

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 13 April 2022

www.oxford.gov.uk



Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Aziz

Councillor Walcott

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director for Communities and People

Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Bill Chamberlain, Senior Surveyor

Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager (Affordable Housing Supply Lead)

Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillors Turner and Clarkson sent apologies.

135. Declarations of Interest

None.

136. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

137. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None.

138. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

139. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

140. Scrutiny reports

Tom Hudson, scrutiny Officer, presented reports which had been considered by Scrutiny Committee at its informal meeting on 12 April and prior meetings.

Procurement Update

Scrutiny Committee had considered potential changes to the Council's Procurement Strategy, which was currently under review. The Committee's considerations had focused on social value in procurement and learning from good practice, most notably from Preston Council. It had also considered ways of broadening the impact by working with other anchor institutions across the City in order to develop the social value and community wealth-building approach. Recommendations made in relation to specific policies included ensuring that the definition of 'value for money' within the policy was consistent with the community wealth building agenda, and that the Council undertook ethical due diligence checks to ensure compatibility of commercial partners with its own standards.

In the absence of Councillor Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management, the Chair replied that the response which had been provided by the Cabinet Member was broadly in support of the recommendations, and they had been taken on board.

Oxfordshire 2050 Plan

Scrutiny had considered a report on the progress of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050; in particular looking at responses to the most recent consultation exercise. The recommendations had largely centred around two main categories, which were (i) greater transparency and representation in the consultation exercises; and (ii) specific policies around water treatment; parks, play areas and nature reserves; and inequality and deprivation. Scrutiny would be considering a further report in June or July; the recommendations before Cabinet therefore represented an interim response.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, responded that whilst he generally supported the recommendations, he had also included some clarifications. Although the consultation process was important - and the recommendation for a wider demographic mix was accepted – it was not a referendum on options. The tests which a Local Plan had to pass in order to be found sound were set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and were not contingent on the number of representations received.

One of the recommendations had referenced local policies on issues such as play areas, parks and nature reserves. The Cabinet Member responded that these were issues for Local or Neighbourhood Plans, rather than the overarching Oxfordshire 2050 Plan.

The recommendation that the Council works with partners to ensure alignment between Thames Water's future investment plans for water treatment works and those areas outlined in Oxfordshire for growth was endorsed, and the Chair undertook to raise this with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

DSS Discrimination Motion Update

The Housing and Homelessness Panel had considered an update report on progress made against actions sought by Council in a motion passed in July 2021 to strengthen safeguards against DSS discrimination.

The Panel had heard that good progress had been made in almost all areas. The main outstanding action related to the setting up of a tenants' forum, although this was underway. Two recommendations had been made which had related to: (i) extending the reach and awareness of the support in place by publicising this amongst third party organisations such as advice centres and unions; and (ii) asking the tenants' forum to decide whether it wished to include both private rented sector and social tenants simultaneously, or alternatively whether their interests would be better served by splitting into two.

Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless responded that she fully accepted the recommendations, which were solution-focused, and thanked the Panel.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report of the Housing and Homelessness Panel on Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, which represented the outcome of work undertaken by the Panel throughout the year. 19 recommendations had been made, of which many involved formalising or regularising existing tenant involvement activity. Recommendations for new innovations included a suggestion for an overarching Board to discuss tenant and leaseholder issues and report on performance, and a new case management system. There had also been a recommendation relating to the adequacy of structures to enable tenants to challenge areas of spending, so as to meet requirements contained in the Social Housing white paper.

A response to the recommendations would be given at the first Cabinet meeting after the forthcoming election.

The Chair announced that Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer, would shortly be leaving the Council to take up another post, and was attending his final Cabinet meeting. On behalf of Cabinet she thanked him for all of his work, and wished him well for the future.

