

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 16 October 2024

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Arshad	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Railton
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive Officer
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director of Development
Tom Hook, Executive Director of Corporate Resources
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager
David Butler, Head of Planning Services
Dr Lan Nguyen, Planning Digital Transformation Officer
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager
Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

Councillor Chapman sent apologies.

Councillor Brown opened the meeting by stating the following.

There are two items on tonight's agenda which relate to land which may or may not come forward for a planning decision. Some members of Cabinet are current members of the Planning Committee and or be members at the point a decision comes before it.

Advice has been provided by the Monitoring Officer to Cabinet on the matter. Cabinet Members feel that they are able to wear both decision-making hats and take each

decision on its merits with an open mind and the in legal terms there is a high bar in terms of predetermination being found.

That said on this occasion some members have decided to recuse themselves from the Cabinet decision, so that they can sit on any future Planning Committees protected from allegations that they have a closed mind because of decisions taken at Cabinet.

As such Item 10 and 11 will be taken at the end of the agenda and the cabinet members concerned will leave the meeting.

Councillor Arshad and Councillor Upton will not attend for the discussion of agenda items 10 and 11.

46. Declarations of Interest

None.

47. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

An address to Cabinet was given from Michael Mowat, a representative from the Save Bertie Park Campaign group:

We challenge the legality of appropriation. The Council argues that appropriation of Bertie Park is legal under Section 122 of the 1972 Local Government Act, that the “land need not have fallen into disuse before it may be appropriated ... (it) may be no longer required for its purpose as (a) recreation ground where the council intends to provide replacement facilities.” (Cabinet report) The Council holds that Bertie Park is “no longer required for its present purpose” as “all current functions of the site ... will continue to be available following the development.” (Cabinet report) We will argue that this is manifestly not the case. Current functions of the site will not continue to be available following the development. Our current recreation ground is a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play. The Council concedes that our concerns that the proposed play and green areas are smaller and will accommodate fewer children are legitimate (EqIA). It asserts that it will re-provide a play area which caters to a range of age groups. Yet every architect’s drawing shows the new recreation ground to be a Local Area for Play. The campaign objects that the area for free play would be reduced by 80%. The Council states “this loss is to be offset by improved accessibility into and around Site B,” which is to become a nature trail, a very “different type of recreational space” (Appendix 1B). There are at least 2 problems with this: Given the close proximity of Kendall Copse, there is no demonstrable need for a nature trail. The Council asserts that site B will include “a safe place for young people to play and socialise” (EqIA), but have not engaged with community concerns, shared by Thames Valley Police, that poor surveillance on Site B makes it unsuitable for unaccompanied children (Cllr Hollingworth, S. Moran). The Council does not hold that there is no need for a free play area, but asserts that the new MUGA will fulfil this purpose (Appendix 1B). We hold this assertion to be Wednesbury unreasonable. The MUGA will be 24% smaller (Appendix 1B). The Council does not engage with our concern that this makes it unfit for its present purpose but argues that the decrease in size is “acceptable when the benefit to the locality of the additional housing to be built on the site is taken into account” (Cabinet report). The downgrading of facilities for young adults is especially concerning given that the new Redbridge Meadow development envisages no provision at all for this age group/demographic. We hold that the consultation was inadequate The Council maintains that they have followed the required statutory processes, including publishing notices in the Oxford Times and making plans available for inspection. They claim to

