

Remote meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 11 November 2020

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown (Chair)

Councillor Hayes (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Clarkson

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Tidball

Councillor Turner (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Upton

Also present:

Councillor James Fry

Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive

Paul Leo, Interim Director of Housing

Nadeem Murtuja, Interim Executive Director for Communities

Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager (Affordable Housing Supply Lead)

Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

None.

81. Declarations of Interest

None.

82. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

84. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

85. Items raised by Board Members

None.

86. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Cllr Bely-Summers spoke to following reports of the Housing and Homelessness Panel.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Private Rented Sector

The meeting of the Panel on 03 August 2020 had benefited from the views and insights of two members of the Oxford Tenants Union. Oxford residents spend the biggest proportion of their income on rents compared with the rest of the UK. The Panel felt it was appropriate to focus on tenants' rights during the pandemic and the support available from the Council to tenants at risk. All but one of the Panel's recommendations had been agreed by Cabinet.

Housing Performance Q1

The meeting of the Panel on 8 October 2020 received a presentation outlining the key activities of the Housing Services team for the first quarter. The Panel made three recommendations concerning the Council's Winter provision for rough sleepers, with particular reference to those without recourse to public funding and those escaping domestic violence, all of which had been agreed by Cabinet.

Recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Rough Sleeping report

The meeting of the Panel on 05 November 2020 considered a report it had commissioned concerning the Council's activity regarding rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Panel heard that the Government had allocated £1m to the Homeless Team for the purposes of Move On accommodation. The Panel raised a number of issues concerning provision for rough sleepers and had concluded with one recommendation which had been agreed by Cabinet.

The Chair thanked Cllr Bely-Summers and the Panel for their contribution to this important area of work.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, confirmed Cabinet's support for the recommendations flowing from the first report presented by Cllr Bely-Summers. The recommendations had covered areas of work already being broadly addressed by the Housing Services team but which were acknowledged to be

of sufficient importance to warrant reaffirmation of the need for them and to ensure that they were being done as well as possible. It had been very helpful to have the Panel and its non-Councillor member probing the Council's work in this area before going on to make the detailed recommendations they had. The final recommendation (that the Leader should send a letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the need for government to introduce practical policy changes to increase protection for renters etc) had already been addressed but as a letter sent by someone other than the Leader. The Chair added that she would, nonetheless, be happy to send such a letter herself, also.

In response to a question it was confirmed that there had been no discussion about Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) or the spend of that budget at these Panel meetings. The Welfare Reform Team had however been monitoring the spend of the DHP budget and recent Scrutiny recommendations about the revised DHP addressed the need to improve the messaging about its availability.

Cllr Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, confirmed Cabinet's response to the second and third reports presented by Cllr Bely Summers. The meetings with the Panel had been helpful. In relation to the recommendation concerning a review of the suitability of its emergency accommodation to those rough sleepers who have specific vulnerabilities he was able to add that one of the properties being prepared as part of the Next Steps accommodation programme would be for women only. He went on to emphasise that the Winter accommodation for rough sleepers in the City was for everyone, including those without recourse to public funds.

Cllr Fry spoke to the following reports of the Finance & Performance Panel

Recommendations concerning Performance Monitoring 2020/21 Q1

The Panel had been concerned at the lack of distinction between long and short term staff absences and he was pleased to see that there would be regular reporting of the matter in future and recognised that the suggestion of targets for these measures was not really practical.

The recommendation that the Council should investigate ways of measuring and monitoring productivity which take homeworking and the variable suitability of homeworking environments into account was already in hand.

Recommendations concerning the Integrated Performance Report 2020/21 Q1

The Panel had recommended cessation of the use of 'optimism bias' in relation to capital budgets and slippage. Cabinet had agreed to this, looking to introduce, instead, a risk rating assessment of each project. Similarly the Panel had recommended the desirability of a clearer distinction between slippage and overspend in the case of capital projects. Cabinet had agreed to this too.

Cllr Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, agreed that reporting on the capital spend at a project level was preferable. It was important to recognise the practical challenges of accurately forecasting capital projects and the need for project managers to submit accurate and not overly optimistic forecasts for individual schemes at the outset. The present year had, inevitably, brought with it additional challenges about the timing of delivery.

87. Project Approval and Allocation of Next Steps Accommodation Programme Funding for Affordable Housing Delivery & Homelessness Prevention

The Head of Housing Services had submitted a report to seek project approval and delegations to enable capital spend, under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, using grant received from Government for the purpose of acquiring additional Council housing for the purpose of reducing rough sleeping. To delegate to officers to enter into property purchase and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivery affordable housing through this programme.

Cllr Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, introduced the report which sought to bring forward “Housing First” properties, giving people the opportunity to take up places in social rented properties in parallel with the wrap around support necessary to help them sustain those tenancies. This was an approach with a proven track record in places as far afield as New York and Helsinki. While there was already a number of Housing First properties in the City, this report heralded a significant increase. Officers had already identified a number of people who would benefit from the scheme who had not been able to benefit from the traditional housing pathway. Overall it was hoped to purchase 50 such properties.

