

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 15 June 2022

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Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Turner

Councillor Aziz

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Thomas

Councillor Upton

Councillor Walcott

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services

Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)

Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director for Communities and People

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Emma Gubbins, Senior Estates Surveyor

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager

Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer

Phil McGaskill, Revenues Manager

Matthew Peachey, Economic Development Manager

Malcolm Peek, Property Service Manager

Carolyn Ploszynski, Head of Regeneration and Economy

Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Carri Unwin, Regeneration Manager

Also present:

Councillor Lizzy Diggins, Scrutiny Committee Vice-Chair

Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton, Scrutiny Committee Chair

Apologies:

Councillor Munkonge sent apologies.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

3. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None.

4. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

5. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

6. Scrutiny Reports

Scrutiny Committee had met on 8 June, and had considered two reports which were before Cabinet: Oxford's Economic Strategy and the Draft City Centre Action Plan. It had also considered the report of the Child Poverty Review Group. The Waterways Update had been deferred to its next meeting on 5 July.

Cabinet welcomed Councillor Smowton as Chair of Scrutiny for the 2022/23 Council year. In Councillor Smowton's absence on 8 June the meeting had been chaired by Councillor Diggins, who presented the scrutiny findings to Cabinet.

Oxford's Economic Strategy

Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and also noted comments made by a public speaker. Nine recommendations had been made, which included: effectively engaging with diverse communities as part of consultation processes; engaging with wider stakeholders such as trade unions and the third sector; developing a clearer way of demonstrating how competing priorities had been assessed; and making explicit reference to Brexit within the Strategy. The Leader responded that the recommendations were largely accepted. Where recommendations were considered to have already been addressed within the document this had been referenced in the Cabinet Member's response.

Draft City Centre Action Plan

Four recommendations had been made, which had largely focused on effective engagement with diverse communities, and ensuring that the Plan was adaptive to diverse needs.

The Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice responded that the recommendations were generally accepted. Whilst there had been a good level of engagement with the Action Plan, consultation was an area where there was always scope for improvement.

Report of the Child Poverty Review Group

In the absence of Councillor Djafari-Marbini who had chaired the group, Councillor Diggins presented the report of the Child Poverty Review Group. This represented a cross-cutting piece of work to address child poverty in the City, and had looked at what more the Council could do to embed poverty prevention methods into its activities and

how it might work with partners on a collaborative response. 42 recommendations had been made, which had included a recommendation that the Council should adopt the socio-economic duty and lobby other local organisations to do the same. The report recognised the work which was already being done by the Council, but noted that there was scope for further action. Councillor Aziz highlighted the work of the Council in implementing the Oxford Living Wage as an example of an existing initiative in the area of poverty reduction.

The Chair responded that the review had been a thorough and detailed piece of work which required further consideration in order that a sufficiently full response could be given. It would therefore be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting. The Chair thanked Scrutiny members for the report, which was a very helpful and valuable piece of work, and noted that the group's recommendations would enable the Council to enhance and add benefit to its work.

7. Oxford's Economic Strategy - Consultation Report and Recommendations

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report inviting Cabinet to note the recommended revisions to Oxford's Economic Strategy following the recent consultation, and to recommend its adoption.

In introducing the report the Leader highlighted that the Strategy had been developed over a long period of time, had involved conversations with Members and stakeholders, and sought to embed the values of the Council. It did not set out new plans or proposals for transport, housing, or employment sites but rather it reflected on what was already planned across those areas and sought to ensure that work with partners on delivery was done in as inclusive a way as possible in order that everybody could benefit from the wealth and economic growth which existed in the City. It also reflected the well-known problems of economic and social division within the City, and lack of affordable housing, and was complementary to other strategies and workstreams both at City and County level. The points which had been raised by Scrutiny with regard to making improvements to consultations were accepted: improving engagement with local communities and local business was an existing aim, and would be further progressed as part of the work of the Strategy. The Council had already sought to improve representation of local business with the various bodies with which it worked in developing and delivering the Strategy, and to ensure that the representation was reflective of the City.

Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager, clarified in relation to paragraph 10 of the report that points and challenges contained in the table within that paragraph were not all from 'Transform Oxford's Economic Strategy' (TOES), but had come from individuals or other organisations which had referred to TOES' literature or had raised related issues. It had not been intended to suggest that TOES was involved with generating misinformation.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the recommended changes to the Consultation version of Oxford's Economic Strategy as set out at Appendix 3 to the report;
2. **Adopt** and publish the revised version of Oxford's Economic Strategy at Appendix 1, with authority to make any minor amendments required before publication

delegated to the Head of Regeneration and Economy in consultation with the Leader.

8. Oxford City Centre Action Plan - Consultation Report and Recommendations

The Head of Regeneration and Economy had submitted a report setting out recommended revisions to the Consultation version of the City Centre Action Plan and recommending adoption of the Plan.

Councillor Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, highlighted that the Plan was a cohesive strategy which sought to draw together good work which was already being done as well as make newer plans for the future. In addition to giving ownership and momentum to existing work, it would also help to identify and fill gaps and enable better partnership working with stakeholders. The Plan was community and stakeholder owned, and, although led by the Council, could not be delivered in isolation. It was also a 'living document' which would be regularly reviewed.

In response to a question about how progress against the Plan would be monitored, Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager, reported that it was intended to adopt a delivery board and internal officer group approach, with an annual review by officers and a quarterly update to the delivery board. The delivery board would explore setting key performance indicators, and it was also expected that there would be an annual conversation with residents about the City centre.

It was also hoped that the cohesive Plan would help in attracting public realm funding.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the recommended changes to the consultation version of the City Centre Action Plan as set out within Appendix 3 of the report; and
2. **Adopt** and publish the revised Oxford City Centre Action Plan, with authority to make any minor amendments required before publication delegated to the Head of Regeneration and Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice.

9. Proposal for Public Realm Improvements on Council Owned Land in the City Centre

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek approval for a public realm improvement scheme on Council owned land in the City Centre, including approval of planned works and required property and legal procedures to deliver the scheme.

Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management informed Cabinet that the report proposed significant improvements to the character and appearance of the site referred to, which could be secured at a reasonable cost to the Council. Further detail was contained in the Part 2 appendix, which was exempt by reason of commercial confidentiality. It was currently an opportune time to pursue this, due to forthcoming lease expiries.

In response to a question about a discrepancy in the capital budget referred to at recommendation 2 and the cost of the scheme given in paragraph 7 of the report, Carri

Unwin, Regeneration Manager, clarified that the cost of the scheme was £327k; however, £30k already existed in the project budget, so that the additional budget request was for £297k.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the public realm improvement scheme on Council owned land in the City Centre, including approval of planned works and required property and legal procedures to deliver the scheme;
2. **Recommend** to Council to approve a capital budget of £297k for delivery of the public realm improvement scheme;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management to agree the final works details, budget changes, and submission of any planning application for this public realm improvement on Council owned land in the City Centre.

10. Draft West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report seeking Cabinet approval for the Draft West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to go out to public consultation.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, highlighted that the area formed a prominent part of both the Oxford Economic Strategy and the City Centre Action Plan and was a large, important, and complex site. The site allocations for West End and Osney Mead were within the Local Plan; the SPD provided greater certainty for landowners and also the public on the implementation of existing adopted policies. If approved by Cabinet, a formal consultation process would be undertaken and once concluded, and if adopted, the SPD would form an additional element to the 2036 Local Plan.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Draft West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to go out to public consultation;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Planning Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, to make any necessary editorial corrections to the SPD prior to going out to consultation.

11. Oxford Local Plan Local Development Scheme 2022 - 2027

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to present for approval the updated programme for the preparation of documents which would form the Council's Development Plan.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, clarified that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) was a document which the Council was required to publish. It set out which local development documents were development plan documents, as well as timescales for the preparation and revision of

documents forming part of Oxford City Council's development plan and other planning policy documents.

