

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET on Wednesday 13 November 2019



Committee members:

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

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Aileen Carlisle, Interim Executive Director (Communities and Customers)
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager (Affordable Housing Supply Lead)
Carolyn Ploszynski, Planning Policy and Place Manager
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant

Apologies:

Councillors Hayes and Tidball sent apologies.

87. Declarations of Interest

None.

88. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

90. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

91. Items raised by Board Members

None.

92. Scrutiny Committee Reports

The Scrutiny Officer spoke to the report of the Housing Panel which had considered the report on Community Led Housing (CLH) Delivery and Approval to Dispose of Land for Housing (Agenda item 8), first passing on apologies on behalf of Councillor Bely-Summers who, as Chair of the Panel, would otherwise have introduced the report. Separately from the report the Panel wished to place on record its appreciation of and support for the work done by the Council in addressing the challenges of homelessness in the City.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, thanked the Panel for its report and for including three people who had experienced homelessness in its deliberations. He was pleased to be able to support the Panel's first recommendation subject to the necessary proviso that, as a community led initiative, the CLH Regional Hub and CLH groups, needed to take the lead. He was pleased, also, to be able to support the second recommendation in principle, tempered only by the need for the Council to be taking decisions in accordance with its Allocations Policy where it had nomination rights.

Councillor Gant, in his capacity as Chair of Scrutiny Committee, said the Committee had asked for comments to be fed back in relation to Cabinet's responses to two of the Committee's previous recommendations. The Committee had recommended that clarity be provided on which (if any) corporate performance indicators include data from the Council's companies. It had also asked how many members aged over 60 were due to lose their existing discount for leisure services and would not qualify for an alternative concession. These recommendations had been agreed without comment, so the requested clarity had not yet been provided.

Councillor Gant spoke to the Committee's report on the Workforce Equality Report and Update on the Equalities Action Plan (Agenda item 11). The Committee had had an interesting and robust discussion.

Councillor Chapman, Cabinet Member for Communities and Customer Focused Services, agreed that it had been a good discussion on a subject which drew cross-party support. He was pleased to be able to support all of the Committee's recommendations subject to the need to give some thought to what action was required in relation to recommendation 3 on structural discrimination training, given that recruiting managers already receive training on unconscious bias. In relation to recommendation 6, he agreed that it would be sensible for the Oxford Direct Service's Shareholder to receive a comprehensive briefing in due course.

93. Community Led Housing Delivery and Approval to dispose of land for housing

The Head of Housing had submitted a report to publish commissioned research into how Community-Led Housing (CLH) could be viably delivered in Oxford; to consider approaches to assisting the development of more Community-Led Housing; and to seek approval to lease the interest in a plot of land, for the provision of additional affordable housing, paying a grant to enable this.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, introduced the report noting that the small plot of land referred to in the report was unlikely to be suitable for other development but did offer an opportunity to trial this initiative. CLH would provide an addition to social housing. He noted that the one recommendation from the Routes to Delivery report which was not supported by the Council was that S.106 agreements be used to require provision of CLH housing sites on larger developments because of the potential risks that further requirements could place on those developments and hence social housing provision.

Charlie Fisher of Transition by Design addressed Cabinet briefly, noting the significant impact good housing/housing development design could have on health and that this should inform decisions about both. Funding was being sought via the Growth Deal to further development of CLH.

Cabinet commended the report. There was agreement that it was important to think creatively and positively about how communities will work and not, simply, about putting “roofs over peoples’ heads,” important though that was.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the Routes to Delivery report and endorse the Council response, supporting the initiatives proposed in response to the recommendations made, and the shared ambition of assisting the development of more Community-Led Housing in Oxford and Oxfordshire;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer and the Council’s Monitoring Officer, to enter into a long lease, for the sum of £35,800, of a plot of land, as detailed in this report, to the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust, or an alternative Registered Provider (within the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing Partnership), for the provision of additional affordable housing in perpetuity; and
3. **Note** that the Head of Financial Services will use standing delegations to vire £35,800 of capital funds, to enable the award of a grant to the Oxford Community Land Trust, or an alternative Registered Provider, for that sum, to recompense for the cost of the land.

94. Oxford Stadium

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to put in place a mechanism for the Council to assist in bringing forward the Oxford Local Plan 2036 proposals for Oxford Stadium if the policy approach to retain the stadium is supported by the Planning Inspector examining the Local Plan.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport, introduced the report which represented one of the last pieces of work prior to examination of the Local Plan later in the month. It had become evident that planning policies were now being judged, very clearly, against deliverability and this would be a key consideration in relation to this matter. The Local Plan policy seeks to retain the stadium as a sports venue for greyhound and speedway racing together with sporting leisure and community uses while, also, allowing for the development of some housing.

