

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2024

EXEMPT ITEM

It is RECOMMENDED that the public be excluded for the duration of item 5 since it is likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to those items and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in

maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

THE REPORT AND ANNEXES TO THE ITEM HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS 'CONFIDENTIAL' BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THEM.

THIS ALSO MEANS THAT THE CONTENTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCUSSED WITH OTHERS AND NO COPIES SHOULD BE MADE.

5. Sale of North Farm, Aston (Pages 5 - 12)

Cabinet Member: Finance

Forward Plan Ref: 2024/265

*Contact: Henry White, Operational Manager – Estates, Assets and Investments
(Henry.White@oxfordshire.gov.uk)*

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer **(CMDf)**.

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **Approve, as a key decision, the freehold sale of land comprising part of North Farm, Aston.**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to consider officer recommendations and agree the final purchaser and sale price.**

6. Speedwell House - Main contractor Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) engagement. (Pages 13 - 16)

Cabinet Member: Finance

Forward Plan Ref: 2024/290

*Contact: Chris Dyer Operational Manager & Senior Project Lead (Major Projects)
chris.dyer@oxfordshire.gov.uk*

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **Approve entering the first part of a two-stage contact with Willmott Dixon for them to carry out pre-construction services on the expansion and refurbishment of Speedwell House under a Pre-Construction Service Agreement (PCSA).**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Director of Property in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer to complete all necessary legal documentation to give effect to this contract award.**

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Agenda Item 4

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 12 July 2024 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 10.05 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Dan Levy – in the Chair

Officers: Jack Ahier (Democratic Services Officer), Henry White (Operational Manager – Assets and Investments).

The Cabinet Member for Finance 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/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda No. 1)

There were none.

16 **QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

17 **PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda No. 3)

There were none.

18 **SUPPORTED TRANSPORT FLEET (X71 VEHICLES)**

(Agenda No. 4)

The Chair welcomed everybody and introduced the item to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the leasing of vehicles was to benefit the home to school transport scheme.

The Chair thanked officers and agreed to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED to:

(a) Endorse the approach and proposals to provide Supported Transport with new leases for 71 vehicles engaged in home to school transport for children with special educational needs.

(b) Authorise Officers to prepare and commence the procurement of the leases for those 71 vehicles.

(c) Approve delegated authority to the Director of Property and Assets, to award, following a compliant procurement process, of 71 new leases for Supported Transport accessible minibuses, providing essential home to school transport for children with special educational needs.

19 VEHICLE HIRE SOLUTION

(Agenda No. 5)

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the Council's fleet management policy was not as efficient as it could be, and that this solution would try to resolve these issues.

The Chair thanked officers and agreed to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Authorise the Director of Property and Assets to award, following completion of a compliant procurement process, new contract(s) for vehicle hire to support staff business travel needs across the County Council.**

20 PURCHASE OF 20-23 BRIDGE STREET, BANBURY

(Agenda No. 6)

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting.

The Chair stated the scheme was long overdue and highlighted the opportunities to work with Cherwell District Council.

The Chair thanked officers and agreed to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Approve as a key decision the purchase of a property in Banbury Town Centre for the purposes of re-providing Banbury Library and other Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) uses.**

- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Director of Property and Assets; Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer; and the Cabinet Member for Finance to consider Officer recommendations and agree the final purchase price and terms.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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Divisions Affected – Eynsham

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

13 September 2024

Development and Disposal of part of North Farm, Aston

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Approve, as a key decision, the freehold sale of land comprising part of North Farm, Aston.**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to consider officer recommendations and agree the final purchaser and sale price.**

Executive Summary

1. North Farm is an agricultural site comprising a farmhouse, farmyard and an area of agricultural land on the northern edge of the village of Aston in West Oxfordshire. This report focuses on the farmyard and farmhouse.
2. The property was historically let on a secure Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy. This tenancy fell away in 2016 on the tenant's death and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) took the site back in 2017.
3. There has been various activity on the wider site since OCC took the tenancy back, with a new children's home (Aspen House) recently built on one of the paddocks and the northern farmland being looked at for biodiversity net gain. The remaining farmyard/house was added to the disposal list.
4. The decision was taken to add value to the site by seeking planning consent.
5. When/if planning permission is achieved, the intention is for the farmyard and farmhouse to be marketed for sale.

