

# **Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET on Wednesday 11 March 2020**

## **Committee members:**

Councillor Brown (Chair)	Councillor Linda Smith (Deputy Leader)
Councillor Turner	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Rowley
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Upton

## **Also present:**

Councillor Andrew Gant  
Councillor Richard Howlett

## **Officers:**

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive  
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)  
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive  
Tim Sadler, Transition Director  
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer  
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services  
Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement  
Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety  
Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager  
Andrew Humpherson, Regeneration Manager  
Becky Walker, Home Improvement Agency Team Manager  
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer  
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

## **Apologies:**

No apologies were received

## **149. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **150. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public**

None.

## **151. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda**

None.

## **152.Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues**

None.

## **153.Items raised by Board Members**

None.

## **154.Scrutiny Committee Reports**

Cabinet had before it the Report of the Climate Emergency Group and the Committee's recommendations in relation to Blackbird Leys Development Project Detailed Design (Agenda item 8) and Agenda Pay Gap (Agenda item 9).

### Blackbird Leys Development Project Detailed Design

Councillor Andrew Gant, speaking in his capacity as Chair of Scrutiny Committee, said he was grateful for the positive responses to the majority of the Committee's recommendations. The recommendation in relation to the desirability of securing adequate temporary provision for activities currently taking place at the Community Centre during the 'decant' phase was particularly important.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Housing, had been pleased to agree the majority of the Committee's recommendations but unable to support the recommendation in relation to a 'comfort payment system', not least because Catalyst, as the provider, did not have the financial systems to support such a system. In relation to the recommendation to require Passivhaus standards of insulation and air tightness, he noted that compliance with standards in the emerging Local Plan would be the starting point. Further work would however be done to look at how those standards could improved still further within the overall budget envelope.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, said that Blackbird Leys was fortunate in having several other venues which could be used during the decant from the Community Centre.

### Agenda Pay Gap

Councillor Andrew Gant noted that the Committee's discussion of this item had been wide ranging and extended beyond the strict remit of the report. He was pleased with the positive response to the one recommendation which had emerged.

### Climate Emergency Report

Councillor Richard Howlett, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee's Climate Emergency Review Group, said the review had benefited from input from a wide range of well informed experts. The decision to focus on buildings had been driven by the fact that they account for the majority of the City's emissions. It was noteworthy that the report's 56 recommendations were of relevance to all but one of the Cabinet's 10 portfolios. The Review Group's visit to a development in Southmoor had been revelatory, showing how it was possible to build properties to Passivhaus standards at a cost marginally lower than houses built simply to Building Regulation standards. He also drew attention to the Nottingham City Homes financing scheme which seeks to ensure that the money used by tenants on energy can be used to fund

improved and zero carbon homes. That such expertise was available locally provided a great opportunity for the Council to benefit from it.

The Chair thanked Cllr Howlett and members of the review group for an excellent report, the recommendations of which deserved a substantial and considered response in due course. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was also very engaged with these matters, having considered an item on Zero Carbon Housing earlier in the day. The Board was committed to becoming a leader in this area. The need to skill up the local workforce was emerging as a priority if the Council's and Board's ambitions were to be realised.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford, thanked Cllr Howlett and those who had contributed to it for an excellent report which would enrich the work of the Council. The report's recommendations would need to be integrated with the many other strands of related Council activity. It would be important, also, to engage the whole City with these important developments.

## **155. Update of Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy**

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to recommend changes to allow clarification around discretionary grant and joint custody arrangements.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Housing, said the proposed amendments simply sought to clarify and incorporate in the policy two matters of common sense and good practice.

Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, said the amendments were driven by customer experience and the wish to provide the best possible service. Becky Walker, Home Improvement Agency Team Manager, noted that the Council was seen to provide an example of best practice in this area of work.

Councillor Rowley paid tribute to the work of the team which he knew to be exemplary.