The next step in the process would be the Local Plan hearings and the view of the Planning Inspector which, if not supportive of the report's proposals, was likely to be the end of the matter. If, on the other hand, the proposals are accepted by the Inspectors, then the recommendations of the report would be pursued. The Council was not looking to take the site into public ownership but instead act to facilitate the policies coming forward and would only ever entertain the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order as a very last resort.

The Planning Policy & Place Manager said that contributions by members of the public to the Local Plan hearings were at the discretion of the Inspectors. It would be unusual for those who had not made submissions at the Regulation 19 consultation stage to be able to contribute at the examination stage but anyone wishing to do so could write to the Inspectors. She noted however that the deadline for asking to appear at the examination hearings set by the Inspectors had passed on 01 November. She explained that hearings would be held in public and anyone could attend to observe.

Cabinet members were appreciative of the work being done by Councillor Hollingsworth and officers to try and enable this important asset being brought back into use and encouraged members of the local community to contact the Inspector to let their voices be heard.

Cabinet resolved, (subject to the Local Plan policy for Oxford Stadium (SP52) to retain the Stadium with enabling residential development being found sound by the appointed Planning Inspector,) to:

1. **Seek** to procure a development partner / operator, with a viable business plan, to try to acquire the Oxford Stadium by agreement and deliver the requirements set out in Policy SP52 but to indemnify the Council for the associated costs; and,
2. **Confirm** that if the Oxford Stadium cannot be acquired by agreement, then, as a last resort it would be willing, if necessary, to use its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to acquire the site; and to
3. **Note** that if an option to use CPO powers was to be pursued a further report would need to be submitted to Cabinet to seek approval for a detailed scheme for the redevelopment of this site demonstrating that the legal and policy tests for the use of its CPO powers had been satisfied. This would need to be accompanied by a recommendation to Council to seek authority to set up a budget for any additional costs for the implementation of its CPO powers, which would be redeemed from the development partner.

95. Local Development Scheme

The Head of Planning had submitted a report to present the updated programme for the preparation of documents that will form the Council's Local Plan for approval.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Transport & Sustainable Transport, introduced the report which sought simply to agree an update programme for preparation of documents which will form the Council's Local Plan.

Cabinet resolved to:

Approve the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2019-22

96. Workforce Equality Report and update on the Equalities Action Plan

The Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to seek approval for the publication of the annual Workforce Equality Report 2017 to 2019; report progress on the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021; and present proposals for additions to the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focussed Services introduced the report which, in broad terms, told a positive story, looking back at progress over the previous 12 months and forward through the lens of Equalities Action Plan.

Notwithstanding the progress noted, he drew attention to two areas which warranted particular attention. The proportion of Council employees from the BAME community had risen by 1% to 13% over the last year and the number of applications from the BAME community had risen as had the number of new starters. The proportion was, however, far short of the percentage of the economically active members of the BAME community in the City (c. 18% on the basis of the most recent 2011 census data). Furthermore, the number of BAME employees in senior positions was very small.

The use of the 2011 census data for this purpose as a baseline was a function of government reporting requirements. There were questions about its suitability, not least because the percentage of economically active members of the BAME community was widely recognised as being much greater than 18% which would, in turn, mean that the deficit was much greater. Councillor Chapman agreed that alternative means of establishing the baseline figure should be explored.

The second area which warranted attention was the proportion of women in senior positions. While 59% of the workforce were women, they were under represented in roles above grade 8 and higher management roles.

There would, therefore, be a focus on improving performance in both of these challenging areas. Councillor Chapman said the Scrutiny input had been helpful and, more generally he sensed a 'change of atmosphere' and a shared recognition of the importance of having a diverse and representative workforce, driven by the need for one which can connect with the local community and, in turn, provide a good service.

The Chair thanked Councillor Chapman, Councillor Aziz (Member Champion for Representation in the Workforce) and the officers for all they were doing in relation to this important area of work.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Workforce Equality Report 2017 to 2019;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Business Improvement to publish the Workforce Equality Report and to make any typographical changes as may be required before publication; and
3. **Note** the current position with the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021 (developed from the Workforce Equalities Report 2015 to 2017); and
4. **Approve** the continuing and emerging actions to be included in updated Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021, which will be developed into a project plan for action.

97. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the amended minutes of the meeting held on 09 October as a true and accurate record.

98. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 19 December
- 22 January
- 12 February
- 11 March

All meetings start at 6pm.

99. Matters Exempt from Publication

100. Community Led Housing Delivery and Approval to dispose of land for housing

There was no discussion of this confidential appendix.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.55 pm

Chair

Date: Thursday 19 December 2019