

Remote meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 10 March 2021

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown (Chair)

Councillor Hayes (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Clarkson

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Upton

Councillor Turner (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Linda Smith

Also present:

Councillor Andrew Gant

Councillor Shaista Aziz

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Paul Leo, Interim Director of Housing

Nadeem Murtuja, Interim Executive Director for Communities

Tim Sadler, Transition Director

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager

Susan Sale, MO and Head of Law & Governance

Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety

Paul Wilding, System Change Manager - Homelessness Prevention

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Gail Siddall, Team Leader, HMO Enforcement Team

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Tanya Bandekar, Service Manager Revenue & Benefits

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Tidball sent apologies.

153. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hayes declared non-pecuniary interests in relation to the Domestic Abuse Review Group report (which named Elmore Community Services as a provider and of which he was Chief Executive); and the Allocation of Homeless Prevention Funds report (which also named Elmore Community Services).

154. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

156. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

157. Items raised by Board Members

None.

158. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Council Business Plan 2021-22

Councillor Gant said he was grateful for the positive response to most of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations. In relation to the one recommendation which had not been agreed (concerning the Committee's view that there was a misalignment of priority 4 with the 2036 Local Plan Policies), the Committee would be grateful for a more detailed explanation for the reasons for the response.

Citizen Engagement

Councillor Gant noted that the recommendation of a pilot project to establish and assess the practicalities of engaging citizens in participatory budgeting had received a response referring to a micro-grant programme for local community groups to access and deliver against local priorities which was not, he argued, quite the same thing as that being sought by the recommendation.

Zero Carbon Council

Councillor Gant said several members of the Committee had asked him to express disappointment that all of its recommendations had been rejected.

Oxpens Lane Redevelopment Update

Councillor Gant was grateful to those who had attended the last meeting of the Committee and had contributed to an interesting discussion of the report but which had not resulted in a formal recommendation to Cabinet. He did however note the Committee's observation that the anticipated balance of housing and employment was skewed disproportionately towards the latter.

Councillor Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, said that one member of the Committee had raised the last point and he was not sure that its expression could be held as the view of the Committee as a whole.

In relation to the point made by Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Business Plan referred to above, Cllr Hollingsworth said the assertion of misalignment was ill founded and, as written in the Scrutiny report, was factually incorrect. The Local Plan 2036 did include the higher environmental standards referred to.

Domestic Abuse Review Group (DARG)

Cllr Aziz, as Chair of the DARG, introduced the report by noting that its work had benefitted from input from a wide range of national and local experts, people working in domestic abuse services, as well as those with lived experience and those providing Council services. She paid tribute to the contribution of all those involved, including a number of Cabinet Members, the number of whom illustrated the cross cutting nature of this subject. The report had particular resonance at the moment given the increase in incidents of domestic violence during the pandemic. The report had opened up an important dialogue between service providers and the City Council.

The report raised a number of important issues, of which housing, in its many manifestations, was one of the most important. At its heart, victims of domestic violence should not be inhibited from escaping a perpetrator for want of somewhere to live and, similarly, there was a recommendation which would require perpetrators to leave a Council property.

There were important recommendations too in relation to those with no recourse to public funds and those for whom English was not their first language.

The group recognised that in the present climate there would be little prospect of additional funding for this area of work and the recommendations were focused on building on the good work already being done in the City by changing the culture in relation to responses to domestic abuse.

The Chair thanked Cllr Aziz and all those who had contributed to the work of the group, for this valuable and significant report. She noted that not all Members would have yet had the opportunity to digest this lengthy report fully. It was important that proper consideration should be given to its recommendations before providing a Cabinet response. It was intended to bring those responses back to Cabinet in June.