Cabinet resolved to:

**Approve** the proposed changes to the current Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

## **156. Blackbird Leys Development Project Detailed design**

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek approval to proceed to the detailed design phase of the Blackbird Leys Estate Regeneration project and allocate funds associated with the detailed design and planning, as well as delivery.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Housing, said the report represented a key stage in this important development and sought, among other things, to secure the

necessary funding for the next phase. The scheme would provide an additional 275 new homes (50% of which will be available for social rent), a Community Centre and new retail units. The project had taken some time to get to this point because of its scale and complexity. There had been recent initial consultation events with the local community and more would follow.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, emphasised the indicative nature of the plans at this stage. A formal planning application would not be made until the end of the year. She encouraged local residents to get involved via the consultation events.

Andrew Humpherson, Regeneration Manager, said the two recent consultation events had been well attended. Feedback from them had been broadly positive with few negative comments. The next round of consultation events would be local 'pop up' events to encourage more people to attend.

The Chair thanked all those involved in this significant piece of work. She further emphasised the importance of this consultative phase; the views of local people were central to achieving the best possible outcome for local residents.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director Development to sign off the Pre-Planning Viability Condition and all other Stage One requirements of the Development Agreement detailed in this report, and confirm the project can move past Gateway One and into Stage Two (detailed design & planning submission) of the Development Agreement;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director of Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Housing and the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, to approve moving through the remaining Gateways of the Development Agreement and subsequently entering into a lease for the land with Catalyst Housing Limited, subject to the approved budget;
3. **Note** that the Development Agreement sets out that if the scheme does not move forward to delivery, that the Council will incur 50% of the Stage 2 costs, an estimate of which is set out in the report. (paragraph 73);
4. **Approve** the use the CIL receipts generated to facilitate the delivery of the community and infrastructure works set out in the concept plan and to recommend to Full Council that this commitment is recognised in the Capital Programme in 2022/23 and beyond as a potential future earmarked CIL receipt (for investment in strategic infrastructure and community facilities at Blackbird Leys) and subject to planning;
5. **Recommend** to Council to allocate a budget of up to £21.528 million to deliver the scheme for new affordable and market housing, community and retail facilities and new and enhanced public space (paragraphs 11-19) and in line with the funding sources and viability assessment set out in this report. (paragraphs 57 – 62);
6. **Recommend** to Council to allocate the HRA and General Fund spend in accordance with the profile set out in the report.(paragraphs 63-64) and which will supersede any current budget held for this project; and
7. **Commit** to the fullest ongoing engagement with the local community as part of the detailed design and planning stage and prior to submission of the planning application.

## **157. Annual Report on Gender Pay Gap**

The Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to alert Cabinet to the Council's Gender Pay Gap reporting data for 2018/19.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services, reminded Cabinet that this report fulfilled a statutory obligation and set out the position as it was one year ago. This report differed from the previous year's in one important respect; data about Oxford Direct Services employees was no longer included. The consequence of this was a significant gap which was previously absent. The pay gap was accounted for by the fact that higher paid jobs were more likely to be held by men and women were more likely to work part time. The gap for bonuses was based on the "Partnership Payment" which was paid on a pro rata basis during the period of the report but was not a feature of the current pay deal. The pay gap, while better than some comparable organisations, was still not good enough and needed to be addressed. The Scrutiny Committee's recommendation in relation to shared parental leave was very welcome in this regard. Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement, said a number of activities flowing from the Equalities Action Plan (to do with recruitment and opportunities for flexible working etc.) would contribute to narrowing the gap.

No analysis had yet been done of the intersectionality of gender and other protected characteristics. It was agreed that this could be valuable.

It was right to seek to reduce the gap to zero but to achieve this, it would be necessary for approximately 60% of the staff employed in the top quartile of pay grades to be female, reflecting the proportion of women in the workforce as a whole. It was noted however that changing the proportion of women in the top quartile would take time because the number of those staff was relatively small and the turnover low.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the contents of the report and Gender Pay Gap table at Appendix 1; and
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Business Improvement to publish the table at Appendix 1 to this report before the deadline of 30 March 2020.

