

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 16 November 2021 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.40 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Glynis Phillips
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Duncan Enright
Councillor Calum Miller
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Mark Lygo

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors David Bartholomew, Andrew Cole, Ted Fenton, Donna Ford, Andrew Gant, Andy Graham, Nick Leverton, Kieron Mallon, Jane Murphy and Liam Walker. *[It was noted Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition was unable to attend as he was at a conference].*

Officers:

Whole of meeting Yvonne Rees (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Director for Finance), Anita Bradley (Director for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Khalid Ahmed (Law and Governance)

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

110/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Pete Sudbury who was unwell with Covid.

111/21 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 were approved and signed with the addition of Councillor David Bartholomew to the list of Other Councillors Attending.

112/21 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

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

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance asked a supplementary question to his question to Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance:

In relation to SODC headquarters, has Abbey House been suggested as an option for a new headquarters which would facilitate a no cost end to OCC's tenancy over there.

Councillor Calum Miller replied that he was sure Councillor Bartholomew as a Member of South Oxfordshire District Council would be able to ask that question to that authority.

113/21 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

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

Item 6: Business Management and Monitoring Report:
Councillor David Bartholomew

Item 8: Climate Action Programme:
Councillor Andrew Coles

114/21 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2021

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered a report which presented September/Quarter two 2021 performance, risk and finance position for the Council.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance addressed the financial aspects of the report:

- In relation to annex c, he expressed concern at the variances against budget for Childrens' Services, which had deteriorated by a further £600,000 in one month, with a projected overspend of £2.4m. £1.1m was attributable to front line social care and use of Agency Staff. When in Opposition, the present Administration criticised the use of Agency Social Workers, so perhaps now there was an appreciation that the use of Agency Staff was unavoidable
- Concern was expressed at the collapse of the regional memorandum of co-operation that had the intention of constraining the acceleration of Agency Staff costs. It appeared that it was every Council for itself

- Paragraph 29 of the report – Adult Services. Reference was made to the number of Care Home places which would continue to be used through the year. However, the figure quoted shows an 8% decline compared to February 2020, the same as in last months' report.
- Paragraph 37 of the report – the new Health and Social Care Team – shows that the Team was reliant on Agency Staff
- Paragraph 42 of the report – Reference was made to £4.7m allocated for financial stability in the care market. Clarification was asked on what this meant.
- Paragraph 60 – Community Operations were forecasting a higher level of activity than budgeted in respect of defect repairs based on benchmarking trends with previous years and long-term weather predictions. Could this be explained?
- The Finance Department had a £300,000 overspend, which had now dropped to £200,000. The department should lead by example.
- There was a disappointing target rate of debt collection, which he hoped the Cabinet Member would improve.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, thanked Councillor Bartholomew for his observations and commented that he was right to point out the increased use of Agency Staff in social care. However, what he had not pointed out was that Agency Staff were being used because of the loss of social care staff due to a hostile employment environment which had reduced the supply in the labour market. Reference was made to the need for the Government to take some action to the crisis in the social care labour sector.

In relation to the £4.7m allocated to Adult Social Care, in a market which had been consistently destabilised by Government underfunding, provision has been found to ensure some financial stability to seek to cope with a market that is facing labour shortages and uncertainty regarding government funding.

In relation to paragraph 60 and Community Operations basing forecasts on long-term weather predictions, to the Cabinet Member, it made perfect sense to make use of long-term weather forecasting for this purpose.

In relation to debt collection, the Council would do everything within its powers, to recover funds owed, but with residents facing deprivation, the end of Covid furlough scheme, and rising inflation, the Member should appreciate these pressures on residents and the difficulties of paying bills and struggling at this time.

Cabinet noted that annexes D and E, were joint reports of OCC and Cherwell District Council and these should not be considered.

RESOLVED: To

- a) Note the September/Quarter two business management and monitoring report excluding Annexes D & E.**
- b) Note virements set out in Annex C-2c.**

115/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-TERM REVIEW

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered a report which set out the Treasury Management activity undertaken in the first half of the financial year 2021/22 in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice. The report included Debt and Investment activity, Prudential Indicator monitoring and forecast interest receivable and payable for the financial year.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Cabinet endorses the report, and**
- b) That Council be recommended to endorse the Council's Mid-Term Treasury Management Review 2021/22.**

116/21 CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME UPDATE AND ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS REPORT 2020/21

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered the Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2020/2021 report which was an annual report on the Council's operational greenhouse gas emissions and progress towards the target of net zero by 2030.

The report covered the financial year 2020-2021 and the period of greatest operational COVID impact.