The Cabinet was unequivocal in its praise for the value of the report and made a number of detailed observations, including, among others: the importance of establishing a housing pathway for those affected by domestic abuse; noting that there were practices in relation to safeguarding which might helpfully be adopted in relation to domestic abuse; the desirability of reviewing practices in relation to those with complex needs which might, in turn, contribute to reducing domestic abuse; and noting that there may be merit in seeking joint responses to recommendations which touch upon responsibilities of the County Council and or police.

Climate Emergency Review Group (CERG)

Cllr Gant said that the Scrutiny Committee would consider the Cabinet response once it had been agreed by Cabinet.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, said some care and time had been taken to assemble well considered Cabinet responses to the Review Group's recommendations. The Review Group had done a thorough and useful piece of work for which he was grateful.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Parks, raised two points of detail in relation to the report. Cllr Hayes agreed to modify the responses accordingly.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the Cabinet response to the CERG, subject to the modifications noted.

Council Business Plan 2021-22 and Business Plan 2020-21 update

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications, had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval of the Oxford City Council Business Plan & Corporate KPIs.

The Chair introduced the report. With reference to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations she confirmed that care would be taken to ensure that the final version was aligned with the recommendations flowing from the Climate Emergency Review Group and was pleased to agree to the incorporation of a glossary of terms, as well as a reference to the circular economy.

The plan set out the Council's objectives over the next four years. The first significant priority was to enable an inclusive economy. The plan set out how this would be achieved and how success would be measured. The recently updated procurement strategy, for example, supported this objective through the encouragement of procurement via local businesses and supporting those which have adopted the Oxford Living Wage, particularly small and medium sized enterprises. The plan drew attention to the work done by the Council throughout the pandemic to support local residents, the local economy and businesses, many aspects of which would continue.

The plan identified a number of important outcomes in relation to equalities, not just in relation to the Council's workforce but elsewhere in the City. The plan sought to ensure that the Council's workforce was properly representative of the communities it serves and that the Council engages with all elements of those communities. The plan recognised the critical importance of partnership working to its success as illustrated, for example, by the 'Meanwhile' project.

The second and continuing priority was the delivery of more housing and affordable housing. House building provided another link to the Council's ambition to be a zero carbon city with the encouragement of modern methods of construction which can contribute to that.

The Blackbird Leys regeneration scheme will be an important strand of work which will involve close co-operation with the local community to ensure their needs are met, including the provision of affordable housing.

The third priority was that of supporting thriving communities through the work of among others, leisure centres and community services. The development of locality based teams over the previous year provided a basis for a future model of locality based working. Grant funding for voluntary groups would remain important given the invaluable contribution made by volunteers to the lives of those in the city. The Chair paid particular tribute to the work of volunteers over the previous year. The value of the Council's parks and open spaces had been evident over the previous 12 months and its commitment to them was reaffirmed.

The fourth priority was the Council's commitment to a zero carbon oxford. The Chair was proud to be the Leader of a council which, having declared a climate emergency,

had then demonstrated its commitment to tackling it by an ever expanding programme of activity, in addition to a great deal of work which had already been undertaken.

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications, noted that KPIs for some of the new indicators, baselines had yet to be established and this would be done over the coming months.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the draft Oxford City Council Business Plan 2021-21, setting out the Council's priority work programmes for the next financial year;
2. **Agree** the draft Oxford City Council corporate key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2021-24 - the remainder of the covered by the Council Strategy 2020-24; and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications in consultation with the Council Leader to make further minor amendments to the draft Oxford City Council Business Plan 2021-22 and Corporate KPIs 2021-24, before implementation.

160. Allocation of Homeless Prevention Funds for 2021/22

The Executive Director of Housing had submitted a report to approve the allocations of Homeless Prevention Funds for 2021/22.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing introduced the annual report which mainly recommended continuation of existing commissioning arrangements and of the current pool arrangements with the County Council and neighbouring districts.

The "Everyone in" programme had been very successful, resulting, among other things, in a further successive reduction in the annual November street count. All those still on the street had been offered accommodation. It was proposed to commission a further 41 beds in 2021-22 with the use of "Next Steps" funding.

