

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 13 March 2024

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Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Lygo
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Railton
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
David Butler, Head of Planning and Regulatory Services
Lucy Cherry, Policy and Partnerships Officer
Lorraine Freeman, CIL Data Analysis and Reporting Team Leader
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Peter Matthew, Executive Director of People and Communities
Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager
Lan Nguyen, Data Analyst
Carolyn Ploszynski, Head of Regeneration and Economy
Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Carri Unwin, Regeneration Manager
Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property
Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

Apologies:

Councillor Chapman sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

131. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

133. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

134. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

135. Scrutiny Reports

The Scrutiny Committee had met on 4 March 2024 and the Housing and Homelessness Panel had met on 7 March 2024.

Recommendations from those meetings, together with Cabinet Members' responses, were provided in the separately published supplement to the agenda.

With the exception of the Corporate Key Performance Indicator Review, all of the recommendations related to items on the Cabinet agenda and were therefore considered within discussion of those agenda items.

136. Request for Exceptional Circumstances Relief from the Community Infrastructure Levy

The Head of Planning & Regulatory Services had submitted a report to seek approval for a recommendation to award Discretionary Exceptional Circumstances Relief (DECR) from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge on the BMW Mini Plant for a total sum of £832,421.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, provided the background to the recommendation, explaining that BMW had taken the decision to site their production line for the new electric version of the Mini in Oxford. This would result in job opportunities both directly at the plant and within the supply chain and was a welcome development for the city. Planning permission for a large bespoke factory building for production of the new line had recently been granted, and BMW was also to receive a c£80m subsidy from central government for the location of production in Oxford.

The development of the factory buildings for which planning permission had been granted would normally attract a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): a charge levied by local authorities on new development which can then be used to help deliver the infrastructure needed to support development. BMW was seeking an exemption from this levy under the Council's Discretionary Exceptional Circumstances Relief Policy: due to the size of the sum involved, regard was also required to be given to the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Accordingly, the Council had sought and received appropriate legal advice.

Both BMW and Council officers were of the opinion that the request met the criteria required for relief. Given the balance with ensuring the economic viability of the proposal, and the importance of securing the continued presence of BMW in Oxford, Cabinet was recommended to approve the award of Discretionary Exceptional Circumstances Relief from CIL.

Councillor Upton highlighted that one of the scrutiny recommendations had related to seeking BMW's engagement with the Council on other ways in which the company might be able to help the community, and work on this had commenced.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the recommendations to award Discretionary Exceptional Circumstances Relief (DECR) for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge on the BMW Mini Plant for a total sum of £832,421; and
2. **Authorise** the Head of Planning & Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the report and to send the recommended outcome in writing to the claimant, as required by regulation 57(7) of the CIL regulations (as amended).

137. Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Budget 2024-25

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to seek approval for the Preventing Homelessness budget allocations for 2024/25 and the grant of a lease of the Floyds Row premises.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, presented the report which set out the work which had been carried out over the previous year in preventing homelessness. The report also set out the proposed allocation of £1.65m of preventing homelessness budget for 2024/25, most of which (almost £1m) was spent through the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance which commissioned a number of important services across the county. These included the outreach team; supported accommodation such as the hostel O'Hanlon House and dispersed beds across Oxford; and the Somewhere Safe to Stay service.

Councillor Smith outlined the changes (as set out in the report) to the Somewhere Safe to Stay Service which would take place over the coming year, and which would involve the service no longer being delivered by St Mungo's at Floyds Row.

In addition to the services delivered by the Alliance, the Council also supported other services specifically in Oxford, such as extra beds at Mathilda House run by A2 Dominion; The Porch Day Centre, which provided meals and support for those sleeping rough or who were vulnerably housed; and The Gatehouse which helped existing and former rough sleepers.

In response to the recommendation from Scrutiny that the Council should carry forward any underspend of SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) funds and that these should be specifically earmarked for that purpose, Councillor Smith responded that this was partially accepted but that the intention would be to use any underspend on SWEP to cover any overspends on Preventing Homelessness Grant funded services, or similar services, in-year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the allocation of the Preventing Homelessness budget and identified Housing Revenue Account funds to commission homelessness services in 2024/25 as detailed in Table 1 of the report;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to revise the intended programme at Table 1 within the overall budget if required;

3. **Approve** a commitment of £798,532 from the Preventing Homelessness budget to fund supported accommodation provision from Matilda House for the period 1 September 2024 until 31 March 2027;
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services; and the Head of Law and Governance to procure and enter into an agreement for supported accommodation provision to be delivered from Matilda House for the period 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2027;
5. **Approve** the Council entering into the lease of the Floyds Row premises to St Mungo's on the basis set out in this report; and
6. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Property in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management; the Head of Financial Services; and the Head of Law and Governance to approve amendments to the final terms and enter into the lease of the Floyds Row premises on terms compliant with Section 123 Local Government Act 1972.

138. Appropriation of Land at Railway Lane

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to (i) seek approval to appropriate a parcel of land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) at Railway Lane from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account in order that the land could be used for the development of new council housing; and (ii) update Cabinet on certain aspects of the development.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, highlighted that the development would provide 100% affordable housing. 90 new affordable homes would be delivered, with 47 for social rent and 43 for shared ownership.