Councillor Andrew Cole spoke on this item and welcomed the report and applauded the measures which had been made to date. However, there needed to be improvements around actions relating to biodiversity. Reference was made to the importance of biodiversity to society and how this impacted on the quality of life and on the public purse. It should be a priority. There was a challenge for society to look to nature-based solutions to climate change.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment, Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy replied and referred to paragraph 15 of the report which detailed information on adaptations by biodiversity. Reference was made to the work in the development of infrastructure where the Council looks for biodiversity gain. An example was works along the A40 where biodiversity gains of 10 % were based in. Where possible, the Council was looking for biodiversity gains on site, in other parts of the Council.

The Leader concurred with Councillor Cole's comments and referred to an event she had been invited to by Thames Water which was looking at how we can look at biodiversity around the County's rivers whilst mitigating flood risk.

RESOLVED: That approval be given to the Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2020/2021 for publication on the County Council website, set out in Appendix 1.

117/21 SUSTAINABLE WARMTH FUND (SWF)

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet considered a report which informed Members that OCC had applied to central Government for a grant of £3.37m from the Sustainable Warmth Fund. This money would provide energy-saving home retrofit measures for those most in need and unable to pay.

This initiative was in support of the Council's strategic priorities on climate action and healthy place shaping, as well as national commitments to a green recovery. If successful, the project would deliver home energy efficiency retrofits to 310 households living in energy inefficient properties and fuel poverty.

Both Councillors Duncan Enright and Glynis Phillips spoke on this report and Councillor Phillips expressed her disappointment at the Government's commitment to this agenda given that in Oxfordshire there were 4,000 properties which required this work, however, if successful there would only be funding for 310 houses. National Government were urged to invest even more into SWF.

RESOLVED: Cabinet,

(a) Endorsed the submission of a funding bid to support retrofit of homes in fuel poverty within Oxfordshire under the Sustainable Warmth Fund (SWF).

(b) Approved delegated authority to the Corporate Director Environment and Place in consultation with S151 Officer and Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment to review and conclude legal agreements should the application be successful.

118/21 LOCAL AGGREGATES ASSESSMENT 2020 AND 2021

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet was provided with a report which informed Members that under the National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021 (NPPF), mineral planning authorities should prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA).

The NPPF stated that the LAA should 'forecast future demand, based on a rolling average of 10 years' sales data and other relevant information, and an assessment of all supply options.'

Cabinet was informed that the purpose of an annual LAA was to set the level of provision for the County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority to ensure an appropriate provision for Sand and Gravel and Crushed Rock extraction in Oxfordshire. This provision level was based on an assessment

between the supply and demand of aggregate in Oxfordshire and evaluated through a review of the latest sales information, and all aggregate supply options and forecast demand. This assessment for provision is based on surveys and past sales.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

a) Approved the Local Aggregates Assessment for 2020 (LAA2020) and the Local Aggregates Assessment for 2021 (LAA2021) as detailed in the report.

b) Authorised the Corporate Director Environment and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment to make any revisions and publish the Oxfordshire Local Aggregate Assessment 2020 and the Oxfordshire Local Aggregate Assessment 2021 on the Council website.

119/21 A4095/B4100 BANBURY ROAD ROUNDABOUT - PREFERRED OPTIONS AND IN PRINCIPLE USE OF STATUTORY POWERS

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to progress with a junction capacity and sustainable transport improvements project at the A4095 / B4100 Banbury Road roundabout in Bicester.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy reported that significant work had been carried out as part of the growth of Bicester as a town. Officers were thanked for their work on this in addition to the consultation which had taken place with groups to ensure cycling, walking and bus facilities were adequate.

Reference was made to the need to approve in principle, the use of The Oxfordshire County Council (Banbury Road Roundabout) 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.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highways Management thanked Mr Bugg and other cycling groups that have been involved in this consultation.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, agreed with the comments made and referred to this Council putting active travel first to ensure new proposals come forward when they comply with the recently adopted policies of promoting active travel.

RESOLVED:

a) That approval be given to the hybrid design option (Annex A of the report) and approval be given to the progression into Design and Procurement Stage 2 of the project.

b) That approval be given in principle, to the use of The Oxfordshire County Council (Banbury Road Roundabout) 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. If Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is required to deliver the project, further approval would be sought, subject to the scheme meeting all CPO requirements and the paper would be brought back to Cabinet, once the necessary approval has been sought, including public engagement on preferred options and submission of a planning application for the scheme.

