

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 November 2020 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Ian Hudspeth – in the Chair
Councillor Mrs Judith Heathcoat
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Steve Harrod
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE
Councillor David Bartholomew
Councillor Liam Walker
Councillor Mark Gray

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Liz Brighthouse (Agenda Item 6)
Councillor Glynis Phillips (Items 6 & 7)

Officers:

Whole of meeting: Yvonne Rees (Chief Executive), Steve Jorden (Corporate Director - Commercial Development Assets & Investments) and Sukdave Ghuman (Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer); Sue Whitehead (Law & Governance);

Part of Meeting: Item 6 - Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers & Organisational Development; Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Item 7 – Tim Chapple, Treasury Manager;
Item 8 – Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers & Organisational Development; Karen Edwards, Director of HR

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.

98/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

An apology was received from Councillor Ian Corkin.

99/20 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment, shown in strikethrough and italics, to the Annex to the Minutes:

It was noted that there were no supplementary questions on Questions 2 & 3. above as Councillor Bearder had ~~had no opportunity to~~ *not* read the response.

100/20 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting have been agreed by the Chairman:

Item 6 - Business Management & Monitoring Report for September 2020: Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee; Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet member for Finance

Item 7 – Treasury Management Mid-Term Review: Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance;

Item 8 – Workforce Report and Staffing Data Quarter 2 – July – September 2020: Councillor Emma Turnbull, Opposition Deputy Leader (gave apologies)

101/20 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2020

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered a report that set out Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) progress towards Corporate Plan priorities for 2020/21 - September 2020.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Chairman of Performance Scrutiny Committee advised that at their recent meeting the Committee had looked at various issues with the Business management & Monitoring report. Councillor Brighthouse commented that part of it was around our response to covid 19 and she had been impressed with the way in which staff had stepped up to ensure that services were provided for our residents and expressed her gratitude to them all. Councillor Brighthouse noted that some data was missing in the report because it was difficult to collect during this time. The Committee had commented on:

- The track and trace grant, wanting to know and understand how it was shared and spent;
- Their wish to continue to look at the projected overspend in relation to EHCPs;
- Their hope that issues around the high needs block would be taken up by the Education Scrutiny Committee;

- The Committee's concern that they did not have the cycling/pedestrian analysis and the hope that this could be prioritised, especially in relation to the active travel work;
- Their wish to understand more fully the new system for delayed transfers of care in place since September;
- The figures in relation to fix my street where improvements were needed;
- Outcomes for care services to support independent living and why these have not been assessed;
- The use of consultants questioning whether the Council sought to make use of our own staff in the first instance.

Councillor Hudspeth, Leader of the Council, agreed with Councillor Brighthouse's comments thanking staff. On the last point he noted that staff were overworked and that although in the first instance the Council would seek to use our own staff where there was insufficient capacity there was the need to get in additional resources.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, commented that whilst covid was taking up all the time for significant numbers of staff business as usual continued with a focus for instance on meeting the carbon reduction target and a renewed focus on inclusion and equality. The demand for adult and children's social care continued to rise and was a real challenge. These were the highest risks on the risk register and had been so for many months.

Councillor Phillips referred to the performance indicators commenting:

- That she was disappointed to see that the LED replacement of street lighting had been reprofiled to be completed by September 2025. The original timing would have saved money earlier on maintenance costs and contributed to the Council's carbon reduction target earlier.
- That it was disappointing that the percentage of waste sent to landfill was expected to rise, although no figures or explanation was contained in the report.
- On the trees surveyed which were above target. However, she noted that the figures referred to 79 out of 84 parishes being completed and queried how the target was set for Oxford as the majority of the City did not have parishes. Councillor Phillips further noted that the report referred to different measures in development and assumed that following the motion to full Council about increasing tree planting that a target for increasing tree cover in the County was being developed.

Councillor Phillips referred to the finance section of the report noting that it was characterised by uncertainty. The report included assumptions that any shortfall in the budget would be met from the covid 19 budget for costs and income losses. In addition the comprehensive spending review from government would cover just one year. Councillor Phillips referred to the revised budget agreed by full Council in September noting that it was unknown if that would be enough and highlighting that the report warned that

if there was insufficient funds in the covid19 budget to cover costs and lost income they would need to be met from general balances.

On a point of presentation Councillor Phillips commented that it would have been helpful to see the list of government grants alongside the additional costs and income losses so that it would be transparent where the council had incurred costs and income losses not supported by government grants.

Councillor Phillips thanked all those involved in the production of the report and in particular the Finance Team.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Cabinet Member for Finance in response to the comments made observed that in terms of identifying costs and income losses that the reason for the Covid 19 separate item as that gave the clarity needed. He shared her view on the one year settlement; There had been the intention from government to have a longer term settlement but due to the pandemic this had not been possible. He had had every confidence, pandemic willing, that there would be a longer term settlement next year. All agreed that it was not satisfactory to have a one year rolling settlement. However, he agreed with Councillor Phillips that the finance team did a superb job within those constraints.

Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of the Council, responding to the point on landfill clarified that everything went to Ardley, so that apart from the approximate 2% residual ash nothing actually went to landfill; instead at Ardley it went to generating electricity for 40,000 homes across Oxfordshire.

Councillor Heathcoat, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the performance and risk elements of the report. She highlighted that despite the huge challenges presented by covid 19, 13 of the 17 performance indicators were green, 13 were amber and 1 measure was unreported (due to covid), with no red indicators. Councillor Heathcoat, praised the contributions of staff to the positive results and highlighted the work within community safety to fit 11 call blockers in the homes of vulnerable residents preventing scams and nuisance calls and the strong performance of trading standards in business interventions. Councillor Heathcoat noted that whilst the Council was performing well in challenging times Cabinet was not complacent and recognised there were areas for improvement.

Councillor Bartholomew, introduced the finance elements of the report that set out the forecast position of the revenue budget as at the end of September 2020, and included an update on the MTFs savings, reserves and balances.

RESOLVED: to note this month's business management and monitoring report.

102/20 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-TERM REVIEW (2020/21)

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet had before them a report setting out the Treasury Management activity undertaken in the first half of the financial year 2020/21 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.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance commended the good results and noted that the decisions made had proved sound particularly investing for the long term and increasing the long term lending limits. She noted that the Arlington Close report noted that the use of negative interest rates had not been ruled out by the Bank of England. This would have a bigger impact on the Council as the majority of fixed term deposits mature in 2021/22 and she suggested it would be prudent to report on this in the next report if possible. She thanked Tim Chapple for his work.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Cabinet Member for Finance expressed his delight that Councillor Phillips shared his appreciation for the work of the Treasury Management Team. Responding to the point on negative interest rates, he was fully aware of the position and had had lengthy discussions with the finance team on this matter. Plans were in place should we move to negative interest rates.

Councillor Bartholomew introduced the contents of the report and moved the recommendations.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the report, and
- (b) **RECOMMEND** Council to note the Council's Mid-Term Treasury Management Review 2020/21.

103/20 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 2 - JULY - SEPTEMBER 2020

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on key HR activities during Quarter 2 (1st July – 30th September 2020) along with a refreshed workforce profile and absence data including COVID related absence data.

Councillor Heathcoat, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the contents of the report and paid tribute to the HR team for the informative report. She commented that staff were the Council's most valuable asset and highlighted the excellent, professional, dedicated work by all staff during the pandemic. Councillor Heathcoat asked that the Leader on behalf of Cabinet email all staff to thank them for their efforts. Councillor Hudspeth undertook to do this referring to the flexibility shown by staff during these challenging times.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

104/20 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 9)

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.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing2020