## **158. Allocation of Growth Deal funds to Oxford City Council**

The Executive Director Development had submitted a report to accept capital infrastructure funds and delegate authority to officers to enter in contractual Funding Agreements with Oxfordshire County Council, in order to deliver two city infrastructure schemes set out within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainable Transport, said the two projects for which funding would be allocated were both high priorities for the Council.

Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager said Heads of Terms had been agreed for the Osney Mead to Oxpens Bridge and the Cycling Improvement Schemes. Project Officers were in place to deliver both in a timely way.

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director, Development, said that while the capacity of the project team had been increased, these additional responsibilities might require the appointment of additional staff and or the re-phasing of other work . The bridge project was still at a feasibility stage. There were further stages to go through with opportunities to review viability and costs before finalising.

It was noted that recent cycling improvements over which the Council had little control had not always been successful. Given that the Council would be responsible for these new schemes, it was hoped that they would be of better quality. It was important to take account of local cycle/lobby groups in the design of the improvement schemes. It was also important to remember that the funding for the schemes was finite and should not be spent disproportionately on consultation.

Cabinet resolved to:

**Recommend to Council to:**

- i. **Accept** £7m in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Funds from Oxfordshire County Council for the delivery of city-based infrastructure schemes;
- ii. **Approve** an initial £300,000 feasibility study allocation from the capital programme for 2020-21, for Osney Mead to Oxpens Bridge, financed by available external funds; and
- iii. **Approve** the £1m capital budget for city cycling schemes at Cuckoo Lane, Marsh Lane, Marston Road & Boundary Brook, Oxford, financed by Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Funding.

**2. Delegate** authority to the Executive Director Development, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainable Transport, to agree and enter into grant funding arrangements and contractual terms with Oxfordshire County Council before the funds are transferred from Oxfordshire County Council to Oxford City Council to enable the City Council to deliver a £7m programme of infrastructure projects, financed through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. This funding will include £6m towards the Osney Mead to Oxpens Bridge and £1M for defined city cycling schemes.

## **159. CIL Charging Schedule**

The Head of Planning Services has submitted a report to consider withdrawal of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule Review from examination.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainable Transport, reminded Cabinet that it had previously agreed to submit a new CIL charging schedule as part of the submission of the new Local Plan. In the meantime however new Regulations concerning CIL had been introduced and it was considered prudent to withdraw the proposed schedule from examination while the consequences of the new

Regulations were evaluated. In the meantime the current schedule would remain in place.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Withdraw** the CIL Charging Schedule review from examination; and
2. **Continue** to apply the existing CIL Charging Schedule whilst the process to review it is re-started in the context of the CIL Regulations as updated in September 2019.

## **160. Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 3 2019/20**

The Head of Financial Services and Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to update Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 31 December 2019.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, said the overall position was positive and robust with a favourable variance in the General Fund and a budgeted surplus in the Housing Revenue Account. There were still issues about the late delivery of parts of the capital programme. Some elements of the programme provided useful learning for the future; the unanticipated length of lead in times for the delivery of electric vehicles for example. Delays in progress with some of the Council's Housing Company's schemes was regrettable. This was, perhaps, not surprising given its ambition to be a significant housing provider but one which was starting from scratch. The recent appointment of Non-Executive Directors to the company and appointment of a permanent Managing Director would all be helpful. The Chair noted that the Shareholder would wish to explore the relationship between the company and Oxford Direct Services at its meeting the following week.

Cabinet resolved to:

**Note** the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 31 December 2019.

## **161. Minutes**

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February as a true and accurate record.

## **162. Dates of Future Meetings**

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 15 April
- 10 June
- 15 July
- 12 August

All meetings start at 6pm.

### **163. Matters Exempt from Publication**

Cabinet passed a resolution in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of the following items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **164. Blackbird Leys Development Project - Confidential Appendices**

There was brief discussion of this item in confidential session.

### **165. Annual Report on Gender Pay Gap - Confidential Appendices**

There was no discussion of these appendices in confidential session.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.30 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Wednesday 15 April 2020**