

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Record of decisions taken at the meeting of the **Cabinet** held via video conferencing on **Wednesday 24 March, 2021** at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: Michele Mead (Leader); Toby Morris (Deputy Leader); Suzi Coul, Marilyn Davies, Jeff Haine, David Harvey and Norman MacRae MBE.

Also in Attendance: Councillors Richard Bishop, Jill Bull, Mike Cahill, Andrew Coles; Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Duncan Enright, Harry Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Gill Hill, Dan Levy, Martin McBride, Elizabeth Poskitt, Alex Postan, Carl Rylett and Geoff Saul

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive); Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer); Jan Britton (Managing Director), Christine Gore (Executive Director, Commissioning), Melanie Dodd (Biodiversity Officer); Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager); Philippa Lowe (Business Manager Localities); Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager); Caroline Clissold (Housing Manager); Vanessa Scott (Climate Change Manager); Democratic Services

109. NOTICE OF DECISIONS

**RESOLVED:** That the record of the decisions taken at the meeting held on 17 February 2021, copies of which had been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers relating to matters to be considered at the meeting.

112. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

112.1 John White

Mr. White read out a statement relating to Agenda Item 8, the Joint Tourism Service and Visitor Economy.

112.2 Sharone Parnes

Mr. Parnes had submitted a statement, which was read out to Cabinet by Democratic Services, and related to the Local Nature Reserve(s) in Woodstock.

113. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

113.1 The Leader announced that two long serving officers were retiring; Christine Gore and Martin Holland. She thanked them both for everything they had done for the Council and wished them well in their retirement.

113.2 Councillor Harvey announced that a Sustainable Planning Specialist had been appointed.

#### 114. LOCAL NATURE RESERVE: WOODSTOCK WATER MEADOWS

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Biodiversity Officer, which Councillor Haine introduced. He thanked Mr. Parnes for his submission. Councillor Haine reiterated that there were only two local nature reserves in West Oxfordshire, the Council does not have the authority to designate an area a local nature reserve. Woodstock Town Council would need to apply to Natural England to designate areas within their ownership and management.

**DECISION:** That Woodstock Town Council apply to Natural England to declare Local Nature Reserves on land within their ownership and management within their administrative boundaries only, including Woodstock Water Meadows.

#### 115. EAST CHIPPING NORTON SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Cabinet received the report of the Planning Policy Manager. Councillor Haine explained that the Council had received correspondence from the lawyers of CALA Homes and was seeking legal advice, therefore this item was being deferred until further notice.

#### 116. JOINT TOURISM SERVICE

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Business Manager Localities. Councillor Morris introduced this item, explaining that this was part of the recovery for the local economy from the Pandemic. There had been a joint steering group with the partner councils to pool resources and ideas, and it was hoped that local residents could see the impact of the project, in the local community, to recover from Covid-19.

**DECISIONS:**

- (a) That a joint Advisory Board be established with partners to provide stronger governance over the activities of the Cotswold Destination Management Organisation;
- (b) That the officers supporting the Advisory Board be requested to:
  - (i) Refresh the Destination Management plan;
  - (ii) Develop a range of key performance indicators to monitor impact;
  - (iii) Build on the Action Plan to prepare a programme of work to support the Green Economy, Recovery and Sustainable Tourism;
  - (iv) Prepare a Communication Strategy; and
  - (v) Review the DMO business member levels and funding structure;
- (c) That the dedicated face-to-face Visitor Information Services do not re-open and that appropriate budget is directed to businesses to support their transition to digital services; and
- (d) That an annual report be presented to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on the state of the Visitor Economy and update on delivery against Corporate Priorities.

#### 117. FINANCIAL AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT: 2020/2021 QUARTER THREE

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Chief Executive. Councillor Morris explained that the report outlined a budget which was set before Covid-19 and a re-forecast was necessary following the Pandemic. Government grants had covered any shortfall within

the budget position, and he thanked everyone who had worked to keep Council services delivered through the Pandemic.

**DECISION:** That the 2020-21 Quarter Three financial and service performance be noted.

#### 118. COMMUNITY REVENUE GRANTS

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Community Wellbeing Manager, which sought approval of recommended Community Revenue Grant awards for 2021/22, and for the distribution of remaining funds for 2020/21.

Councillor Coul explained that it had been a difficult year for the voluntary sector, a lot of projects had been unable to be completed, and it was considered that the organisations who were not able to start or complete their projects should still receive the grant allocation.

**DECISIONS:**

- (a) That the recommended Community Revenue Grant awards for 2021/22 be approved, as detailed in Annex 1 to the report; and
- (b) That the remaining £5,081 in the 2020/21 Community Revenue Grants budget, be distributed, as required, to the originally awarded bodies.

#### 119. PLANNED EXPENDITURE OF THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT 2021/2022

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Resident Services, which sought consideration of the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22 and the Emergency Accommodation Allocation for April to June 2021.

Councillor Davies explained that this was a comprehensive package which was a housing led approach, making sure that when people were made homeless they would be allocated a home as soon as possible, and wherever possible, within the district.

**DECISIONS:**

- (a) That the expenditure detailed within paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of the report be approved;
- (b) That, subject to a successful bid for RS14 funding, the allocation of spending as set out in paragraph 2.15 of the report be approved; and
- (c) That the Housing Manager be authorised, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, to approve any amendments to these allocations, subject to compliance with ring-fenced grant conditions.

#### 120. OXFORDSHIRE ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Climate Change Manager, which set out the benefits of the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS) and sought a decision to adopt the Strategy, the draft of which was included as an Annex to the report.

Councillor Harvey explained that an Oxfordshire wide project was being undertaken, and the strategy raised the number of electric vehicle charging points from 5% of all the car parking spaces to 7.5%, which depended on Government funding to move forward with this change, the charging points would be under local authority management by 2025. This had been delayed for about a year due to Covid-19.

**DECISION:** That the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.

121. OXFORDSHIRE COUNTYWIDE DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICE: EXTENSION OF CONTRACT

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Community Wellbeing Manager, which was for two years, in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and a financial commitment of £95,000. This was an essential service, although Councillors wanted to ensure that abuse of older people was highlighted as an issue.

**DECISIONS:**

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That approval be given for contributions to the Countywide Domestic Abuse contract to continue for a further two years, as outlined in the report.

122. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED:** That, in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person), the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business.

123. UNIT 13, TALISMAN BUSINESS CENTRE, BICESTER

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Senior Estates Officer. The property had been void for 2 years.

**DECISION:** That approval be given for the granting of a lease for Unit 13 at the Talisman Business Centre, Bicester, on the terms specified in the report.

124. REQUEST FOR FUNDING: SALT CROSS GARDEN VILLAGE DESIGN WORKS

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, which was supported by Members. The Garden Village would bring improvements, such as employment and affordable housing to the area.

**DECISIONS:**

- (a) That, in the absence of any other external funding sources, the forward funding of design works for the access roundabout and underpass to the Garden Village with A40 improvement works be supported in principle, subject to repayment of the funds by developers via the Section 106 Agreement for the Garden Village;
- (b) That the Chief Executive be authorised, following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and the Chief Finance Officer; to approve the final terms of the funding agreement; and
- (c) That up to £440,000 of funds from the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant reserve be allocated to provide this forward funding on the understanding that the Council's share will be substantially lower, and ultimately repaid.

The meeting closed at 3.33pm

Leader of the Council