have considered all received objections. (Cabinet report) The Council has used misleading language in their communication, implying that the recreation ground will be "regenerated" rather than partially built upon. The consultation process was also ineffective. Legitimate concerns were dismissed as matters for the planning stage. Officers instruct that "it is the Planning Authority who will need to have regard for the NPPF when it determines the planning application" (Cabinet report). If the land is to be considered no longer required for its current purpose because that purpose is met by replacement facilities, then the nature of those facilities is key. The Council has told itself that housing is needed at all costs and pre-determined the outcome. It is not genuinely engaging with residents' concerns. (see Objections) We hold that there is a critical need for both social housing and recreation space. The council cites the Local Plan's identification of Bertie Place for residential development, and the contribution new housing would make to addressing homelessness. (Cabinet report) It acknowledges the need for a balance between housing and open spaces but argues that the critical need for affordable housing overrides the legal requirements of section 122 of the 1972 Local Government Act. This approach runs counter to government policy which states that "strong, vibrant and healthy communities", depend not only "a sufficient number and range of homes," but also "accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being." (NPPF8) We recognize the need for affordable housing but question the Council's prioritisation of housing over other considerations on this specific site, when it promotes developments elsewhere that prioritise job creation over housing. We advocate for exploring alternative solutions, and a more balanced approach to development that considers long-term community needs. Summary We have shown that the replacement facilities will not meet current (or future) needs, and that the land is therefore still required for the purpose for which it is currently held. (s122 1972 LGA). This conclusion is supported by extensive data collected by the campaign (Campaign Objection). The council argues that "while there is a difference between the facilities currently available and the new recreation facilities proposed as part of the development, this will not have a disproportionately negative impact on the protected characteristics" (Cabinet report). Officers instruct the cabinet to "strike a balance between different land uses in the light of wider community interests, taking a broad view of local needs" (cabinet report). This is not the legal test. We therefore ask you to reject the recommendation before you, and not to appropriate Bertie Park for this affordable housing scheme.

Following this address, the agenda was adjusted so that the Bertie Place item was taken forward directly after this address was given.

48. Bertie Place Land Appropriation

The Executive Director (Development) submitted a report to Cabinet which sought approval to appropriate land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) currently held for public open space purposes at Bertie Place Recreation Ground (the "Land"). This paper relates to the appropriation of part of Site A to a planning purpose for the objective of building affordable housing.

Councillor Smith presented the report on this matter. She stated that this site has been earmarked for social housing for quite some time. Due to the housing crisis and cost of housing in Oxford, building homes such as those planned for Bertie Place is a dire need for the city. Councillor Smith stated that the housing costs in Oxford are a central reason why a quarter of the city's children live below the poverty line. The social housing planned for Bertie Place will help to address Oxford's housing crisis. Councillor

Smith added that the proposal balances the need to engage with the local community while also addressing Oxford's need for more social housing.

Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead, discussed the consultation that had been undertaken by the Council with the local community at Bertie Place. He stated that this consultation had helped to guide the choices they had made in this proposal, confirming that the land identified was no longer required by the Council for its current purpose, and noting the Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken at Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked about the area to be appropriated. He asked if the open space to be appropriated was to be replaced with space on site A and the open space on site B. He asked for clarity regarding exactly what is being appropriated. He also asked, for the benefit of the meeting, if the Wednesbury Rules of Unreasonableness could be explained.

The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead responded that the land that they are proposing to appropriate can be found in the red line in paragraph five of the report. That is the land being proposed for housing development. Excluded from that is the new location for the playground, as that will be left as a recreation site.

Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance, explained that the Wednesbury Rules of Unreasonableness are a tool that is used in assessing applications for judicial review. The Wednesbury Rules of Unreasonableness can be implemented to demonstrate if a decision is so unreasonable that no rational person could have reached that decision. This is a high test for unreasonableness, above what is commonly used.

Councillor Hollingsworth added that the Wednesbury Rules of Unreasonableness test would show that no rational person could reasonably reach a decision. He stated that in terms of land appropriation, they have two new play areas being opened in new areas and that this decision does not meet the test of being so unreasonable that a rational person would not reach that decision. Councillor Hollingsworth argued that what would be unreasonable would be to accept the proposition brought by the objectors and to prevent housing on this site. He stated that on that basis, he would be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Brown stated that there have been changes in the planned appropriation. For clarity, she asked the Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead to say why it is that the land they are seeking to appropriate was reduced following a consultation with the local community.