The Chair said this was an important area of work and commended those involved for the success to date while noting the need, also, to take the next steps to find forever homes for those who need them.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2021/22 as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 30 and in Appendix 2 of the report;
2. **Delegate** to the Interim Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required; and
3. **Approve** the request for £15,000 of new expenditure from the 2020/21 allocation, outlined in paragraph 24.

161. Proposal for a Selective Licensing Scheme for privately rented homes

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to inform Cabinet of the results of the consultation exercise carried out into the proposal to introduce a selective licensing scheme in the city.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report. The response to the consultation which was the subject of the report was noteworthy because of the number of responses to it (2000 plus). He was pleased that the intensive and extensive consultation had resulted in such a response to inform the final version of such an important scheme. He drew attention to two changes made as a result of the consultation, set out in the report, one of which included a requirement for improved access to data/feedback about the scheme. Confidence in the scheme by all concerned would be improved by this addition.

The Chair said this was another important area of work, she was pleased to see the high level of engagement with it and that landlords and agents would be able to see that their concerns had been listened to.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Consider** the outcome of the consultation process detailed in the report (Appendix 1), in particular the representations received and the Council's consideration and response to these (Appendix 3);
2. **Approve** the designations as outlined in Appendix 5A and 5B as being subject to selective licencing and confirm that Cabinet is satisfied :
 - a. That the statutory grounds and requirements outlined in this report to introduce a selective licensing scheme have been met
 - b. That it has considered other courses of action available to it that might provide an effective method of achieving the objectives that the designation intends to achieve , and
 - c. That it considers that making the designations will significantly assist it to achieve those objectives
3. **Agree** that a submission be made to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting confirmation of the designations;
4. **Delegate**, subject to recommendation 3, to the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety and the Head of Law and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet member for Planning and Housing Delivery, responsibility for agreeing the final documentation requesting confirmation of the scheme to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG);
5. **Agree** to the proposed fee structure for licence applications at Appendix 7;
6. **Agree** the proposed licence conditions that would accompany any granted selective licence at Appendix 4; and
7. **Agree** the proposed eligibility criteria as detailed in Appendix 6

162. Additional HMO licensing scheme renewal

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to provide the results from the consultation exercise carried out for the proposal to renew the HMO Licensing Scheme and seek approval from members to designate the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act

2004 in relation to the size and type of HMO specified in the recommendations of this report for 5 years commencing on the 10th June 2021.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report which simply sought agreement to the third five year cycle of the licensing scheme.

The Chair noted that this scheme, which had been subject to some controversy when it was originally launched, was now recognised to be of benefit to tenants and landlords alike.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the Executive summary report of the Consultation of Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) 2020 and note its findings attached at Appendix 1;
2. **Confirm** that, having considered the report of the consultation along with the Review report: Additional HMO licensing scheme 2020 presented to the 9th September 2020 Cabinet meeting, an Additional HMO licensing scheme is required for a further 5 years commencing the 10th June 2021;
3. **Designate** the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1) (a) of the Housing Act 2004 for all Houses in Multiple Occupation that contain three or four occupiers and all self-contained flats that are Houses in Multiple Occupation, irrespective of the number of storeys, but, so far as concerns section 257 Houses in Multiple Occupation, limit the designation to those that are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords;
4. **Delegate** to the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety the authority to sign and finalise the designation at Appendix 10;
5. **Recommend** to Council to adopt the proposed fees and charges structure for both mandatory and additional HMO licences attached at Appendix 6; and
6. **Adopt** the eligibility criteria for the new scheme as attached at Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 and delegate to the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety the authority to add or remove accreditation schemes, in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance.

163. Local Development Scheme 2021-2026

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

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report which marked the start of progress towards the Council's next (2040) Local Plan.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2021-26.