A key update to the LDS had been a change in the timetable for the Local Plan consultation which was required as a result of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan having been rescheduled. The intention remained for the Local Plan to follow, and be shaped by, the 2050 Plan; however, this would not be possible in the event of any further delays due to the need for adopted Plans to not become more than 5 years old. The LDS also included the addition of the Draft West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document for consultation.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2022 – 2027.

12. Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Grant and Project

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report which sought approval for the Council's participation in a countywide bid to Government under the new Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) pilot fund, led by Oxfordshire County Council which, if successful, would fund the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Oxford.

Councillor Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, highlighted that participation in the pilot would support the Council's aim of 25% of the City's cars being electric by 2025, and would allow the necessary infrastructure to be quickly provided. This included up to 500 cable gullies for homeowners without access to off street parking and 3 – 5 residential charging hubs, with a total of 18 charge points to be installed on City Council owned land / car parks. Project C (up to 35 electrified disabled parking bays) had subsequently been removed from the funding bid by the partnership developing the project; however, the Council would continue to work with the County Council with a view to progressing this in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice highlighted that due to the nature of the planning process it could not be guaranteed that planning permission would be granted for cable gullies; therefore there would need to be consideration during the pilot process of options to mitigate the risk to homeowners of paying for a planning application which may subsequently be refused. Eventually, this might involve permitted development rights for home EV chargers. Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, recommended that planning design guidance be produced both for the team leading the project and residents thinking of taking up the opportunity of a cable gully. It was also recommended that other electric vehicles such as cargo bikes, and the inter-operability of their charging formats, be considered as part of the pilot.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant approval** for Oxford City Council to collaborate in the project (called OXLEVI) and funding bid in June 2022 and, if successful, to deliver the scheme, subject to negotiations with Government and partner organisations associated with the project;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice; the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport; the Head of Financial Services / s151 Officer; and the

Council's Monitoring Officer to enter into funding, partnership, contracts and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivering the scheme, including expenditure as necessary of remaining GULO grant funding held by the Council;

3. **Authorise officers** to deliver installation of EV charging infrastructure in Oxford's car parks, having regard to other potential purposes to seek to optimise the use of space;
4. **Grant approval** for funding of up to £80k (£8k per annum) to cover contract management for the installed infrastructure over the next 10 years, with the expectation that this figure will be increasingly offset by revenues generated; and
5. **Note** that the Oxford City Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy is scheduled for the July Cabinet meeting, while due to the June grant deadline the OXLEVI project item has been brought to the June Cabinet meeting. The delivery of this project within Oxford will be aligned with the principles of the Strategy.

13. Review of the Anti-Racism Charter

The Head of Community Services had submitted a report which highlighted the scheduled review of the Anti-Racism Charter and which asked Cabinet to approve the recommended changes and actions.

In presenting the report Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, highlighted the deep and wide ranging impacts of racism. Examples were provided of the disproportionate impacts of Covid on diverse communities, as well as impacts on education, health and employment. Addressing racism was fundamental to creating a fairer society.

The Charter, which had been developed as a result of a Council motion to make Oxford an anti-racist city, aligned with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and aimed to build trust and transparency within communities.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Charter would be reviewed every two years in order to enable sufficient time to implement any actions which arose. An action to develop a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities definition had also been added following feedback.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the updated Anti-Racism Charter at Appendix 1 and the actions shown in Table 1 of the report, subject to an amendment that review should take place every two years.

14. Draft Oxfordshire Food Strategy

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report setting out the partnership work which had enabled the development of the draft Oxfordshire Food Strategy and which outlined the ambitions established in Part 1 which would guide the development of the action plan in Part 2.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport, highlighted that the Strategy aligned with many of the Council's corporate priorities and wider initiatives across the county. In addition to food poverty, the Strategy also included healthy

eating; addressing health inequalities; the environmental impact of food and promoting biodiversity; security of food supply; and the social role of food in communities.

