

Remote meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 20 January 2021

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown (Chair)

Councillor Hayes (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Clarkson

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Upton

Councillor Turner (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Tidball

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive

Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive

Paul Leo, Interim Director of Housing

Nadeem Murtuja, Interim Executive Director for Communities

Tim Sadler, Transition Director / Chairman Direct Services Companies

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Susan Sale, MO and Head of Law & Governance

Jenny Barker, Regeneration Manager

Julia Castle, Senior Lettings & Disposal Surveyor

Andrew Humpherson, Regeneration Manager

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager

Pedro Rocha Abreu, Air Quality Officer

Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager

Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property

Tom Morris, Principal Planner

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Rowley sent apologies.

114. Declarations of Interest

None.

115. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

117. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

Cllr Gant raised questions about the withdrawal of the Green Flag scheme for parks, asking about the reasons for it, who took the decision, the financial consequences of it and implications for park maintenance.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks, explained that the decision flowed from the previous year's budget agreement but which would only come into effect at the beginning of the new financial year. The practical consequences of it would be a reduction of 17 hours less labour in relation to all of the City's parks, which was likely to result in less bin emptying in the evening. The bins would still be emptied first thing in the morning. There would however be capacity within the service to be flexible in its operation to meet demand in hot spots as the need arose. Some small savings would result from removal of the administration of the scheme. On balance it was unlikely that park users would discern a noticeable difference in the level of park maintenance.

118. Items raised by Board Members

Cllr Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, suggested that future Cabinet reports should include an environmental impact assessment. Following a brief in principle discussion Cabinet expressed broad support for such an approach.

119. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Cllr Gant, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, said he had been asked by the Committee to pass on its concerns at the late Cabinet response to the Climate Emergency Review Group's recommendations.

Cllr Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, explained that Covid-19 had diverted some Council resources and there was a wish to ensure that the Cabinet responses had real meaning, giving substance to the work of the Review Group, something which would be evident in the responses when they are given and the various activities and actions which are or will be in train. The Review Group's work had already triggered useful conversations within the Council about how best to improve its response to the climate emergency. He said he would be pleased to meet with the Review Group if it was reconvened or the Committee to discuss the

Cabinet response in due course. In the meantime he thanked the Committee for its patience and looked forward to issuing the response very soon.

120. Regear of the second floor lease at 20-24 Queen Street (Ramsay House)

The Executive Director (Development), had submitted a report to approve a change in the current lease arrangements to provide an improved income stream to the Council and to facilitate investment in the asset to improve and diversify the city centre offer.

Cllr Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, introduced the report. The Council owned the freehold interest of the property. There had been a change in the leasing arrangements as a consequence of which it was proposed to change the Council's interest in the second floor of the property. The proposed arrangements would provide greater security of income in the medium and long term.

The desirability of seeking social as well as a financial value from future leasing arrangements, to the extent that it was possible, was noted.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the outline terms in relation to the changes to the lease arrangements, as set out in Exempt Appendix 3 - not for publication; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director – Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Property, the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Law & Governance, to approve the changes to the lease.

121. 1-3 George Street refurbishment

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek approval to fund and enter into contract for the building refurbishment of 1-3 George Street, to provide affordable managed workspace in the heart of the city centre.

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report. This City centre property owned by the Council was in need of significant improvement and refurbishment. The proposals would not only make the property easier to let but would also increase its environmental efficiency. The intention would be to let it as a flexible, affordable workspace, with a wish to bring back businesses into the City centre which would, in turn, support service businesses which rely on local footfall.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director Development, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance to agree and enter into a building contract for the refurbishment works and associated professional services, following the conclusion of a current procurement exercise;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director Development, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance to and to enter into agreement with an operator to manage the building and provide business support services, following the conclusion of a current procurement exercise; and

3. **Recommend to Council** to approve a capital budget of £1.921m to deliver the project with the enhanced sustainability option and including the use of up to £800K of funds awarded to the Council from OxLEP's Local Growth Fund. This will be split £454K in 20/21, £1.361m in 21/22 and £106K in 22/23. This is an increase to the proposed capital allocation in 21/22 consultation budget and the rationale for this increased investment is set out in the confidential Appendix 1.

122. Air Quality Action Plan

The Transition Director had submitted a report to approve adoption of Oxford's Air Quality Action Plan (2021-2025, as amended) (AQAP) following public consultation.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, introduced the report. The detrimental consequences of air pollution were well understood, not least the potential to cut short peoples' lives. The Council had a good record of tackling air pollution in the City but improvements in pollution levels were now plateauing. The AQAP sought to proceed further and faster than the target for improvement set by Government. He thanked all those who had contributed to the consultation and who had influenced the proposals now before Cabinet. The proposals included a framework of activity to underpin the new targets. The AQAP would, at the same time, make a contribution to reducing the Council's carbon footprint and tackling climate change.

