

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on 17 April 2007 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.42 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Keith R Mitchell – in the chair

Councillor Roger Belson
 Councillor Louise Chapman
 Councillor Jim Couchman
 Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat
 Councillor John Howell
 Councillor Ian Hudspeth
 Councillor David Robertson
 Councillor Michael Waine

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Alan Amitage (for Agenda Item 5)
 Councillor Zoé Patrick (for Agenda Item 6)
 Councillor Anne Purse (for Agenda Items 8 & 12)
 Councillor David Turner (for Agenda Item 10)

Officers:

Whole of meeting: A.R. Cloke and M. Bayliss (Legal & Democratic Services).

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5	K. Bell & M. Petty (Corporate Core)
7	J. McWilliam (Corporate Core)
8	C. Cousins & N. Robertson (Environment & Economy)
9	R. Leach (Children, Young People & Families)
10	N. Monaghan (Environment & Economy)
11	D. Pettis (Environment & Economy)
12	C. Cousins (Environment & Economy)
13	R. Munro & C. Taylor (Social & Community Services)
14	R. Munro (Social & Community Services)
15	A. Harper-Smith (Corporate Core)

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.

42/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Charles Shouler.

43/07 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Mitchell declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 11 on the grounds that he was the Chairman of the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA).

Councillor Hudspeth declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Items 10 & 11 on the grounds that he was a Director of the Cottsway Housing Association.

44/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2007 were approved and signed.

45/07 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:-

Request from	Agenda Item
Ms Hana Graham (on behalf of ORASTEEL, Oxfordshire's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Training, Education and Employment Partnership) Bridging Project Coordinator Oxford and Cherwell Valley College Oxpens Road Oxford OX1 1SA	6. Financial Monitoring
Mr Paul Betteridge (Editor of the Oxfordshire Family History Society Journal) 7 Little Langley Leafield Witney OXON OX29 9NZ	13. Westgate Library Refurbishment

Agenda Item 5 – Financial Monitoring

Ms Hana Graham, representing ORASTEEL (Oxfordshire's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Training, Education and Employment Partnership), urged the Cabinet to consider investing a portion of the Local Authority Business

Growth Incentive (LABGI) grant in access to English classes in Oxfordshire. She highlighted some potential indirect costs to interpreting services, Social and health care budgets and the local economy if classes were not provided. She believed that investing in English classes would help the Cabinet address two key areas for improvement as identified by the Audit Commission: raising the attainment of ethnic minority children in Oxfordshire schools and engaging with ethnic minority families.

Agenda Item 8 - Draft Future First Action Plan 2007/08 and Strategy & Implementation Plan for the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme

Councillor Purse, speaking as Shadow Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, welcomed the challenges set out in the officers' report and thanked the officers for their work. She asked if Cabinet would now provide an unequivocal response in support of the proposals outlined in the Programme.

Agenda Item 12 - Future of the Radcliffe Infirmary Site and Science Area, Oxford

Councillor Anne Purse, speaking as shadow Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, generally welcoming the proposals and endorsed the approach of increased provision of access for pedestrians and cyclists.

46/07 FINANCIAL MONITORING

(Agenda Item 5)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA5) which covered the period ended 28 February 2007 for both revenue and capital. Changes to the forecast revenue outturn are reported against the position at the end of January 2007.

Councillor Alan Armitage, speaking as Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, endorsed the comments made regarding provision of English classes and was disappointed that no LABGI funding was available for Community Safety schemes. He strongly urged Cabinet to reconsider this position.

In response to Councillor Armitage, Councillor David Robertson stated that all Community Safety schemes had to be agreed using the criteria as outlined in the Local Transport Plan. Central Government had reduced the budget for projects in the Plan by £2m and this had affected the number of projects available for completion.

In response to Ms Graham, Councillor Jim Couchman recognised the need for provision of English classes but stated that the LABGI money was a one off provision and Cabinet would be looking to the Government to bridging the funding gap.

The Leader of the Council undertook to write to the Secretary of State for Education to request that carry-forwards of year-end unspent balances on

delegated schools' budgets above a nominal amount (currently suggested 5% or 8%) should not be 'clawed back' by the Government.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the report;
- (b) request the early repayment of £0.087m being half of the temporary supplementary estimate to Adult Learning in this year;
- (c) approve the write off of £0.259m bad debts that are no longer recoverable against the balance sheet provision previously made;
- (d) approve the creation of a reserve from the additional surplus strategic measures of £1m to smooth the impact of SORP debt restructuring activity;
- (e) recommend that council approve the allocation of LABGI grant;
- (f) approve the changes to the Capital Programme; and
- (g) recommend Council approve the permanent virement of £1m to the Property Services budget and a transfer of £1m ICT expenditure to the capital programme.

