

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET on Wednesday 22 January 2020

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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

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Tim Sadler, Transition Director / Chairman Direct Services Companies
Paul Leo, Interim Director of Housing
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager
Jo Colwell, Service Manager Environmental Sustainability
Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager (Affordable Housing Supply Lead)
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer
Laura Bessell, Benefits Manager
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant

Apologies:

No apologies were received

119. Declarations of Interest

For the avoidance of doubt, Councillor Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest as an employee of the Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in relation to the item on Connecting Oxford.

120. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

Alison Hill chair of CycloX addressed Cabinet on behalf of the Coalition of Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) in relation to the item on Connecting Oxford. CoHSAT warmly welcomed the report as a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity to address travel in the city. She cited the example of a recent initiative in Ghent to limit

the use of motor vehicles in that medieval university city. She congratulated the Council on this example of co-production with the County Council.

121. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda

None.

122. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

123. Items raised by Board Members

None.

124. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer, spoke to the Committee's recommendations in relation to the Mid-point review of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, on behalf of Councillor Bely-Summers who, as Chair of the Housing Panel, had had to send her apologies. The Panel had made three broad recommendations but was generally very supportive and appreciative of the Council's work in this area with the Floyd's Row project being singled out for particular praise. The contribution of members of the Lived Experience Advisory Forum to the Housing Panel Meeting had been invaluable and the Panel was very keen that the practice of working with service users should be embedded. The work of the homelessness team had been praised. The Homelessness Reduction Act had introduced additional and broader responsibilities for the Council and all parts of the Council, not just the homelessness team, should embed the focus on homelessness prevention as a priority.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, had been pleased to support the Panel's recommendations and was particularly keen to embed the contribution of service users in future.

Councillor Gant, in his capacity of Chair of Scrutiny Committee, spoke to the Committee's recommendations in relation to the Committee's report on Oxford's Waterways. He was pleased to note Cabinet's broad support for all of the Committee's recommendations. He drew particular attention to the recommendations in relation to the assets associated with the waterways such as the moorings on Port Meadow and the desirability of gaining a better understanding of the communities who live on the water. While all recommendations had been agreed in principle, some responses did not provide the detail which had been sought (eg in relation to recommendations 5 and 9); this detail would be welcome. While the Committee had not yet asked for it, he noted that the Committee might well request an update at some point.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford, commended the work of the Oxford Waterways Coordinator; many of the Committee's recommendations were already in his workplan. With particular reference to recommendations 4 and 5 she would speak to other relevant Cabinet colleagues to agree how best to take forward.

125. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020-21

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to consider feedback from the recent consultation on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to agree the principles of the new scheme to be drawn up for approval by Council on 27 January 2020.

Councillor Marie Tidball, Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities, introduced the report, drawing particular attention to the three changes originally proposed and the subsequent outcome of the consultation. The following changes to the scheme would be introduced: changes that affect Council Tax Reduction (CTR) to be applied from the date of the claim (rather than the following Monday); and, leaving a CTR claim open for 6 months while there is a Universal Credit application in place. The proposal to introduce a banded income approach for working age claimants would not, however, be introduced yet but would be considered when preparing a scheme for 2021/22. She reminded the Cabinet that the Council was one of the few which still provided a scheme which, in some circumstances, would accept 100% liability for Council Tax, a clear demonstration of its commitment to financial inclusion.

Laura Bessell, the Benefits Manager, confirmed that all respondents to the consultation had been replied to. In relation to future proposals for banding, she said that no options had been ruled out and it could be devised in many and various ways, something which would be facilitated by the forthcoming introduction of a new computer system. Any proposals would be underpinned by rigorous Equality Impact Assessments to evaluate which options offered the greatest beneficial impact.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the outcome of the consultation on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Financial Services to draft the details of the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 in accordance with paragraphs 6-9 of this report, so that it can be submitted to Council for approval at its meeting on 27 January 2020; and
3. **Recommend** Council to resolve to adopt the new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21.