The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead said that it is broadly because the intent was always to re-provide, in a smaller area, the playground, MUGA and green space in the proposed scheme. Following the consultation, the current proposal seeks to be clearer in the intent to maintain a recreation site, rather than appropriating all of the land and then re-appropriating part of the site back for recreation.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Note that following the statutory public notification process of the Council's intention to appropriate the Land to planning purposes, three written representations (including one signed by 97 people) were received in response to the public notice; and

2. Approve the appropriation of part of the land in the Council's ownership at Bertie Place Recreation Ground Site A (see Image 1 for plan) ("the Land"), to planning purposes, so as to facilitate its future development for new housing (per planning application number 23/00988/FUL).

The meeting was suspended as the Save Bertie Place campaign exited the session.

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

None received.

50. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

51. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

52. Scrutiny Reports

Councillor Miles presented the reports from Scrutiny. She said that they had discussed the LGA report and that the Scrutiny Committee would like to express gratitude for the work done on this. They asked questions on the LGA report regarding benchmarking in relation to ODS, clarification questions about the long term visions for the facilities in the town hall, and about how communities will be engaged in their regeneration plans.

Councillor Miles stated that on the Annual Air Quality report, Scrutiny had made the following recommendations:

- That the Council writes to Central Government to make representations in relation to securing future additional local government funding to adequately resource the Council's statutory air quality obligations.
- That the Council develops a clear plan to mitigate against reversing the improvements in air quality achieved as a result of the Botley Road closure, when the road is reopened.
- That the Council explores investment in air quality display boards to disseminate key messages to the public related to air quality.
- That the Council considers setting a limit for the number of vehicles it licenses in the city (i.e. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles).

Councillor Brown noted that Councillor Railton had stepped out for this section of the meeting, so was not able to address these comments.

Councillor Miles said that the Scrutiny Committee had been impressed with the work that had happened with air quality. In regard to the ZCOP Expansion Plans, Scrutiny Committee had made the following recommendation:

- That the Council works with the expanded ZCOP to explore the feasibility of there being a mechanism by which organisations that are not located in Oxfordshire, but that have an operational footprint in Oxfordshire, can engage with the ZCOP.

Councillor Miles noted that the Housing and Homelessness Panel had met on the 10th of October, but no recommendations had resulted from this meeting. Councillor Miles thanked the individuals who had attended the meeting.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, said that in relation to Air Quality items, they had been pleased with the work being done. He stated that once Botley Road reopens and traffic through that route resumes, traffic measures will become integral to the Council's Air Quality Action Plan. That plan will cover the second half of the current decade. The Head of Corporate Strategy added that air quality display boards are under discussion as part of this plan. He added that in regard to the private hire vehicle situation, they are limited in what they can do to address that issue. In relation to the ZCOP recommendation, they hope to have a number of new partner systems.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Miles for the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee.

53. Housing Complaint Handling Annual Report 2023/24

The Head of Housing Services had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval for the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report (Housing) 2023/24.

Councillor Smith presented the report and its findings. The central issues raised in complaints were delays in repairs, poor communication, and the handling of damp and mould. Councillor Smith stated that they recognize there is a need for better communication and complaint management and that they are working in a number of areas to make improvements. For example, they are working to:

- Create a dedicated customer care team.
- Create a texting service in ODS.
- Provide enhanced training to staff so they are better equipped to handle complaints.
- Implementing new systems to track complaints and related service issues.

Councillor Smith stated that although they would hope that people would not usually have cause for complaints, it is important for them to be open about their performance and the areas where there is room for improvement. Councillor Smith said they welcome the report and its recommendations.

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager, stated that the second proposal in the current report relates to the requirement for the governing body of the Council to make a response to the report and publish it on the website.

Councillor Hollingsworth commented on the difference between how Council complaints and ODS complaints are logged. He emphasised that they need to ensure that ODS are using the same reporting template as the Council, otherwise it is difficult for them to differentiate what the different issues are.

