

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET on Wednesday 12 February 2020

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Committee members:

Councillor Brown (Chair)

Councillor Turner

Councillor Clarkson

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Tidball

Councillor Linda Smith (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Upton

Also present:

Councillor James Fry

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Paul Leo, Interim Director of Housing

Nadeem Murtuja, Interim Executive Director for Communities

Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager

Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology and Information Officer

Rachel Lawrence, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager

Richard Wyatt, Senior Planner

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also present:

Councillor James Fry

Apologies:

None.

132. Declarations of Interest

None.

133. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

A question had been posed by a member of the public. The question and the response to it are attached to these minutes.

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

None.

135. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

136. Items raised by Board Members

None.

137. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer, addressed Cabinet, noting apologies from Cllrs Gant and McManners in their capacities as Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Council Strategy (item 11 on the Agenda). The Committee had seen the pre-consultation iteration of the strategy. Timetabling constraints had, regrettably, meant that the Committee was unable to see the version of the strategy which was now before Cabinet. The Committee's response was therefore limited to some general observations with no specific recommendations. The Committee had been particularly pleased to note the increase in the number of people who had engaged with the consultation compared with previous consultation exercises and the general support shown by the consultation for the individual proposals.

The Chair repeated the apology she had given to the Scrutiny Committee for the timetabling difficulties associated with the production of this report occasioned by the recent General Election. She noted that it had been a very effective consultation exercise and had included the opportunity for an early sight of the pre-consultation draft by a number of groups.

Plans for Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) The Committee had considered the Council's plans for the introduction of the ZEZ at some length and concluded with 5 recommendations. The Committee was generally supportive of the proposals and, indeed, was advocating that the zone should be expanded and that the move to it should be swifter. The Committee had some concerns however about the nomenclature of the ZEZ and about the efficacy of the proposals for enforcement using handheld ANPR devices.

Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon, said that while there had been a very full discussion at the Committee he had to register his concern that aspects of the Committee's report did not accurately reflect the views or position of the Council. He drew particular attention to paragraph 9 (nomenclature of the ZEZ – there is no evidence of ambiguity about the use of ZEZ); paragraph 11 (potential use of geofencing – the technology is not yet available); and paragraph 16 (use of ANPR – there is no evidence to support the concern that the current proposal for its use will be ineffective).

Customer Experience (item 12 on the Agenda). The Committee had been very supportive of the principles behind the proposals and its recommendations came from an enthusiasm for the topic. The Committee had been particularly keen to advocate a

greater understanding of the Council's customers so as inform the development of services for them. It was also keen that similar strategies should be adopted by Oxford Direct Services. The Committee's discussion had strayed into a wider consideration of the desirability of a citizen's engagement strategy, while recognising that this was outside the scope of the Customer Experience Strategy.

Performance Monitoring The Committee's approach to Performance Monitoring was much improved. Councillor Fry was now undertaking preparatory work with relevant officers, on a regular basis, before Committee meetings so as to facilitate more effective discussion at them.

Commentary on the recommendations from Scrutiny was not available at the time of publication. They are, however, attached to these minutes.

Councillor Fry spoke in his capacity as Chair of the Budget Review Group, to the Scrutiny reports on the budget and Capital Strategy in a confidential session at the end of the meeting.

138. Budget 2020-21 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-22 to 2023-24

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the outcome of the budget consultation and agree the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021-22 to 2023-24 and 2020-21 Budget for recommendation to Council.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, gave a brief introduction to the report which would be subject to wider discussion and debate at the following day's Council meeting. The proposals now before Cabinet included very few changes from the pre-consultation version. He drew attention however to the Government's recent decision to combine two major rough sleeping programmes: the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Rapid Rehousing Initiative and the consequential addition of a further recommendation to those given in the report. The background to this recommendation is attached to these minutes and the new recommendation is included in those given below.

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services, noted that the Government had now published its final Local Government Finance Settlement with no significant changes from the provisional settlement.

Cabinet resolved to:

Recommend that Council resolves to:

1. **Approve** the 2020-21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices 1-10 of the report, noting:

- (a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £24.183 million for 2020/21 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 1.99% or £6.13 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £313.92 per annum subject to confirmation of the referendum levels contained in paragraph 5 of the report
- (b) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21 of £44.455 million and an increase of 2.70% (£3.06/wk) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2020 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £105.32 as set out in Appendix 5 of the report
- (c) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6 of the report
2. **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7 of the report;
3. **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 13- 15 of the report;
4. **Approve** a loan facility of up to £500k for working capital to the Council's Joint Venture, Oxford West End Development (Oxwed) at terms to be agreed by the Council's Section 151 Officer as referred to in paragraph 38 of the report;
5. **Approve** the payment into the County Council Pension Fund of £5 million as referred to in the Consultation Budget and paragraph 23 of the report; and
6. **Note** the changes to Business Rates reliefs and discounts for 2020-21 as referred to in paragraph 12 of the report.
7. **Agree** the additional unbudgeted amount of RSI grant of £840k for 2020-21 is added to the Council's Homelessness earmarked reserve.

139. Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 to 2024/25.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report. The strategy was not materially different from that for the current year.

In response to a question he said there was no evidence of a major impact from the Corona virus, noting that the Council held a good level of reserves/balances to mitigate any unexpected demands.

Cabinet resolved to:

Recommend that Council approves:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 as set out in paragraphs 18 to 64 of the report and the Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 – 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
2. The Borrowing Strategy at paragraphs 26 to 38 of the report;
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at paragraphs 39 to 41 of the report which sets out the Council's policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account; and
4. The Investment Strategy for 2020/21 and investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 42 to 63 and Appendix 1 of the report.

140. Corporate Strategy 20-24 - final draft for approval

The Assistant Chief Executive had submitted a report to seek approval for the Council Strategy 2020-2024.

The Chair introduced the report by noting that the strategy had been referred to by a number of titles and that it would be helpful to be clear that it was the Council's Corporate Strategy and that it should simply be referred to as the Council Strategy. The strategy had been written in a way to be as meaningful and accessible to as many people as possible. Early engagement had ensured something which was properly representative of the Council's visions and values.

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager, said the input from Scrutiny Committee had been helpful. The strategy would be underpinned by the Annual Business Plan and associated KPIs, which would come to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the objectives of the strategy would, in turn, inform Council employees' personal work objectives.

The Chair thanked all those who had contributed to this important piece of work.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the report on the public and stakeholder consultation on the draft Council Strategy 2020-24;
2. **Agree** revisions made to the draft Council Strategy in response to the consultation;
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications in consultation with the Council Leader to make further minor amendments before adoption by Council;
4. **Recommend Council to**
 - A) **adopt** the Council Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to the report;
 - B) **delegate** authority to the Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications in consultation with the Council Leader to make further minor amendments as required prior to its publication in March 2020;
 - C) **note** that Key Performance Indicators agreed by Cabinet will be inserted as a schedule in the Council Strategy.

141. Customer Experience Strategy

The Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to seek approval of the Customer Experience Strategy which provides the Council with a clear vision for the future state of customer and digital engagement and the technology required to support achieving the vision.

Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Facing Services, introduced the report. Customers have increasingly high expectations of their engagement with the Council. The strategy represented an important step to becoming more “slick and professional” and included important elements to build staff skills and capabilities. It was important to recognise that digital technology was an enabler and not an end in itself as was the importance of ensuring that those without access to digital technology were not disenfranchised.

Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology and Information Officer, said the strategy would replace three, separate, previous strategies. As the effectiveness and efficiency of day to day engagement with the Council improves through application of the strategy, so it would release the capacity of staff to deal with more complex and challenging cases. The last two years had seen a great improvement in the basic IT infrastructure of the Council and it was well placed to proceed with this strategy.

In response to a question about the quality of the digitisation of some planning material, he said that where large quantities of material had to be digitised a balance had to be struck between the pace and quality. Poor quality would be addressed as part of an iterative improvement process over time.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Customer Experience Strategy and Action Plan 2019/22 at appendix 1 of the report; and
2. **Note** and approve the Public Customer Experience Strategy 2019/22 Summary at appendix 2 of the report.

142. Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds for 2020/21

The Interim Director of Housing had submitted a report to approve the allocation of homelessness prevention funds for 2020/21 with the purpose of helping to meet the objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018/21.

Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, introduced the report, which set out the proposed allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funding for the coming year. The report detailed the many and various purpose to which this funding was put such as initial engagement and assessment; preventing homelessness; and supported accommodation. In relation to the latter she was pleased to be able to report an increase in the number of beds compared with previous year (from 234 to 256). She was also pleased to report that the latest snapshot of the number of people sleeping on the street (25, measured on one night in January) was encouraging. While the objective remained of ensuring that no one should have to sleep on the City’s streets,

this latest figure represented a considerable improvement on the November 2019 figure of 43 and was the lowest since 2015.

The Chair thanked Rachel Lawrence and members of her team for their work in this important area.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2020/21 as outlined in paragraph 36 to 48 and in Appendix D of the report; and
2. **Delegate** to the Interim Director of Housing in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required.

143. Headington Neighbourhood Forum (re) Designation

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to approve the re-designation of Headington Neighbourhood Form in respect of the original designated neighbourhood area.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport said the report fulfilled the necessary function of re-designating the Headington Neighbourhood Forum given that the original designation expired after a period of 5 years.

Cabinet resolved to:

Approve the re-designation of Headington Neighbourhood Form in respect of the original designated neighbourhood area.

144. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January as a true and accurate record.

145. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

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

All meetings start at 6pm.

146. Matters Exempt from Publication

Cabinet passed 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 the presence of the press or public could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

147. Appendix to Scrutiny Budget Review Group Report

148. Capital Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.25 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 11 March 2020