Background

6. OCC own the freehold of the agricultural unit at North Farm, Aston. The farm was let to a lifetime tenant under the Agricultural Holdings Act. The tenant passed away in May 2016 and vacant possession was secured in September 2017.
7. The site within this report consists of the following:
 - Farmhouse – Lying directly on North Road on the northern edge of the village. The house is a four-bedroom stone cottage with a reasonable garden. The property was in poor condition when the lease ended and is currently vacant, requiring significant expenditure before it could be occupied.
 - Farmyard – A range of modern style, portal frame farm buildings behind the farmhouse, with their own access onto North Road. There is a small grass paddock to the north of the yard.
 - The wider farm also includes three small paddocks on the northern edge of the village and two larger arable fields further north.
8. The farmyard and farmhouse were considered to have development potential, and the farmyard was considered for disposal in 2017 with the decision made to enter the property onto the disposal list and explore opportunities to add value through the planning process.
9. On the assumption planning permission is achieved, the intention is that the property will be marketed for sale.
10. Services within OCC were given a final opportunity to submit interest in September 2023, with no further interest coming forward by the deadline in October 2023. The property has now been declared surplus to the operational requirements of the Council.

Risk Management

11. The Council must ensure that all capital payments received come from the client account of a firm of solicitors acting for the purchaser, which has taken responsibility for money laundering checks. The Council may wish to conduct independent checks on the source of the funds and must reserve the right to withdraw from the transaction at any stage in the event that these are not completed to its satisfaction.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

12. The sale of the site supports the agreed Property and Asset Strategy agreed in November 2022, by maximising the value of investments to support the long-term

financial sustainability of the Council land and supporting the local community by the provision of land for social housing.

Staff Implications

13. There are no staff implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

14. There are no equality and inclusion implications.

Financial Implications

15. The Capital & Investment Strategy for 2024/25 agreed by the Council in February 2024 sets out that the principle that capital receipts should be treated as a corporate resource and used across the capital programme flexibly.

16. The eventual sale would provide a capital receipt as set out in the disposals programme. The sale price will have been supported by a period of open marketing. The disposal will therefore be compliant with the best value requirements as set out in section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Comments checked by:

Drew Hodgson - Finance Business Partner (Resources & E&P)
drew.hodgson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

17. The Council has power to dispose of its land assets pursuant to Section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, subject to its duty to ensure it receives best value for them. The Council owns the freehold to the site.

Comments checked by:

Richard Hodby, Solicitor, Law and Governance
Richard.hodby@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

18. There are no sustainability implications

Lorna Baxter
Executive Director Resources

Contact Officers:

Michael Smedley, Head of Estates, Assets, and Investment
Michael.smedley@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Henry White, Operational Manager, Assets and Investment
Henry.white@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Appendix1 – Exempt Information

22 August 2024

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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Divisions Affected – Jericho and Osney

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

13 September 2024

SPEEDWELL HOUSE – EXPANSION AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Report of Executive Director of Resources and Section 151
Officer

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Approve entering the first part of a two-stage contact with Willmott Dixon for them to carry out pre-construction services on the expansion and refurbishment of Speedwell House under a Pre-Construction Service Agreement (PCSA).**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Director of Property in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer to complete all necessary legal documentation to give effect to this contract award.**

