

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 14 May 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.50pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in

Attendance: Councillor Liam Walker

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director People), Ansaf Azhar (Corporate Director Public Health & Community Safety), Bill Cotton (Corporate Director Environment & Place) Lisa Lyons (Corporate Director Children's Services), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet 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.

62/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were none received.

63/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

64/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 were approved as a correct record.

65/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

66/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

There were no requests received.

67/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were none to report.

68/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Kieron Mallon, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on s.106 and Infrastructure Funding Update.

Cabinet received the Scrutiny report and will respond in due course.

69/24 COST OF LIVING PROGRAMME FOR 2024/25

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the intended approach to support those residents who are most negatively impacted by cost-of-living pressures over the current financial year, assigning additional funding provided by national government after local 2024/25 budget setting processes, in the context of locally assigned funding. It provided the latest position on the impact of the cost of living, as well as providing a summary outturn report on the 2023/24 support programme. In March 2024 the government announced a fifth round of the Household Support Fund running for the first six months of 2024/25. Oxfordshire's allocation was £3,361,256.

Councillor Dr Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, presented the report and gave details of the proposed allocation of the funding across various services.

During discussion members made the following points:-

- The need for continued funding for free school meals during school holidays
- Concerns about the late notification of the funding from central Government
- The importance of these financial interventions in providing support to residents during cost-of-living pressures and to ensure that they were targeted appropriately
- Members commended the work by officers and proposals set out in the report but reiterated the need for the Council to tackle the underlying problem of inequality and that this should continue to be a fundamental element of the Council's strategic objectives going forward

Councillor Ley moved and Councillor Bearder seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to

- a) note the cost-of-living support measures delivered during 2023/24, as summarised in table 1;**
- b) agree to the support package for 2024/25, as summarised in table 3;**
- c) delegate authority to the Programme Director (Partnerships & Delivery) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, to amend the programme during the year in response to changing and emerging need, within the overall programme budget.**

70/24 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Customer Experience Strategy. Improving customer experience was a key area of focus for the organisation. A wide-ranging programme of work was in place to ensure that interactions with customers were of a consistently high standard and a customer-first approach was at the heart of everything the council does.

The strategy set the direction for how the council wanted its employees to interact with customers and colleagues as well as emphasising the importance of council values and behaviours.

The aim of the strategy was to demonstrate to customers that the council was putting them first and to ensure everyone across the council understood the importance of good and consistent customer service regardless of their role. The strategy would apply to all council employees and not only the Customer Service Centre.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report and referred to an amendment to the introduction to the strategy which clarified its purpose to support customers, residents, local businesses, and community groups.

The Director of Customer and Culture referred to the feedback from customers and internal colleagues which had helped to shape the strategy presented to the Cabinet. He outlined the main elements of the strategy and emphasised the importance of the core values set out in the document.

During discussion members referred to the ongoing impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the Council's services.

Councillor Fawcett moved and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) approve the council's new Customer Experience Strategy.**
- b) endorse that the annual update of the strategy and the action plan should be overseen by the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

71/24 OXFORDSHIRE COUNCILS CHARTER

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Oxfordshire Councils Charter. The County Council had been working in partnership with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), district and city councils, town and parish councils, and parish meetings to strengthen partnership working across local councils in Oxfordshire.

Through a multi-organisational working group, an Oxfordshire Councils Charter had been developed which set out the principles and commitments to achieve stronger partnership working and enhanced local democracy.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report, and explained the background to the development of the Charter.

During discussion members referred to comments made during the engagement exercise which highlighted the need for improved channels of communication between residents and councils.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to

- a) **endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter attached at Annex 1 to the report**
- b) **agree to be a signatory to the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.**

72/24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (UPDATES ON FUNDING AND ANY OTHER BUDGET CHANGES FOR 2024/25 SINCE FEBRUARY 2024)

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out updates to funding notified since the 2024/24 budget was agreed as well as updates and risks which would need to be managed in 2024/25 and the arrangements for monitoring progress with investments and the achievement of savings.

Councillor Dan Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to

- a) **agree the virements in Annex 1a and note the virements in Annex 1b.**
- b) **note the anticipated reduction in business rates funding of £0.7m in 2024/25 compared to the assumptions in the budget, and the proposed use of additional business rates income notified in late 2023/24 to replace this.**

73/24 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 4 2023-24

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided the workforce profile for quarter 4 2023/24 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators. The report also provided an update on the Council's Our People & Culture strategy which aimed to address the trends identified in the report, but importantly help the Council's ambitions to become an Employer of Choice.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

Members noted the excellent results achieved by the Council's apprentices which were highlighted in the performance dashboard.

Councillor Fawcett moved and Councillor Gregory seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to note the report.

74/24 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.

75/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet noted the following response to the Scrutiny report:-

Infrastructure Funding Statement

.....in the Chair

Date of signing