravel – concentration of working in existing areas of working, at Lower Windrush Valley, Eynsham/Cassington/Yarnton, Radley, Sutton Courtenay and Caversham, subject to the ability of these areas to provide for the medium to longer term being re-assessed when the requirement for sand and gravel supply has been established and consideration being given to new areas of working if the re-assessment indicates this is necessary;
  - (ii) soft sand – working in three existing areas: south east of Faringdon; Tubney/Marcham/Hinton Waldrist; and Duns Tew;
  - (iii) crushed rock – working in three existing areas: north of Bicester to the east of the River Cherwell; south of the A40 near Burford; and south east of Faringdon;

## **110/10 PROGRESS REPORT ON CLA AND LEAVING CARE**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered one of a number of regular reports to Cabinet and Council on its role as legal "Corporate Parent" to the Children and Young People Looked After by the Council, and those Leaving Care to live independently.

The report addressed Council-wide improvements in Corporate Parenting, including enhanced accountability for this highly vulnerable group. It also reported on the progress and challenges posed in caring for the County's most vulnerable young people.



Councillor Fooks highlighted some very good work including the 'virtual school' and the achievements of students where 15% were going to University. The cabinet member for Children, Young people & Families thanked Councillor Fooks for her sustained efforts and support.

**RESOLVED:** to:

- (a) continue to support the Corporate Parenting Strategy; and
- (b) note the information on outcomes for Looked After Children and the associated service performance measures.

## **111/10 FORMAT OF COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet considered a report that reviewed the effectiveness of the changes, made to the format of Council meetings, including the themed debates.

Councillor Patrick, Opposition Leader expressed disappointment over the discontinuation of the themed debate but commented that although some had been good others had not and she was not surprised. She noted that the earlier end for meetings would mean less time for motions but agreed that the time could be used for briefings.

**RESOLVED:** to agree the amendments to the constitution outlined in the report and to **RECOMMEND** to Council to approve the changes including the cessation of themed debates and the proposal for ending meetings of full Council at 3.30 p.m.

## **112/10 CORPORATE ICT STRATEGY**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval of the draft Corporate ICT Strategy.

Councillor Fooks, Opposition Deputy Leader, stressed the importance of the different ICT systems 'talking' to one another. In noting that there was no proper provision for upgrades after 2011/12 she hoped that this would be possible. It was important that information on the web site was as up to date as possible. In taking the ICT Strategy forward she hoped that climate change and the need to reduce our carbon footprint would be given some priority.

Councillor David Robertson responded to the points made and highlighted the attached Action Plan that would be monitored.

**RESOLVED:** to agree the draft Corporate ICT Strategy, and to receive quarterly updates on its implementation in line with the action plan.

### **113/10 CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY**

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval of the draft Customer Service Strategy.

Councillor Fooks, Opposition Deputy Leader commented that the Strategy had been a long time in preparation and referred to earlier initiatives. The standards for responding to emails and letters needed to be reinforced with employees.

The Deputy Leader replied that the intention was to embed the standards into the Council culture.

**RESOLVED:** to agree the draft Customer Service Strategy, and to receive quarterly updates on its implementation in line with the action plan.

### **114/10 THE FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL MAGAZINE 'OXON NEWS'**

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet considered options for the future of the Council magazine 'Oxon News'.

Councillor Patrick welcomed the report and recommendation.

**RESOLVED:** to discontinue 'Oxon News' at the end of 2010.

### **115/10 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(Agenda Item. 13)

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.

### **116/10 DELEGATED POWERS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - OCTOBER 2010**

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet noted the schedule below reporting on a quarterly basis any executive decisions taken by the Chief Executive under the specific powers and functions delegated to her under the terms of Part 7.4 of the Council's Constitution.

Date	Subject	Decision	Reason for Urgency
22/09/2010	Premature retirement	Approved the early retirement of a member of staff in accordance with regulations.	A decision was required urgently due to the proposed leaving date prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Pension Benefits Sub-Committee.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....