The Landlord Services Manager said that they are looking into this. They are prioritizing additional key works, in order to better categorize complaints relating to ODS. He

stated that the categorization would be improved in the next year's report. He also said that a breakdown of the different categories of complaints was provided in the leaders meeting earlier in the week.

Councillor Brown added that the amount of work being done helps to put the number of complaints into context. She said that including the number of tenants being managed and issues being addressed would be good in future reports. Councillor Brown stated that including casework would also help to provide further context in future reports. She agreed with Councillor Smith that they would like it if no one had cause to complain, but that they are grateful when people do complain because this allows them to improve their services. Councillor Brown reiterated the comments made by other group leaders that this is a good report, which shows that generally, they are working pretty well, and it is a small percentage of people who are making complaints. Many of the complaints are also addressed in a reasonable manner. Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Smith and the Council Officers for the report.

Councillor Arshad agreed with Councillor Hollingsworth that having consistency in the way that ODS and Council complaints are logged would be beneficial. She also thanked the Officers and Cabinet member for their work on the report.

It was agreed that Councillor Smith would circulate the Governing Body response to this report following the meeting.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Agree the content of the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023/24 (Housing) in Appendix 1; and

Delegate to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to provide a formal response to the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023/24.

54. LGA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan Update and Progress Review Feedback

The Head of Corporate Strategy submitted a report to update the Cabinet on the Council's Action Plan based on feedback and recommendations from the Corporate Peer Review in July 2023; and the Progress Review feedback.

Councillor Brown presented the report. She stated that a year ago the Council underwent a peer review, which led to an action plan, and this report determines if the Council are sticking to the action plan. The original peer review was complimentary and helpful, and Councillor Brown said that they were pleased with the recommendations that had come from it. She added that the action plan was useful in helping the Council to determine the work which needed to be prioritized. In terms of the action plan, the Council had delivered on very nearly all of the actions by the time the peer review came back.

The Head of Corporate Strategy added that of the sixty actions identified, forty-six are complete and fourteen are underway. This means that all actions are either complete or in the process of being addressed. From this stage, their intention is to continue monitoring these actions as a management team. As a couple of the actions extend into the next year, they will incorporate them into the management team's work.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Note the progress and updates in the Council's Action Plan update;
2. Note the Local Government Peer Challenge feedback report of April 2024; and
3. Agree that the remaining tasks in the Council's Action Plan be incorporated into the Council's ongoing work, which will be monitored to completion by the Council's Corporate Management Team.

55. Option Agreement for the Disposal of Land

The Head of Corporate Property submitted a report to Cabinet which requested approval to enter into an Option Agreement for the disposal of land at Foxwell Drive, Headington.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He stated that a proposal has been brought forward to develop land owned by Ruskin College. In order for that development to proceed, access over land owned by the Council is needed. Councillor Turner said that the report proposes granting an option agreement, so that if the development gains permission, the Council can grant the necessary access to land. Questions over whether or not the development area is good or bad will be tested when the local plan comes forward, but that is not the concern of the present meeting. Councillor Turner recommended that Cabinet grant the option agreement.

No questions were asked on this matter.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Give approval to the Heads of Terms for an Option Agreement, as outlined in the report, for the disposal of land at Foxwell Drive, Headington, noting that any development would be subject to planning;
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance, the Head of Financial Services and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management to enter into the Option Agreement; and
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance, the Head of Financial Services and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management to agree the final disposal price of the Land on the basis that it will comply with the requirements of S123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

56. Procurement of new Planning IT and Document Management System

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services submitted a report to Cabinet which sought project approval and delegated authority for the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) to procure a new IT system to replace the Council's Planning and Regulatory Services database and document management system.

Councillor Upton presented the report and stated that the Council has a need to procure a replacement for the systems they currently use. The contract for the current systems used by most departments in the Council expires in early 2026. The Council needs to get a new system before then and there is a chance to implement a new system which makes managing information easier and more efficient. Councillor Upton

said they have had workshops with users, and they have employed a consultant to analyse the specifications that they will need from the new system. So that the Council can keep up to date as legislation evolves, the new system will need to have a degree of flexibility.