126. Connecting Oxford

The Executive Director, Development had submitted a report to support further scheme and business case development of Connecting Oxford proposals.

Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainable Transport introduced the report. These were significant and far reaching proposals, prepared and co-produced with the County Council. The need for them could be well summed up by the point that “doing nothing was not an option.”

The Council had been faced with difficult choices in the past about traffic management in the City and must do so again now. A failure to do so would have detrimental social, economic and health impacts. It was well evidenced that poor air quality affected physical and mental health and educational attainment. It had become clear that a

significant number of people who would otherwise ride bicycles in the City were deterred by the fear of having to share the road with motor vehicles and the absence of safe and adequate cycle lanes. One consequence of congestion in the City was that bus companies were having to provide about one third more buses than there was demand for in terms of number of seats and passenger numbers were falling. Some bus services had already been lost and there was a risk that others might follow. There was a need to reallocate the finite amount of road space to other users. The introduction of bus gates should reduce car traffic by about 40%, so lessening congestion, increasing the rate of flow and removing the need for bus lanes, provide an opportunity to improve the quality of dedicated cycle lanes and the pedestrian environment. The other important element of the proposal would be the introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy. It was clear that a lot of detailed work had yet to be done, a lot of questions to be asked and challenges to be addressed. In the meantime it was important not to lose sight of the overarching reasons behind and the need for significant changes to traffic management in the City.

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager, emphasised the significance of the proposals as a joint initiative with the County Council, the Cabinet of which had endorsed them the previous day. The proposals would be funded for the most part by the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and further Government funding would be bid for. The initial consultation had generated over 3000 responses, the majority of which were from within the City and the majority of which recognised the need for action.

Cabinet members were very supportive of the proposals and in discussion raised a number of matters which would need to be addressed as the detail was worked up. These included:

- The importance of phasing elements of the proposals, so that, for example the introduction of bus gates would coincide with the introduction of improved services across the City.
- The desirability of close partnership with the bus companies.
- Buses were an important shared community space and invaluable to, among others, those experiencing mental health challenges. An improved service would enable many more to make use of them and contribute to their independence.
- Consideration should be given to the introduction of a young person's bus pass within the City.
- Cycle lanes were needed which were not only safe but fully accessible to wheelchair bicycles and cargo bicycles.
- There would, inevitably, be many arguments for various categories of user to be excluded from the proposals restrictions. Viewed singly they would often seem deserving. Great care and resolve would be needed to ensure that exceptions did not start, collectively, to undermine the overarching ambition of the proposals and the effectiveness of the scheme.
- Transparency of the evidence behind the proposals would remain important.
- The location of the bus gates was important and care should be taken to ensure that they did not, inadvertently divide communities.

While there was no consensus for it at the moment, Cabinet agreed that there would be merit in exploring the potential for expanding the Work Place Parking Levy beyond the area currently proposed and that this should be pursued in discussion with partners.

Cabinet resolved to:

Endorse the overall approach proposed as the basis for further scheme and business case development of Connecting Oxford proposals in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council.

127. Use of s106 and Retained Right to Buy Receipts to increase the provision of more affordable housing

The Head of Housing Services had submitted a report which sought project approval and delegations to enable the spending of Retained Right to Buy Receipts and s.106 funding for the purpose of delivering, or enabling the delivery of, more affordable housing, through new build or acquisition activity.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report which brought together a number of different funding streams to enable the delivery of more affordable housing through new build or acquisitions. This amounted to a little over £17m over the next two years and was estimated to provide about 200 new affordable rented Council homes. He was pleased to be able to report the recent agreement to purchase 45 homes for social rent from a developer in Littlemore.

Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager, said the proposals, with particular reference to the delegations, would enable the Council to respond more swiftly than would otherwise be the case to opportunities for the purchase of affordable housing which might arise.