120/21 BANBURY REGENERATION - TRAMWAY ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN PRINCIPLE USE OF STATUTORY POWERS

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet was provided with a report which provided details on the Banbury Regeneration - Tramway Road Improvements. The proposals would deliver a new bus and taxi link past the railway station and into the town centre, as well as a new access to Network Rail West Car Park, variable message signing to indicate spare car park capacity to direct drivers to the east or west station car parks and improvements to pedestrian access.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy reported that the proposals were an important part of the regeneration of Banbury Town Centre. Providing good bus links to the station, good links to other types of public transport and cycleways which were compliant with national best practice.

Councillor Kieron Mallon spoke in support of the recommendations and commented that this was only the start for Banbury. The report was the first start of this regeneration. Improving access to the station would achieve far more for the green agenda. It would show the Council's commitment to delivering more homes.

Councillor Duncan Enright thanked Councillor Mallon for his support.

RESOLVED:

a) That approval be given to the update design layout (Annex A – Option D of the report) and approval be given to the progression of the layout into Design and Procurement Stage 2 of the project.

b) That approval be given in principle, to the use of The Oxfordshire County Council (Banbury Regeneration – Tramway Road Improvements) 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. If Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is required to deliver the project, further approval would be sought, subject to the scheme meeting all CPO requirements and the paper would be brought back to Cabinet, once the necessary

approval has been sought, including public engagement on preferred options and submission of a planning application for the scheme.

c) That approval be given to the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council Banbury Regeneration - Tramway Road Improvements (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 Project design necessitates. Formal approval for the making of Side Roads Order(s) would be reported to Cabinet, and necessary approval sought, following public engagement on preferred options and submission of a planning application for the Project.

121/21 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.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member Decisions for Highway Management that had been moved to 16 December 2021 were being 'brought forward' not 'deferred'.

The COVID Lessons Learnt Review should be listed as 18 January 2022 Cabinet meeting and not 'to be confirmed'.

RESOLVED: Cabinet noted the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings, with the above amendments.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>1. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES</p> <p>To ask the Cabinet Member whether the Cabinet currently intends on providing a specific budget allocation within the upcoming Budget Cycle towards accelerating planning and delivery of the Connecting Oxford project, in recognition of urgent need to alleviate chronic traffic within Oxford City, to ensure a modal shift to active travel and public transport, as well as to fulfil key policy commitments of the Fair Deal Alliance.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>Funding for the planning of Connecting Oxford has already been secured via the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Delivery costs are expected to come from several sources: the Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan includes a budget allocation of £3 million to cover the cost of implementing the Connecting Oxford Traffic Filters. Costs associated with introducing the Connecting Oxford Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) are expected to be funded by borrowing against future income raised by the levy and following scheme approval by the Secretary of State (Department for Transport). Income raised by the WPL is also expected to fund supporting bus, cycle and pedestrian improvement schemes in and around Oxford, and to secure additional external funding including from the DfT.</p> <p>The desire to implement Connecting Oxford as quickly as possible is understood, however, given Connecting Oxford would be the biggest change to the city's transport network and traffic management arrangements in the city's history, it is vital the programme allows sufficient time to carry out the detailed</p>

Questions	Cabinet Member
	scheme design and assessments, and more importantly, allows the council to engage and consult with the public before proceeding. This is planned to take place throughout 2022.
<p>2. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES</p> <p>The new LTCP commits this Council to a “well maintained highways network”, yet such a target needs to reflect the growing financial cost pressures of doing so because of Government cuts and the relative risks to different user groups of poorly maintained roads. As such, can the Cabinet Member commit to ensuring that the upcoming Highways Asset Management Strategy or the final version of the LTCP will include a financially sustainable plan for managing our highways stock and will prioritise the repair of cycleways and well-cycled roads ahead of those almost solely used by motor traffic?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Some difficult decisions need to be made about where and how to most effectively invest the limited funding available not only to ensure compliance with our various statutory responsibilities as the Highway Authority, but also to make a positive contribution to this Councils priorities for a more accessible, active and integrated transport network.</p> <p>This is outlined in our 9 priorities.</p> <p>In order to achieve the right balance, we will be working with elected members to inform a revised Highways Asset Management Plan, which will lead to a programme that addresses the concerns such as you are raising.</p> <p>The revised Highways Asset Strategy and Plan will indeed see a greater focus and a proportionately higher level of investment for infrastructure that supports walking, cycling and other more sustainable transport choices.</p>