Executive Summary

1. The City Centre Accommodation Strategy was approved at Cabinet on 23rd January 2024, which sanctioned the expansion and refurbishment of Speedwell House to achieve a single, city centre headquarters to accommodate the Council's corporate and democratic services.
2. The Initial Business Case (IBC) for this project was approved by Cabinet on 19 March 2024 and the project entered the capital programme (£22.680m).
3. The building strip-out works have commenced and will be completed by the end of September 2024 meaning that the contractor will have a safe blank slate for this project.
4. Whilst the strip-out works have been progressing, the Council has tendered the extension and refurbishment of Speedwell House which involves two-stages of appointment. Under the first stage, the contractor is appointed to work under a Pre-contract Services Agreement (PCSA) to develop the design. As part of the second stage, the contractor submits their final offer and programme to deliver the works based on the detail of design they have agreed to develop. Whilst it

was always envisaged that a key-decision would be required for the second stage due to the estimated value of the construction works, the evaluation of the tenders has resulted in the value of the PCSA being above £1m hence the reason for now seeking an urgent key decision. The Council is committed to delivering Speedwell House at pace so it also important to have a key decision as soon as possible to formally appoint the successful contractor and for them to commence with the first stage of their appointment. The second stage of the appointment will be considered following the approval of a Full Business Case which will be prepared in conjunction with the contractor as part of the development of the design.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

5. This proposed course of action supports the Council's Strategic Plan 2023-25 of making Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. In particular, it supports the Property Strategy's strategic objectives by a) enabling agile working and rationalisation of the estate, b) facilitating service delivery and c) decarbonising our corporate buildings.

Financial Implications

6. The total project budget has already been approved as part of the capital programme which amply covers the cost of the PCSA. A further key decision will be sort before entering the second contract for the construction works.
7. Should the recommended course of action not be followed, the project is likely to incur additional costs in the form of inflation costs due to delay in entering contract. It would also hinder the ability for OCC to delivery to the required timeline.

Comments checked by:

Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
drew.hodgson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

8. The decision will enable legal services to draft and finalise the relevant contractual documentation on behalf of the Council so that the project can proceed.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

9. The project budget includes allowance for internal staff costs for a Project Lead in the Major Projects team to ensure the project is delivered to the required standards within the project programme and budget agreed in the Initial Business Case.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

10. This project will support Oxfordshire as an exciting, diverse county where everyone has a chance to thrive. The refurbishment of Speedwell House will result in an inclusive office design creating spaces where everyone's needs are being catered to, so staff feel comfortable and able to do their best work respecting and incorporating diversity and individuality thereby helping to deliver the highest standard of service to our residents.

Sustainability Implications

11. The intention is to create new net zero headquarters for the Council using sustainable technologies including air source heat pumps. To support the Council's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) aspirations, baseline reports will be produced at the outset by the contractor to model post development scenarios to focus on areas that will have the highest impact. In addition, the 20% BNG will be met for this project as per the Oxfordshire Climate and Natural Environment Policy Statement.

Risk Management

12. Outside of the standard design and construction risks which are managed by the Project Lead, the key project risks are:

Description of areas or sources of risk and impact on project	Mitigation
This project forms part of a wider City Centre Accommodation Strategy and will be ultimately funded from the disposal of County Hall.	Market testing and engagement to determine the likely sale value of County Hall is currently taking place. Early contractor involvement will deliver greater cost certainty as the contractor will have the opportunity during the pre-construction phase, to assess the risks of the project and tender key sub-contract packages transparently.
This project brings together a number of interlinked transformation strategies across the Council.	A transformation and communications team has been established to ensure that Council staff are updated and consulted with as much as possible.

Consultations

13. A key component of this project is to work with colleagues, local businesses and our residents to ensure continued provision of our services in a manner that is expected for residents. Colleagues have been and will continue to be engaged with to provide input and feedback into the development of Speedwell House. In addition, local businesses and organisations both private, public and charity sectors have been identified and will be provided opportunities to meet with the project and consultant team to raise any ideas or concerns relevant to the project to support the highest standard of success.

Report by Lorna Baxter
Executive Director of Resources

Contact Officer:

Chris Dyer, Senior Project Lead, Mobile: 07754 257979;

chris.dyer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Liz Clutterbrook, Head of Major Projects, Mobile: 07972 804316

liz.clutterbrook@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Annex:

Other Documents: [Oxford Accommodation Strategy Outline Business Case \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

September 2024