47/07 OXFORD CITY UNITARY COUNCIL PROPOSAL
(Agenda Item 6)

At the end of January 2007 Oxford City Council submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government a proposal for three unitary councils to cover Oxfordshire. This proposal had been rejected by the Government, which also made it clear that no further proposals for unitary councils would be considered in the medium term and that continuing two tier local authorities were expected to work together to secure better partnership working and to enhance customer service and value for money.

Councillor Zoé Patrick, speaking as Leader of the Opposition, welcomed the decision by the secretary of state and urged the Cabinet to consider setting up localised contact points and forming area committees as a potential mechanism for engaging the public on the Council's activities.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that this was the best possible decision for the Council and the people of Oxfordshire. He stated that it was now the Council's responsibility to make the two-tier system work more efficiently and be more accessible for the public. To this end he had drafted a paper that would be circulated to Council Leaders and would be discussed at upcoming bi-lateral meetings on options for improved two-tier joint working.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the decision of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; and,
- (b) work with District Council colleagues on a 3 year programme for 'Improved two-tier local government' to secure seamless customer service and improved value for money.

48/07 ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

(Agenda Item 7)

The Cabinet considered the first Annual Report (CA7) by the new Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire appointed by both the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and local government.

RESOLVED: to recommend the County Council to receive the report and note in particular the general recommendations therein.

49/07 DRAFT FUTURE FIRST ACTION PLAN 2007/08 AND STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item 8)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA8) that provided a review of progress on the Future First Action Plan 2006/07 and proposed priorities and actions for the Action Plan that would ensure the delivery of targets outlined in the Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan and other Future First objectives.

The Cabinet agreed to note the specific points raised by The Environment & Economy Scrutiny Panel. This included officers drafting a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport, urging a relaxation of the regulations that cover the need for lighting of signs, thus allowing local highway authorities to reduce their carbon emissions from this source. Associated with this the Council should, at the appropriate time, publicise the advantages - in terms of reduced light pollution as well as cost and carbon savings - of selectively reducing the amount of street lighting, particularly in some rural locations. The Panel also suggested that there should be member representation on the Carbon Management Programme Board.

RESOLVED: to approve the draft Future First Action Plan 2007/08 and the Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan.

50/07 GREENMERE SCHOOL, DIDCOT – OUTCOME OF FORMAL CONSULTATION

(Agenda Item 9)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA9) that contained the response to a formal consultation with a wide range of stakeholders undertaken by officers

about the proposal to replace Greenmere Primary School with a 'Fresh Start' school supported by additional funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the outcome of the formal consultation; and
- (b) proceed with the publication of statutory notices for the closure of Greenmere Primary School and its replacement by a new Fresh Start school in the existing new school buildings.

51/07 SALE OF SURPLUS LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

(Agenda Item 10)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA10) on the County Council's policy for the disposal of surplus property. The Capital Steering Group, County Council Management Team and the Informal Cabinet had reviewed the current policies prior to formal consideration by the Cabinet.

Councillor David Turner, speaking as a Local Member, expressed concern that as the report made no delineation between affordable housing on land which was deemed acceptable in planning terms and that which was not, the Council could then be sending a message to landowners that because land in Oxfordshire was scarce then they should not sell it now and make a greater profit on it at a later date.

In response to Councillor Turner, the Leader of the Council stated that it was important to strike a balance between affordable housing provision and provision of services generally. To gain best value the Council had to rely on speculative estimates and the capital receipts from the sale of land would be available for investment in other services such as libraries and the like.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) make no change to the current policies for the disposal of surplus property;
- (b) continue the flexible and positive approach to negotiation of off-market sales to the District Councils or their nominated housing associations and the disposal of rural exception sites, should continue; and,
- (c) participate in a partner-wide approach to the provision of public sector land to help achieve the Local Area Agreement target, subject to the Capital Steering Group being satisfied that there would be no unacceptable consequence for funding for the capital programme.

52/07 SOUTH EAST REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW

(Agenda Item 11)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA11) which set out a recommended response to consultation on the draft South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006-2009.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) agree the recommended responses;
- (b) note the points made in the report concerning Gypsy and Traveller sites, the creation of a Regional Infrastructure Fund, public sector brownfield land, and housing for vulnerable groups; and,
- (c) thank the Regional Housing Board for the opportunity to comment on the draft Regional Housing Strategy Review and request that they made reference to the Every Child Matters agenda and the Local Area Agreement in relation to housing and sustainable community targets as set out in the report.