David Butler, Head of Planning Services, thanked Lan Nguyen, Planning Digital Transformation Officer, for their and their team's work on this project. He said that he looks forward to hopefully being able to take this proposal out to the market.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked to what degree the digitization of the paper archives will be covered by the budget of the proposed project, or if the digitization efforts would require a new budget. He also asked about the length of the contract and if seven years was the maximum contract length that they could seek to acquire. Additionally, Councillor Hollingsworth stated that the last time the Council undertook a major acquisition project, they learnt several lessons. From this, he asked if they had, as part of the steering group, people who were involved in the last project and if the current work was taking on board the lessons learnt from the last acquisition project.

Councillor Upton responded that they are working to take these lessons on board. The Head of Planning Services agreed that they are taking the lessons from the previous project on board and that they are conscious about the quality of the data they have. He added that they are working through different plans, to ensure they keep their feet to the fire to deliver a new system.

The Head of Planning Services said that the proposed seven-year contract would begin in 2026. In choosing a seven year contract, they considered that a longer contract does offer some security, but that they also would not want to be with a uniform system for too long. They believe that seven years hits a sweet spot with those two issues. However, he added that they will be able to reflect on this at the end of the seven-year period. The Head of Planning Services said that as a part of a separate project, they should be able to bring forward a cabinet report on archive digitization in the near future.

Councillor Munkonge thanked the team for the report. He asked if there were any councils currently using the proposed system and what their plans are for the changeover period.

Councillor Upton clarified that they do not yet know who they are going to appoint. When they are evaluating possible systems, they will look to see which systems have been successful elsewhere. She added that they will ensure there is support during the changeover period.

The Planning Digital Transformation Officer responded that as a part of the procurement process, they will be assessing what the migration process will look like with each possible provider. They will be looking at what possible appointments will do to support the Council as they migrate. They stated that this will be part of their scoring in the procurement process.

Councillor Brown asked if it would be part of the scoring system to see how many councils are using a given system. The Head of Planning Services said that they will be taking references from people who have used a system. Although the system they choose will be somewhat bespoke to the Council, they will be looking for high quality references for each system as a part of the procurement process.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Grant project approval for the procurement of a new IT system to replace the current Uniform and IDOX DMS system used by Planning Services and other departments, as well as the linked Document Management System (the full budget envelope is attached in confidential Appendix 2); and
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer; the Head of Law and Governance; the Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies; and the Cabinet Member for Planning to award and enter into a contract following a procurement process as outlined in the report.

57. Acquisition of Social Rent Properties at Barton Park

The Executive Director (Development) submitted a report to Cabinet which sought approval of the acquisition of properties at Barton Park by the Council, including properties currently owned by Oxford City Housing (Investment) Limited, to be held in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), recommending to Council an in-year budget change to the HRA Capital Budget and associated changes to the HRA Business Plan to fund and operationalise this.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He stated that they have units of social housing and that in the current plan they will be acquired by the investment arm of the Council's housing investment company. However, since that plan was developed the landscape has changed, in particular with matters such as interest rates. Due to the changes seen in interest rates, it is now more advantageous for the Council to hold the units through its HRA than through its housing investment company. For these reasons, he commended the recommendations.

Councillor Upton noted that this report provides fantastic news and that they will have another 350 social houses for the people of Oxford. She said that this is a great piece of work, accomplished jointly between the Council and the developer.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Subject to approval of the budget allocation by Council, agree that:
 - a. the Council take a transfer of the 168 residential units from OCH(I)L at Barton Park into the HRA;
 - b. That the Council acquire the remaining 184 units at Barton Park that units directly from the developer Barton (Oxford) LLP and retain them in the HRA;
2. Note the single member decision of Councillor Linda Smith, dated 19 September 2024, to approve acquisition from the developer into the HRA of the 10 units OCH(I)L were due to acquire between September and 26th November 2024, (included in the 184 homes above);
3. Subject to budget allocation by Council, to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Executive Director (Communities and People); the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities; the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; the Cabinet Member

for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to:

- a. agree the terms of the acquisition, of both the freehold and leasehold interests of the 168 units held by OCH(I)L and any associated land using the valuation approach as set out in Appendix 5;
- b. agree to the purchase of the remaining 184 Social Rented properties and any associated land from Barton Park in accordance with the agreement with Barton Oxford LLP and Oxford City Council dated December 2014;
- c. enter into all agreements necessary, where delegation does not already exist, to facilitate the transfer of the properties at i and ii above, including but not limited to, any documentation necessary to transfer the benefit of any continuing warranties and guarantees relating to the properties to the Council; and

4. Recommend to Council to:

- a. approve a capital budget of £39,732,981 in accordance with the table at para 27, to finance the acquisition of all the Barton properties from OCH(I)L into the HRA (168 units at a cost of £33,375,324), plus a further 29 additional units directly from the developers at a total cost of £6,357,657, funded predominantly from additional borrowing. This additional spend to be profiled into the 2024/25 financial year. The expenditure incurred in respect of the 10 units as per the Single Member decision (Noted in 2 above) will then be transferred and allocated to this new budget;
- b. approve a further revision to the HRA capital budget of £33,359,780 profiled into years 2025/26, 2026/27 & 2027/28, to provide for the retention of the further Social Rent homes from the developer at Barton Park funded predominantly from additional borrowing;
- c. note that the budget for loans to Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) for the future purchases of Barton properties included within the Council's capital programme and HRA income and expenditure for the properties purchased will also be adjusted as necessary to reflect the new ownership. These properties are listed in Appendices 1 and 2, and 3;
- d. note that the total additional borrowing required by the HRA may be lower if other funding is able to be used (for example Retained Right to Buy Receipts) or the council chooses to utilise the option within the agreement with the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) to sell up to 100 of the homes acquired from Barton Park to a third party Registered Provider. Either of these options would be subject to another Cabinet Decision; and
- e. note that in recognition of the volatility of the housing market and, therefore, that there may be an increase in costs of acquisitions in future years that the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer) may alter the budgets for the above acquisitions at ii so as to increase it provided that such increase is possible within the envelope of the approved HRA

capital budget at that point in time and such changes being reported to Council in the quarterly budget reporting / budget update.

58. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on **11 September 2024** as a true and accurate record.

59. Dates of Future Meetings

13 November 2024

11 December 2024

22 January 2025

05 February 2025

Matters Exempt from Publication

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

60. Option Agreement for the Disposal of Land

61. Procurement of new Planning IT and Document Management System

62. Acquisition of Social Rent Properties at Barton Park

The meeting started at 18:00 and ended at 19:12.

Chair

2024

Date: Wednesday 13 November

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.

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Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023/24 (Housing) – Governing Body Response

As a Cabinet, we welcome this report as an opportunity to share the challenges we have faced and the progress we have made in relation to complaints about our services as a landlord. It demonstrates our commitment to listening to citizens, improving our services, and acting with transparency.

We would like to thank the officers who have contributed to investigating and resolving complaints in the last year, as well as the residents who took the time to share their experiences with us.

We acknowledge that the Housing Ombudsman issued the Council with a Complaint Handling Failure Order during 2023/24, and we are reassured that the changes made since then show that we are determined as a Council to learn and to do better. We have noted the trends mentioned in the report, both nationally and at a local level, and we look forward to seeing how this information is used to improve our services and plan for the future. Addressing damp and mould is a priority within the housing sector, and we hope to see these complaints used to inform our strategies for this.

We fully support the plan to improve the recording of complaints to ensure that trends and themes can be picked up on easily, and would like to see reports of these themes published on a regular basis throughout the year, along with how we intend to act on this information.

Whilst there is still a lot of work to be done, we feel this report details the positive improvements being made in our handling of complaints and our learning from them. We look forward to greater visibility of our progress moving forward, and the implementation of the plans detailed in the report.

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