A detailed action plan, to underpin the Strategy, would be brought to Cabinet later in the year.

In considering the Strategy it was highlighted that, in terms of environmental impact, the term 'food miles' could be misleading. It was recommended that this should be clarified to 'carbon footprint' in future iterations. Additionally, consideration should be given in the future to including reference to farming methods.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Endorse** the Oxfordshire Food Strategy Part 1, including the principles and framework for delivery;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture to make any necessary amendments to the draft strategy as it goes through the County and District approvals process, with a revised document returning in the autumn;
3. **Note** that Part 2 will see the development of a detailed action plan and that this will return to Cabinet in the autumn;
4. **Note** the grant allocation proposed by the County Council to assist with the development of Part 2.

15. National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to seek approval for an updated National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, reported that the Policy related to reliefs which could be given to organisations which were considered to provide public and social value. These reliefs were given to some organisations (including charities and sports clubs) on a mandatory basis: the Policy allowed, and gave transparency on, discretion to give up to 100% relief to organisations which did not meet the mandatory criteria (such as arts organisations or youth clubs which did not have charitable status) but which nonetheless provided benefit to the community.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the updated National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Discretionary Rate Relief policy as attached at Appendix 1.

16. Repairs to 2-4 Gloucester Street & 24-26 George Street, Oxford

The Head of Corporate Property had submitted a report to seek approval for a budget of £770,000 for the repair of 2-4 Gloucester Street and 24-26 George Street, Oxford in order to facilitate letting of the building.

Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management reported that the property (formerly 'Jamie's') had reverted to the Council following the company which previously held the lease entering into administration. Survey works

were subsequently done, and had identified water ingress. A new tenant had now been found: however, substantial works were required to prevent further deterioration and to facilitate the letting. Cabinet was therefore asked to agree a spend for the works from the existing budget assigned for condition survey works.

In response to questions it was clarified that the building had been surrendered back to the Council in January 2021. The previous lease had been on a full repair basis; however, the administrator bore no health and safety or repair liabilities. The timescale for completing the works and leasing the building was expected to be around 10 months.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** a budget of £770,000 to spend on 2-4 Gloucester Street and 24-26 George Street, Oxford from the existing budget assigned for condition survey works.

17. Disposal of Council Dwelling Houses

The Head of Housing had submitted a report to seek approval for the sale of four Council owned properties on the open market, with the use of the resulting capital receipts into the General Fund for regeneration purposes.

The Cabinet Member for Housing reported that the four properties were void, and were considered to be beyond economic repair. The principle of the disposals had been previously approved by Cabinet in January 2022 within an item on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Leader recommended that preparation of the properties for sale should be made evident as soon as possible, in order to avoid any misperception that repair work was about to start.

In response to a question as to whether the Council might develop the properties itself prior to putting them for sale on the open market, the Head of Financial Services advised that the option of refurbishing the properties within the HRA had been considered as part of the budget setting process in February 2022. It would have required additional borrowing, and, as there was no capacity to undertake additional borrowing in the HRA over the next few years without breaching the interest covered covenant set for the HRA, this option had been rejected.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the disposal of the freeholds of 39 Long Close, 163 Walton Street, 8 Cowley Road and 46 Stubbs Avenue;
2. **Approve** the use of the resulting capital receipt into the General Fund for regeneration purposes; and
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to approve the terms of sale for each property.

18. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2022 as a true and accurate record.

19. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

13 July 2022

10 August 2022

14 September 2022

19 October 2022

16 November 2022

14 December 2022

25 January 2023

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

20. Other Business

The Leader reported that Andrew Brown, Committee and Member Services Manager, would be leaving the Council at the end of June to take up a new post at West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean Councils, which worked in partnership.

On behalf of Cabinet, the Leader thanked Andrew for his work over a number of years in supporting Members and the Council, and wished him well for the future.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.43 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 13 July 2022

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.