53/07 FUTURE OF THE RADCLIFFE INFIRMARY SITE AND SCIENCE AREA, OXFORD

(Agenda Item 12)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA12) on proposals for the University of Oxford to redevelop the Radcliffe Infirmary site and the Science Area. The University has published Masterplans for consultation that proposed to expand and improve its facilities for staff and students on these two key sites to help maintain and develop its standing as a world class University.

RESOLVED: to advise the University of Oxford that:

- (a) it generally welcomed the University's proposals to invest in the Radcliffe Infirmary site and the Science Area;
- (b) in particular, it supported:
 - (i) the proposals to increase the permeability and interconnectivity of both areas which would increase public access;
 - (ii) the proposed reduction in car parking spaces, improved cycle and pedestrian access and provision of cycle parking facilities which would encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport; and,
- (c) it supported proposals to increase the sustainability of the Science area and encouraged the University to also incorporate best practice in energy use and resource conservation in its redevelopment proposals for the Radcliffe Infirmary site.

54/07 WESTGATE LIBRARY REFURBISHMENT

(Agenda Item 13)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA13) which updated them on the proposals for securing substantial improvements to the Westgate Library as part of the planned development of the Westgate Centre, and to seek approval for alternative arrangements for library service provision during the period of refurbishment.

Mr Paul Betteridge, representing the Oxfordshire Family History Society, expressed concern at the proposals for the new library and their potential adverse effects on Oxfordshire Studies. He urged the Cabinet to recognise the unique nature of the service provided to the public by Oxfordshire Studies when designing and implementing the arrangements for the library at Westgate.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the progress in negotiations to secure improvements to Westgate Library;
- (b) agree that the option of relocating all or part of Oxfordshire Studies with the Archives Service to create a History Centre, though attractive, was not viable at present;
- (c) agree that the preferred option for library service provision during the refurbishment of Westgate Library was to relocate to alternative city centre premises (Option B); and,
- (d) delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Social & Community Services, after consultation with the Head of Cultural & Adult Learning Services and the County Librarian, to agree alternative provision for accommodation if Option B subsequently proves not to be feasible.

55/07 SOLDIERS OF OXFORDSHIRE TRUST

(Agenda Item 14)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA14) on the Soldiers of Oxfordshire (SOFO) Trust, which aimed to preserve Oxfordshire's military heritage – in the form of museum objects and archives – and to make it available to the public for interest, education and research.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the developments in forming a partnership with the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust;

- (b) agree that in the event of the SOFO collections being housed in an enlarged Museums Resource Centre, no charge should be made to SOFO for routine care and maintenance of the collections; and,
- (c) approve the Memorandum of Understanding.

56/07 GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

(Agenda Item 15)

The Cabinet considered a report (CA15) on the Council's Disability Equality Scheme under the Equality Act 2006.

RESOLVED: to agree:

- (a) the principles on which the draft Gender Equality Scheme has been prepared and the method for implementing, reporting on and revising the scheme;
- (b) delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Change Management to approve a final scheme and detailed action plan based on a set of agreed outcomes for staff and customers; and
- (c) that annual progress reports should be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Change Management for consideration in accordance with Appendix 3 to Section E of the Council's Constitution (Delegated Decisions by Individual Cabinet Members).

57/07 DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS – TRANSPORT PORTFOLIOS

(Agenda Item 16)

There has been a change in Cabinet membership and portfolios, approved by Council on 3 April 2007. The former Cabinet Member for Transport is now the Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport Policy, retaining within his portfolio responsibility for strategic transport policy. The responsibility for implementation of schemes for transport; highways; traffic and parking; road safety; and public passenger transport, has been delegated to the new Cabinet Member for Transport Implementation.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) confirm the arrangements for the creation of the 'Transport Decisions Committee' comprising the Cabinet Members for Strategic Transport Policy and Transport Implementation in order to discharge the executive functions in relation to their respective portfolios, to take effect from 26 April 2007;
- (b) adopt the rules and conventions for the operation of the Committee;

- (c) authorise the Assistant Head of Service (Democratic) to take all necessary steps to bring the arrangements into effect from that date, including:
 - (i) the setting of provisional dates and venues for decision meetings for each Cabinet portfolio, in consultation with the respective Cabinet Members and relevant Directors; and
 - (ii) making the arrangements known to other Members and to officers; and,
- (d) review the working of the arrangements when they have been in operation for six months, subject to any detailed adjustments that may appear desirable in the interim.

58/07 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item 17)

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

.....in the Chair

Date of signing.....2007