It was agreed that the element of wrap around support would be critical to the success of this approach and would need to be provided on a multi-agency basis; this would be the subject of a future Cabinet report.

The Chair noted that there had been discussions at a Leaders’ level with neighbouring authorities and health partners in recognition of the need to work collectively to address these challenges.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Give project approval** to the proposals, to accept grant and enter into spend for the purpose of delivering more affordable housing in Oxford, specifically under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) for the purpose of assisting rough sleepers through more affordable accommodation using a ‘Housing First’ accommodation model;
2. **Note** that the budget for further NSAP grant and spend in 2021/22 will be requested in the draft budget 2021/22 report to Cabinet in December 2020, and if agreed, in the budget 2021/22 report to Cabinet and Council in February 2021;
3. **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 property purchase and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivery affordable housing through the NSAP programme, within identified budgets, for the work referenced in this report;
4. **Delegate authority** to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Asset Management, and Affordable Housing, to approve any agreements over £500,000 for affordable housing, within this project approval and budget envelope; and
5. **Recommend** to Council that it approves a revision to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget in 2020/21 of £1,195,750 for the initial purchase of 5 properties, to be funded by capital grant from MHCLG/ Homes England of

£150,000; by Oxfordshire Housing and Growth (OGD) Deal funding of £275,000; and HRA Council borrowing of up to £770,750.

88. Alcohol and Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval for the implementation of the draft Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order and the Alcohol Disorder Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPOs).

Cllr Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Safer Healthy Oxford, introduced the report. The current PSPOs were due to expire later in the month having been in place for three years. PSPOs gave an authority the power to determine that a particular activity was illegal. This was a serious matter and before their introduction or renewal a number of tests had to have been met. It was necessary to demonstrate that an activity was persistent or continuing and that it was unreasonable. Evidence had been gathered from a public consultation, the police and officers. The main change from the current PSPOs was that the proposed alcohol PSPO would no longer cover the whole City but be limited to areas where there was documentary evidence of a problem. The alcohol PSPO was recognised to have been a very useful tool, allowing officers and the police to engage with people being anti-social, confiscating alcohol if necessary but without ever having recourse to fines or prosecution. Having been able to address anti-social behaviour without criminalising those concerned (many of whom were vulnerable) should be regarded as a great success. The Council had a range of measures to deal with anti-social behaviour which started from the principle of low level engagement and dialogue but PSPOs were an important tool in the face of persistent and unreasonable behaviour.

It was noted that the police had been making good use of the current alcohol PSPO in relation to the current Covid secure environment.

Cabinet expressed some concern about the reduction in scope of the current alcohol PSPO, particularly in relation to parks and open spaces where fires and barbeques, for example, often caused a public nuisance and where alcohol was often a feature. In response it was noted that the revised PSPO still included those parks and spaces for which there was evidence of a need on the basis of information provided by the parks and green spaces team and the police.

The Community Safety Manager said the Constitution now gave authority to an Executive Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for community safety, to introduce a new PSPO within a Ward if the need arose (subject to the usual consultation and evidence tests). For such a small scale PSPO the process could be relatively swift. Furthermore, extension of the PSPO before Cabinet could probably be introduced relatively swiftly if a need was demonstrated and on the basis of the information collected for the current review with the proviso that it was not too long after the original consultation and evidence gathering.

The Chair asked that all Councillors be provided with information about options for addressing and how to report anti-social behaviour in their Wards. Consideration should also be given to the need for measures which might be needed to address other

anti-social behaviours in parks and open spaces such as barbeques and fires which have public safety and environmental implications.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the implementation of a Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order as set out in Appendix 1; and
2. **Approve** the implementation of an Alcohol Control Public Spaces Protection Order as set out in Appendix 2.

89. Street Naming and Numbering Policy

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report seeking Cabinet approval for the updated Street Naming and Numbering Policy for the Council.

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, introduced the report. The Council had a legal responsibility for determining street names and house numbering and needed to ensure that it was done in a professional and transparent way which resulted in unique and unambiguous addresses for everyone. The matter of street naming often generated considerable and understandable interest but it was necessary to be clear that the final decision rested with the Council. In the case of new streets which might be named after people, the default position was that a reasonable period of time should have elapsed since their passing to give time for a considered reflection of its appropriateness.

There was a growing public appetite for the reconsideration of the suitability of some names which, with the passage of time and new perceptions, may now seem tainted. While this was still a relatively infrequent occurrence, the policy surrounding it needed to be clear, and set out a two stage process. The Council would need to be assured that there was broad support for such a change in the local community, particularly from those living in the street in question. The final decision would need to have the active support of a substantial proportion of those residents living in the street at the time of the consultation.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Street Naming and Numbering Policy; and
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance to make any amendments to the draft Street Naming and Numbering Policy as a result of the Cabinet's consideration of it.

90. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the amended minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020 as a true and accurate record.

91. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 09 December
- 20 January
- 10 February
- 10 March
- 14 April

All meetings start at 6pm unless otherwise stated

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm

Chair Date: Wednesday 9 December 2020

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