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p data-bbox="183 384 817 411">3. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW</p> <p data-bbox="183 496 1030 858">South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is proposing to borrow £ millions to build a new HQ at Didcot. Given that there are six councils across Oxfordshire (four district, one city, one county) with much existing surplus office space between them, surely effective consolidation and reallocation of property based on the principle of 'One Public Estate' might mean that no new building is needed. Could the Cabinet Member please advise how much he has explored this option with SODC which would not only save money but would also be a much greener alternative.</p> <p data-bbox="183 900 416 927">Supplementary</p> <p data-bbox="183 938 1030 1042">Has OCC suggested Abbey House as a potential SODC HQ which would facilitate a no-cost end to OCC's tenancy there?</p>	<p data-bbox="1052 384 1955 448">COUNCILLOR CALUM MILLER, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p data-bbox="1052 496 1955 823">The County Council's property team are actively engaging with estates colleagues across the public sector organisations operating in Oxfordshire under the One Public Estate Initiative to further develop our partnership agenda. Officers are working with all councils in the county, including SODC, to focus on and understand collective needs in respect of workforce planning strategy (agile working) so that challenges and opportunities for collaboration can be explored to achieve cost saving, revenue generation and a reduction in our carbon foot-print.</p> <p data-bbox="1052 900 1211 927">Response</p> <p data-bbox="1052 938 1955 1153">As a Member of SODC I am sure you will be able to put these questions directly to the Cabinet Members of South Oxfordshire. As my answer made clear, we are always looking for ways to improve the efficiency of our work under the One Public Estate Initiative and we will be looking for all opportunities to do that moving forward.</p>
<p data-bbox="183 1198 786 1225">4. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p data-bbox="183 1310 1030 1374">I welcome the latest report on our Climate Targets and would like to thank officers and the Climate Action Team for</p>	<p data-bbox="1052 1198 1955 1262">COUNCILLOR PETE SUDBURY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p data-bbox="1052 1310 1955 1374">The County Council is developing proposals for the introduction of a policy that will demand that all stand-alone</p>

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>their diligence. However, I am concerned around the reliance of gas in our schools and estates and whilst I embrace the challenges faced by energy system evolutions, we have heard from members and the public alike (Shrivenham residents address to Full Council in November) around the lack of progress in our schools to reduce carbon by design and installation of Gas Boilers. I would like to ask cabinet, when can we expect to see our administration ban the installation of gas boilers in our education settings and embrace options such as Heat Pumps, Electric Systems and retrofitting of PV solar options or exploration of Biomass and Geothermals?</p> <p>It's time we fuelled our education and not old fossil fuel powered boilers, I urge this cabinet to not only ban the installation of Gas boilers on new build schools alongside our district partners but also would like to know when we can expect to see a programme of retrofitting our 126 schools with new, lower or zero carbon solutions and embrace the renewable heat incentive grants to help sustain a rapid payback in technology investment. When can we expect to see action from this cabinet on zero carbon fuel for schools?</p>	<p>new buildings including new schools are designed and constructed to carbon neutral standards. This would effectively remove gas boilers as a heating option. It is expected that this policy will be considered by Cabinet for adoption in early 2022. It is recognised that existing legal agreements in place, that fund or directly deliver new schools, are set against historic performance standards which will bring capital pressures.</p> <p>Projects already in design development continue to be designed to minimise the carbon impact wherever practicable to do so in light of funding and/or programme constraints, for example the project noted at Shrivenham is currently within the design phase where use of air sourced heat pumps is being proposed and Carterton Fire Station where funding has been secured to upgrade electrical infrastructure serving the site and enable air sourced heat pumps to be the heating source for the building. It should also be noted that the council has, for many years, embraced many new technologies in schools including air and ground sources heat pumps, PV's, solar not water, biomass and combined heat and power systems where appropriate and practicable to do so.</p> <p>The county council has supported our schools to secure Decarbonisation Grant at 4 sites which will result in the installation a heat pump system on one site and photo-voltaic / battery systems at all 4 sites which are programmed for delivery by March 2022. We have also helped seek</p>

Questions	Cabinet Member
	<p>Decarbonisation Grant under phase 3 of the programme at 5 further school sites which could enable heat pump and insulation measures to be delivered. We will know in early 2022 whether we have been successful. The county council will continue to seek grant funding where practicable to do so but it is however recognised that ongoing bids for government grants are oversubscribed and there is not a published timetable for funding rounds. It is also the case that Decarbonisation Grant Funding is becoming more restrictive; it is now only available as top-up grant for low carbon solutions where “end of life” fossil fuel heating replacement is already funded.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that ongoing investment in schools sites is restricted (through revenue funding from central government used by schools to keep buildings water tight and operational, through a school condition allocation from central government that is prioritised for major capital works to ensure schools remain operational and through central government grant or planning obligations from developers which can only be used to provide additional pupil places), the county council is about to let a contract that will deliver support to schools to help them understand their energy use, and look for energy saving opportunities in their buildings.</p>