164. Zero Emission Zone

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director- Development, had submitted a report seeking support for the introduction of a Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) Pilot in Oxford City centre, including supporting Oxfordshire County Council in their legal implementation of the scheme. Cabinet was also asked to note the outcome of the joint public consultation on the ZEZ Pilot.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, introduced the report. The idea of a Zero Admission Zone (ZEZ) had been worked towards since 2015 and consulted upon several times in preparation for it. The ZEZ sought to reduce air pollution as just one of the Council's measures to address the climate crisis. While air pollution levels in the City had dropped by 26 percent in recent years, the improvement was plateauing. The Council's recently confirmed Air Quality Action Plan set an ambitious target for improvement to which the ZEZ would contribute, not least because transport is responsible for about 68% of the main pollutant of concern.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Support** the introduction of the Zero Emission Zone Pilot in Oxford City Centre as outlined in Appendix 5;
2. **Support** Oxfordshire County Council in their legal implementation of the scheme outlined in Appendix 5;
3. **Note** the content of consultation report and outcomes of the recent public consultation on the Oxford ZEZ Pilot; and
4. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director for Development, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the treatment of surplus funds raised from the scheme and related matters.

165. Report back on Zero Carbon Summit and launch of partnership

The Transition Director had submitted a report to report back to Cabinet on the outcomes of the Zero Carbon Oxford Summit, recommend formal adoption of the Zero Carbon Oxford Charter signed by major Oxford partners and employers, and to set out the next steps on Oxford's sprint to become a Zero Carbon City by 2040 or sooner.

Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, introduced the report. The Summit illustrated the key role which could be played by the Council, through its relationships and the ability to bring together key players, partners and employers in its ambition to become a Zero Carbon city by 2040.

The Chair said she was pleased to have Chaired the summit which had been a very positive event, illustrating the shared wish by all those involved to contribute to this important matter.

Councillor Hollingsworth left the meeting at the end of this item

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the outcomes of the Zero Carbon Summit held in February 2021;
2. **Formally** adopt the Zero Carbon Oxford Charter, including the target date for Oxford to become a Zero Carbon city by 2040; and
3. **Note** the next steps to be taken to set out Oxford's sprint to become a Zero Carbon City by 2040 or sooner.

166. Integrated Performance Report for Q3

The Head of Financial Services and Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to update the Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 31 December 2020.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, introduced the report which was for noting and which illustrated, among other things, some of the impacts of Covid-19.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 31 December 2020.

167. Business Rates Write Offs

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to approve the write-off of a debt of £213,810.60.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, introduced the report which was for noting and recorded the necessity of writing off the debt described.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the write-off of the debt

168. Oxpens Lane Redevelopment Update

The Executive Director – Development had submitted a report to seek approval of additional loan finance, of up to £1m, to Oxford West End Development (OxWED) to support the preparation and submission of an Outline Planning Application and associated site preparation & promotion works.

In the absence of Councillor Hollingsworth, Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, introduced the report which sought agreement to a loan facility of up to £1m to Oxford West End Development Limited OxWED, with a similar loan arrangement being made available from Nuffield College. This will enable the site to be brought forward for outline planning permission and represented an important next step in this significant project for the both the Council and the City.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree**, in line with the 21/22 Budget, approved by Council, to provide Oxford West End Development (OxWED) with a loan facility of up to £1m, subject to the OxWED Shareholders approval and Nuffield College providing the same level of facility;
2. **Delegate** the agreement of terms and draw down of the loan to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; and
3. **Agree**, in line with the 21/22 Budget, approved by Council, to provide up to £150k (revenue) from the reserve, for costs associated with a review of the OxWED company structure, and the implementation of any associated changes subsequently approved by the Shareholder.

169. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021 as a true and accurate record.

170. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

14 April
16 June
14 July
09 August
15 September
13 October
11 November
15 December

All meetings start at 6pm.

171. Matters Exempt from Publication

No matters were considered in confidential session.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.30 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 14 April 2021