

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 14 December 2022**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Mathew Parkinson, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett and Geoff Saul.

Officers: Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager), Janet Eustace (Democratic Services Manager), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Susan Sale (Monitoring Officer), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Anne Learmonth, Michelle Ouzman, Emma Cathcart (Counter Fraud Unit Manager), Georgina Dyer (Business Partner Accountant), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development) and Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Operations Support and Enabling).

Other Councillors in attendance: Ted Fenton, Gill Hill, Michele Mead, Harry St John, Jeff Haine and Alaa Al-Yousuf.

#### **94 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 November 2022 were approved by the Cabinet and signed by the Leader, Councillor Andy Graham.

#### **95 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **96 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **97 Participation of the Public**

No public were present.

#### **98 Receipt of Announcements**

Councillor Graham, Leader of the Council, announced that the next Cabinet meeting would be on 11 January at the Community Hall in Woodstock starting at 3pm due to a prior booking of the Hall. The Leader congratulated the Communications Team on winning two Common Place Awards which acknowledged excellence within the team.

Councillor Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader) reported that the inflatable snow globe had been deployed around the towns in support of community events and thanked officers who had assisted with this. He also mentioned the 'What's On in West Oxfordshire' web page which was promoting a number of free or low cost activities within the District.

#### **99 Financial Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter Two**

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report which reviewed the Council Financial Performance for 2022-23 Quarter Two (Q2) and sought agreement to delegate authority to approve further funds from the New Initiatives Fund.

Councillor Levy reported that there had been predictable overspend in a few areas and loss of income in some fee generating services. Officers were looking to get these back on track where possible.

Cabinet had been progressing a variety of new priority projects under the New Initiatives Fund. Some £750,000 had already been allocated. Cabinet was recommended to approve the allocations and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Cabinet members, to approve further allocations.

In answer to a question from Councillor St John, Councillor Arciszewska (Cabinet Member for Environment) said she would provide further information about the deployment of the new electric road sweepers.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to:

- a) note the Financial Performance for Quarter two,
- b) approve the allocations for the New Initiatives Fund, and
- c) delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and, where relevant to portfolios, other Cabinet Members, to approve further allocations from the New Initiatives Fund.

#### **100 Service Performance Report Quarter Two**

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report which set out details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Two (Q2). He said that performance was excellent in some areas but less good in others. Inflation and other pressures would put more pressure on services in coming months.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to note the 2022/23 Q2 service performance.

#### **101 Update of 2023/24 Budget**

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report on the developing budget for 2023/24. He said that all local authorities are under increasing pressure and thanked the Finance team for their work on putting the draft budget together. He said that the budget made sober reading with some income falling below expected levels and ever increasing upward pressure on salaries and utility costs. The budget would be further refined once the Government settlement had been received on 21 December. The Leader asked for clarity about the summary of growth requests. Councillor Levy explained that a number of the posts were time limited or grant funded. These were now being reviewed to see whether they should become part of the core budget.

There was discussion around the additional £250,000 for the Local Plan. It was confirmed that this was in addition to the £650,000 in the budget. The Chief Executive confirmed that some of the work on the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan could be used to support the Local Plan but some additional work would be needed. The Planning Policy Manager was currently working to establish a breakdown of costs.

Councillor Al-Yousuf reported on the concerns that had been raised by Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FMOS) and suggested that a more sustainable path needed to be found for future years. The Leader responded that the budget setting process would follow its usual course with Cabinet taking measured decisions. The

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Chief Finance Officer confirmed that long term measures would need to be introduced in the 2023/24 to secure a sustainable future.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to note the report.

## **102 Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the updated Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy. The Policy had been reviewed to ensure the content reflected current legislation and the Council's Policies and Procedures. The Policy would replace the existing Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy. Councillor Mead thanked the Head of Service for marking up the changes.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to:

- a) Approve and adopt the Policy attached and;
- b) Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Legal Services and the Leader of the Council.

## **103 Pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge Area**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report about the new pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge area. The partnership would bring together twenty local partners and would provide a vehicle to take forward shared economic and environmental ambitions. There would be a small contribution from each of the partners of £4,000 which would help unlock the second £250,000 tranche of Government funding.

In answer to a question about how long the partnership might last, the Chief Executive said that he thought it would have a long life and that the financial contribution required would remain modest. It would provide an excellent opportunity to advocate the Council's position across a bigger, strategic area. Councillor Enright commented on the ability of both the Partnership and the England's Economic Heartland to bring benefits to the area particularly with east/west rail and economic developments in Swindon, Bristol and Bath.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to:

- a) Recommend to Council that West Oxfordshire be a participant in the proposed pan-regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge area
- b) Approve a contribution of £4,000 towards the pan-regional partnership.

## **104 Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021 - 2022**

Councillor Carl Rylett, Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the item on the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for 2021/22. He noted that the statement set out details of contributions and spending priorities and had to be published each year.

Councillor St John raised a number of questions about some of the figures which related to planning consents granted many years ago and asked about the £5.4m received through planning obligations which had not been allocated. He also asked why the review of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had dropped off the Cabinet Work Programme.

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Councillor Rylett explained that S106 money was received when a scheme was completed rather than when planning approval was given. He said that it had been agreed in May that the CIL review should be taken forward but there had been delays and officers were now considering whether to progress the review as planned or whether to dovetail it into the Local Plan. He said that the Cabinet recognised that the CIL Schedule needed to progress and agreed that it should be restored to the Cabinet Work Plan.

That Cabinet **Resolved** to:

- a) Note the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) with a view to it being published on the Council's website by 31 December 2022 in accordance with legislative requirements.
- b) To reinstate Community Infrastructure Levy as an item on the Cabinet Work Programme.

### **105 Pavement License Fee Reimbursement**

Councillor Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader and Economic Development) introduced this item which set out the proposal to reimburse licence fees in respect of Pavement Licences. Councillor Enright said that it was important to help local businesses and that street trading added to the vibrancy of the towns and villages of West Oxfordshire. Those businesses which had paid fees would be reimbursed while there would be no charge for new applicants.

In answer to a question, Councillor Enright confirmed that there would still be a number of regulatory procedures that had to be followed such as food safety and keeping pavements clear, but the process of application would be easier. Councillor Enright thanked the Licensing Team for the help they had given in taking the proposals forward.

The Cabinet **Resolved** to:

- a) Approve the reimbursement of the pavement licence application fee to those eligible businesses,
- b) Approve the setting up of a process for an internal adjustment of funds for future applications rather than continuing to take payment and then reimburse, and
- c) Approve the payments for reimbursement from the Cabinet Priorities Fund.

The Leader wished all councillors a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.