141. Affordable Housing Delivery Programme

The Head of Housing Services had submitted a report to seek further project approvals and delegations to enable the continued delivery of more affordable housing.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, highlighted the continuing need for affordable housing within the City and presented the recommendations in conjunction with Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the 64 affordable homes that have already been acquired from OCHL as per Table 1, and the 111 affordable dwellings that are currently in delivery as listed in Table 2, in accordance with the previous Cabinet approvals in February 2017 and May 2019.
2. **Give project approval** for the continued acquisition of affordable dwellings developed by OCHL for which budgetary provision has been made in the Council's Housing Revenue Account in respect of:
 - a) The 6 affordable dwellings listed in rows 6 to 10 in Table 3, and
 - b) The development of 80 affordable homes at Almonds Farm, Mill Lane, Marston as laid out in paragraphs 6 to 10.

3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Executive Director for Communities and People; the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery; the Head of Financial Services/ Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance, to approve and facilitate the sale of the council owned site, to facilitate the OCHL development and the subsequent acquisition of affordable dwellings by the HRA, within this project approval for Mill Lane, Marston.
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless; the Head of Financial Services/ Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into agreements and facilitate the agreed purchase by the HRA of all the affordable housing units from OCHL within this project approval, for Mill Lane, Marston (as recommended at 2b above) and the extensions (as recommended at 2a above).
5. **Give project approval** to the proposals, to accept and distribute grant; enter into funding agreements; and any other necessary agreements or contracts, as set out in paragraphs 11 to 13 of this report for Gibbs Crescent, for the purpose of delivering more affordable housing in Oxford, through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programme.
6. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into funding and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivery affordable housing through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programme, within identified budgets, for the Gibbs Crescent scheme listed in this report.
7. **Recommend to Council** that it approves a revision to the general fund capital budget of £2,150,000 to fund the grant payable for the additional 43 affordable homes on the Gibbs Crescent scheme, all of which will be funded by capital grant income from Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (OGD). This to be profiled as £1,935,000 (90%) in 2022/23 for the initial grant payment, and the balance of £215,000 in 2024/25.
8. **Give project approval** to the proposals to enter into funding agreements, and any other necessary agreements or contracts, with Homes England to receive grant under the Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) for the purpose of delivering more affordable housing in Oxford, as set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of this report.
9. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into funding and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivery of affordable housing with Homes England, in accordance with recommendation 8 above.

10. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless; the Head of Financial Services/ Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into agreement and facilitate the agreed purchase by the HRA of the affordable housing units, from OCHL, referenced at paragraphs 16 to 20 of this report, at a cost that exceeds the usual financial parameters for the HRA in respect of the 5 properties listed in Table 3, within further information provided in the confidential Appendix 2, to ensure units remain at Social Rent, within overall budget envelopes for affordable housing buy-backs.

142. Award of a Works Contract for Concrete and Guard Rail Repairs to Balcony Walkways and Access Stairs to Five Apartment Blocks at Blackbird Leys

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval for concrete and guard rail repairs to balcony walkways and access stairs to five apartment blocks at Blackbird Leys; and delegated authority to authorise, sign and award a works contract.

In presenting the report, Cllr Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless, thanked housing officers for their work in identifying sources of funding and enabling the repairs to be progressed. She commented that the work was badly needed, and once completed would improve the living conditions of residents.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the award of a contract for concrete and guard rail repairs to balcony walkways to five apartment blocks at Blackbird Leys; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) to award the concrete repairs contract to suppliers following completion of the procurement competitive closed compliant tender process described in the report.

143. Authority to Tender Contract for Insurance Services

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to seek approval to invite tenders in respect of proposed insurance services contracts to start on 1 January 2023, as required by the Council's Contract Rules, and delegate authority to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance to award a contract(s) following a compliant procurement exercise.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** commencement of a procurement project to renew the insurance contract for the Council and its companies; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance to award a contract for the provision of insurance services to Oxford City Council and group companies from 1 January 2023 for a period of 3 years with an option to extend for up to 2 years (1+1) following a compliant procurement exercise.

144. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022 as a true and accurate record.

145. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

15 June 2022

13 July 2022

10 August 2022

14 September 2022

19 October 2022

16 November 2022

14 December 2022

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 15 June 2022