The Chair was pleased to welcome this important report, noting how experience of the first Covid-19 lockdown had resulted in an observable improvement in the City's air quality and the relief that had brought to those with respiratory difficulties. She also observed that good partnership working was critical to this area of work, with, for example, other local authorities, bus companies, taxi drivers and the people of Oxford.

Vehicle use was the biggest contributor to air pollution and one of the biggest challenges to addressed would be that of private car and particularly diesel car use. This would need to be tackled in a variety of ways, including robust conversations with the County Council as the transport authority around a range of measures such as the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, the continued roll out of Controlled Parking Zones and introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy. These measures would be needed in parallel with giving bus companies the confidence to invest in cleaner buses and to be part of the plans following the successful "All Electric Bus Town" bid. The Active Travel agenda would have an important part to play. It was important, also, to reinstall confidence in public transport.

The importance of ensuring that new housing developments included safe (and preferably segregated) routes for cycling and walking into district centres and City centre was recognised.

Pedro Abreu, Air Quality Officer, confirmed that he was consulted about new major planning applications to ensure their compatibility with air quality policies in the new Local Plan.

Councillor Hayes concluded by thanking the officers involved in preparation of the report, the AQAP, and the considerable work which underpinned this area of activity.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the adoption of Oxford's Air Quality Action Plan.

123. Housing Infrastructure Funding for Osney Mead Innovation Quarter

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to provide an update on the use of the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) that had been secured for Osney Mead (OMHIF). The report sought approval to agree changes to the milestones for the delivery of the infrastructure in the funding agreement with Homes England and agreements needed to facilitate the drawdown and implementation of the funding.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, introduced the report. Osney Mead had the potential to be a significant development site but required a considerable amount of work to improve the infrastructure beforehand, not least the successful delivery of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the proposed changes to the HIF agreement with Homes England to facilitate the securing of the HIF funding, the delivery of the infrastructure and the recouping of funding;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, and the Head of Law and Governance, to agree the final amendments to the contract, in line with the proposed changes, and any other changes that are considered necessary to facilitate effective delivery of the funding agreement with Homes England;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into a legal agreement with the Environment Agency to enable HIF funding for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme to be transferred to the Environment Agency, in accordance with the terms of the Homes England Agreement;
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into a legal agreement with the University of Oxford, if necessary, regarding the delivery of the residential development identified in the HIF agreement;
5. **Undertake** the works necessary to implement the HIF funding agreement including the drawdown of funding, monitoring and reporting, minor variations agreed with Homes England; and
6. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into contracts, following agreement of the Development Board and an appropriate procurement process, for the walking and cycling infrastructure works covered by the HIF Agreement with Homes England.

124. Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to seek agreement to publication of the draft updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for public consultation.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, introduced the report. The Statement of Community Involvement was a statutory document which set out the ways in which the Council consults the public about certain planning matters. The version on which it was proposed to consult reflected, among other things, changes necessitated by Covid-19 and a greater emphasis on the role of consultation by digital means. The value of early consultation by applicants in relation to planning matters could not be underestimated.

In relation to digital matters it was noted that for Council meetings to continue exclusively on a remote and virtual basis after May would require the introduction of primary legislation of which there was no sign at the moment. It was agreed that hybrid meetings (ie a mixture of remote and face to face) were generally less satisfactory.

While digital access for some was not possible or very difficult, many more had been able to engage with a range of Council matters than would otherwise have been the case. It was important, also, to be mindful of the needs of those who may have sensory or other difficulties in accessing virtual meetings, planning or other consultation matters.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** to publish the draft updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for public consultation.

125. Meanwhile in Oxfordshire (Additional recommendation)

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to add a further recommendation to the report agreed at the 9 December 2020 Cabinet meeting. The further recommendation was required to seek approval to include the £1.875m funding across the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Council budget. All other aspects of the project remained unchanged.

Cabinet resolved, in addition to the three recommendations agreed in December Cabinet, to:

Recommend to Council the establishing of a budget £1.875m (capital) within the Council's capital programme, profiled across 2020-21 and 2021-22, subject to contracting with OxLEP.

126. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 09 December 2020 as a true and accurate record.

127. Decisions taken under Part 9.3 (b) of the Constitution

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) had submitted a report asking Cabinet to note the decisions taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the decisions taken as set out in the report.

128. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

10 February

10 March

14 April

All meetings start at 6pm unless otherwise stated

129. Matters Exempt from Publication

No reports were considered in confidential session.

130. Regear of the second floor lease at 20-24 Queen Street (Ramsay House) - Appendix 3 & 4

131. 1-3 George Street refurbishment - Appendix 1

132. Decisions taken under Part 9.3 (b) of the Constitution Appendix 1

133. Confidential minutes of previous meeting

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.00 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 10 February 2021

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