The Chair was pleased to see this initiative which was another means to address the pressing need for affordable housing.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Give project approval** to the proposals, to purchase accommodation or issue grants, as set out in this report, and within the allocated capital budgets, for the purpose of delivering more affordable housing in Oxford;
2. **Note** that the proposals set out in this report, in relation to Retained Right to Buy Receipts (RRTBRs) - £13.2m in the HRA in 20/21, and £2.35m in 21/22; Recycled Capital Grant Funds (RCGF) - £370k in the HRA in 20/21; and s.106 funds - £3m in the General Fund in 20/21; have informed the budget setting process and that the implications for budgets are included within the 2020/21 consultation budget;
3. **Recommend** to Council that a capital budget for £3m of expenditure, subsidised using RRTBRs, is approved in 2019/20, to enable an off-plan purchase of Social Rented homes, this sum being effectively brought forward from the overall

£13.2m identified in 2020/21 in the consultation budget, which would then reduce to £10.2m in 20/21 accordingly;

4. **Delegate authority to the Director of Housing**, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, **to enter into agreement for the award of grant, contractual arrangement and/or spend**, for the provision of additional affordable housing in perpetuity, using Retained Right to Buy Receipts or Recycled Capital Grant funding;
5. **Delegate authority to the Head of Planning Services**, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, **to enter into agreement for the award of grant, contractual arrangement and/or spend**, for the provision of additional affordable housing in perpetuity, using s.106 funds; and
6. **Delegate authority** to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Asset Management, and Affordable Housing, to approve any property or development purchases over £500,000 for affordable housing, within this project approval.

128. Energy & Water Supply Procurement 2020 – 2024

The Transition Director had submitted report to approve parameters and approach for the procurement of energy and water for the period period 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2024 with a view to Oxford City Council becoming a net zero carbon council in terms of energy usage.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford, introduced the report, which represented just one very tangible outcome of the Council's declaration of a climate emergency a year previously and the ambition expressed by the Citizens' Assembly. It provided a good example of looking at what the Council already does with fresh eyes and how it might be done differently.

The Chair thanked all those involved with this important strand of work for the Council.

Cabinet resolved, subject to the necessary budgetary provision being agreed at the Council meeting on 13 February, to:

1. **Approve** the procurement strategy of seeking the purchase of certified renewable electricity and renewable gas supplies;
2. **Authorise** officers to explore options to better stimulate investment in new local renewable energy generation through a corporate Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) approach for the council's energy supplies;
3. **Approve** (subject to 2 above) the use of the Kent County Council energy procurement framework via its trading arm LASER (the specialist public sector energy buying organisation) for up to a further four years (2020-2024) to procure the Council's energy and water contracts from October 2020;
4. **Approve** the continuation of the energy purchasing approach - a flexible contract for larger electricity and gas supplies, and a fixed term fixed price contract for smaller energy consuming sites and water supplies;
5. **Approve** the purchase of appropriate offset products to mitigate the impact of vehicle fuel purchase;

6. **Note** the continuing impact of the Council's Carbon Reduction Programme in reducing the need for offsetting in the future and the overall energy and fuel requirements to support the council's operation; and

7. **Note** that with the combination of the procurement of renewable energy, certified and verifiable offsetting of fuel impacts and a programme to reduce energy consumption in place the Council can rightly claim to be Net Zero in terms of Green House gases associated with its operations.

129. Flag flying on World Refugee Day

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval to fly the "City of Sanctuary" flag annually on 20 June for World Refugee Day and on 18 December for International Migrants' Day, following a cross-party motion passed by Council on 22 July 2019.

The Chair noted that, notwithstanding the Council motion, final decisions about which flags should be flown by the Council rested with Cabinet.

Cabinet resolved to:

Authorise the flying of the City of Sanctuary flag annually on 20 June for World Refugee Day and 18 December for International Migrants' Day.

130. Minutes

The Board resolved to APPROVE the amended minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 as a true and accurate record.

131. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 12 February
- 11 March
- 15 April
- 10 June
- 15 July

All meetings start at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.35 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 12 February 2020

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