Cabinet heard that whilst the parcel of land comprised only a small area of the proposed development, its incorporation would allow for a better scheme with an increased amount of housing.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend to Council** the appropriation of the land owned by Oxford City Council that forms part of the development site for housing at Railway Lane from the General Fund (GF) into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at the established red book valuation figure.

139. Regeneration of 38-40 George Street

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek delegated authority for a designated officer to spend additional budget for the regeneration of 38-40 George Street, if the parameters included in the report are met.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, outlined that the project would involve the regeneration of the Council asset at 38-40 George Street into an aparthotel, helping to relieve some of the pressure on the city's short stay housing market. It would also provide a new community space, with involvement from local groups and the community in its development. Work was currently underway to produce a more refined proposal for the scheme which would be acceptable in planning terms. The report before Cabinet sought to provide a financial envelope as the scheme

was still in development; however, there was a need to ensure that the budget was in place. Councillor Turner clarified that Cabinet's approval was only sought with regard to authority to spend within the financial envelope, as the development of any scheme would be subject to the appropriate planning approvals.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Property, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer; the Head of Law and Governance; and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, to agree the final scheme submitted in any planning application and authorise spend up to the maximum budget if parameters set out are met and enter into any property agreements required in connection with 38-40 George Street (see Confidential Appendix 1 for more details).

140. Oxfordshire Food Strategy - City Food Action Plan

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to set out the City Food Action Plan which accompanies the Oxfordshire Food Strategy and to seek Cabinet's endorsement of it.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, highlighted that Cabinet had endorsed the Oxfordshire Food Strategy in June 2022. The report now before Cabinet set out the action plan which would underpin that Strategy's aspirations.

The action plan contained a number of strands, which included: helping people in food poverty; helping people to eat more healthily; binding communities together through participation in growing and sharing food; and reducing the carbon footprint of the food we eat. It had been developed by a multi-partner working group of stakeholders which had included involvement from, amongst others: the Oxford Colleges, food banks, commercial enterprises, community groups and food producers as well as the City Council.

Councillor Upton summarised some the work already being done in this area, which included setting up the Community Food Network; providing fridges and training volunteers for community larders; and supporting families to access Health Start vouchers.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management highlighted that Council had, in July 2023, agreed a motion on Supporting a Community Right to Grow. This had included asking the Council to provide a register of unused public land which could be offered to community groups for cultivation. Councillor Turner commented that production of such a register was proving very difficult, given resourcing constraints. It was therefore suggested that a report be brought to Cabinet setting out options for what could be provided, and the additional resources needed. This could then be considered by Council as part of the wider budget setting process.

In response to the scrutiny recommendations, Councillor Upton advised that these had been mostly accepted. A recommendation to explore the collection of food waste from larger generators of food waste and distribute it amongst food larders had been rejected because of the intensity of resources it would require. Responses to all of the recommendations were included in the separately published supplement.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the City Food Action Plan which is part of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities to make any amendments to the action plan which are necessary following approval of the plan by the other local authority partners;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) to negotiate and enter into the necessary grant agreements to deliver the City Food Action Plan; and
4. **Agree** that a report be brought to Cabinet setting out the options and resources required to address the Council motion of July 2023 on Supporting a Community Right to Grow.

141. Voluntary Adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to propose the Council's voluntary adoption of the socio-economic duty set out under the Equalities Act 2010, but not applied in England, with implementation in a way which minimised legal and resourcing impacts.

Councillor Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships outlined the background to the socio-economic duty (SED) and its voluntary adoption by a number of councils, noting that implementation of the duty had been suggested in a number of areas, including by the Child Poverty Review Group. It offered an opportunity to try to reduce inequality and bring the life chances of all to where they should be.

The report before Cabinet set out the first stage of the process and confirmed the Council's position with regard to the SED. Future work would include developing an expanded Equalities Impact Assessment and confirming the appropriate data measures to assess socio-economic need and associated policy impacts.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Voluntarily adopt** the Socio-Economic Duty (SED), involving the development of a holistic approach, as part of the Council's policy making and decision-making processes. The SED considers and seeks to address the inequalities of outcome that stem from socio-economic disadvantage.

142. Integrated Performance Report for Q3 2023/24

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update Cabinet on finance, risk and corporate performance matters as at 31 December 2023.

Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management, reported that the financial and economic climate remained challenging. Some areas in the General Fund and the HRA were showing overspends, and some slippage had been experienced in the capital programme for a variety of reasons.

Councillor Turner highlighted that the position on temporary accommodation costs in the General Fund had worsened from that shown in the report (which gave the position as at the end of December). Other variances included an overspend on staffing in the

Contact Centre; however, the volume of calls and pressure on the Council's core services continued to increase in the context of the cost of living crisis.

In terms of savings, the Council had had an ambitious programme of efficiencies over recent years which had been successful delivering savings. However, this made the implementation of new savings more difficult. There therefore remained significant financial pressures and operational stresses which would require a focus on delivery of savings and the capital programme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 31 December 2023.

143. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 as a true and accurate record.

144. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

17 April 2024
12 June 2024
10 July 2024
14 August 2024
11 September 2024
16 October 2024

All meetings start at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.52 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 17 April 2024

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.