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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Record of Decisions of the meeting of the
Cabinet

Held at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 21 July 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Michele Mead (Leader), Councillor David Harvey (Deputy Leader), Councillor Suzi Coul, Councillor Merilyn Davies, Councillor Jane Doughty, Councillor Jeff Haine and Councillor Norman MacRae MBE.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Senior Strategic Support Officer) and Jasmine McWilliams (Asset Manager).

18 Notice of Decisions

The notice of decisions taken at the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were noted.

19 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

21 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

22 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Mead addressed the meeting and requested a moments reflection following the sad news of the death of young, 13 year old resident earlier in the week. The young girl had passed away following an incident at Duck Lake and had been a student at Woodgreen School. A moments silence was held by all present.

Oxfordshire Growth Board – Change of Name

Councillor Mead advised that, following recent discussions, it had been agreed to change the name of the Oxfordshire Growth Board to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. It was felt this better reflected the purpose of the group and more accurately suited their remit. She advised that both names may continue to be used during the transition period.

Retirement of Monitoring Officer, Mr Keith Butler

Councillor Mead reminded Members that, although not present at the meeting, this was the last Cabinet meeting with Mr Butler at the helm as Monitoring Officer. She expressed her gratitude to him for all his help and support when she took over the role of Leader and agreed that he would be dearly missed. She wished him, along with the Cabinet Members, all the best for the next chapter in his life.

Councillor Mead also advised that the Cabinet meeting due to be held in August would be cancelled due to a lack of business.

Re-opening of Woodstock Swimming Pool

Councillor Doughty was delighted to announce that Woodstock Swimming Pool was due to reopen imminently. She advised that there would be a special 'pre-opening' of the pool on Thursday 22 July with slots being made available for children and after school attendance. The official opening day was Friday 23 July 2021 and Councillor Doughty reiterated that the pool

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was one of the jewels in West Oxfordshire's crown and all the team were excited to be re-opening their doors.

Launch of Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

Councillor Harvey announced the launch of the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit which had been produced to assist developers and home owners with understanding how they could reduce their carbon emissions. He noted that this was not just for new build properties but included information on retro-fitting existing buildings and was an excellent guide for all aspects of the subject including costings. Councillor Harvey advised that the 90 page document would be circulated to all Members in due course and he encouraged them to disseminate the information widely.

23 **Financial Performance Report 2020/21 Year End**

Members received a report from the Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive which provided details of the Council's financial performance at the end of 2020/21, the key movements to reserves and the capital budget for 21/22, including any unspent funds rolled over from 20/21.

The circumstances of the 2020/21 financial year applied an unprecedented pressure on Council finances in terms of the ability to generate and collect income. The report outlined the early action taken by officers and the biggest impacts on the budget.

The Revenue Outturn was attached as Annex A and the Capital Programme was attached at Annex B.

The report asked for approval to carry forward £3.657m of Capital Budget as detailed in Annex B as well as to approve the transfers to Earmarked Reserves as detailed in section 4 of the report.

There were no alternative options detailed in the report.

Councillor Coul introduced the report and reminded Members of the careful and considered approach the Council had taken with its finances in recent times. This had resulted in the authority being in a better position than many other Council's. However, she noted how challenging the past year had been, with additional costs and loss of income. She reminded Members that there was not an easy journey ahead and urged caution as the District tried to recover from the impact of Covid-19. She proposed the recommendations as laid out.

These were seconded by the Leader.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

Resolved that the report be noted; and

Recommended that Council

- (a) approve the carry forward of Capital Budget of £3.657m as detailed in Annex B to the report; and
- (b) approve the transfers to Earmarked Reserves as detailed in section 4 of the report.

24 **Approval of Proposed Standard Fees for Legal and Estates**

Members received a report from the Interim Head of Legal Services which sought approval to set the Legal and Estates fees for property transactions.

The report advised that historically Legal and Estates fees had been charged by the Council where a transaction was at the request of the tenant or other parties but there had been no

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standard fees set formally by the Council, with each case set individually. Private sector landlords and other Councils typically charged standard fees for property transactions where appropriate.

The main points relating to the Legal and Estates fees were summarised at sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the report and it was proposed that the fees be set annually within the Fees and Charges report.

An alternative option was that Members could choose to amend or not approve the proposed standard fees.

Councillor Coul outlined the report, which was considered to be a sensible, housekeeping exercise and proposed the recommendations as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor MacRae who noted the importance of being open and transparent with these decisions.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

Resolved that the fees detailed at Annex A be approved; and

Recommended that the fees be set annually as part of the Council's Fees and Charges report to Cabinet.

25 Oxfordshire Plan Consultation Document

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which asked them to consider the approval of the Oxfordshire Plan consultation document, which set out a range of planning policy options and a series of spatial strategy options for Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) is being produced by the five local planning authorities in Oxfordshire, working in close partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and OxLEP throughout.

When complete the Oxfordshire Plan would provide a high-level spatial planning framework for Oxfordshire up to 2050 and would be a statutory planning document supplementing Local Plans. The Plan aimed to be transformational and occupied new policy areas, such as climate change, environmental betterment, health impacts and zero carbon transport. It had now reached the Regulation 18 part 2 stage.

The report and consultation document were considered by the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 July 2021. The Committee did not raise any objections but noted some points of detail. These points were noted by the Chief Executive and would be taken into account in the context of recommendation b).

The report noted that the proposed Consultation document at Annex B differed from that published for the meeting of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee but only in relation to the information on page 120 of the document.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose not to approve the consultation document.

Councillor Haine outlined the report and reported the content of an email received from the CPRE to all Members. The CPRE whilst supportive in principle had raised concerns that the document was not fit for purpose. Councillor Haine provided an overview of the document and the reasons he felt it should be approved for consultation. He proposed the recommendations as laid out and this was seconded by Councillor Davies.

In response to a query from Councillor Graham, the Chief Executive assured Members that the comments and suggestions from the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taken into account, as per the paragraph at section 3 of the report.

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Councillor Enright advised that the County Council had approved the document for consultation at their recent Cabinet meeting and highlighted the importance of joint working. The Leader assured Councillor Enright that the District's response would be delivered by the Chief Executive along with the CEO's of all Council's.

Councillor Postan advised that, alongside his colleague Councillor Levy, the document had been considered by the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel. The Panel had given a clear understanding that the document needed to reflect that the country was in a Climate Emergency and therefore the attitude towards all plans being developed, needed to reflect that view. He also advised of technological developments that had the potential to be interesting and positive, which he intended to brief Members on in due course.

Councillor Cooper raised a query as to what cases had been looked at and consideration given to a buffer zone at Blenheim. He cited the recent situation in Liverpool who had lost their World Heritage Site status. In response, the Chief Executive advised that this document did not look at the detail of locations and this would be considered in more detail, further through the process.

The Leader concurred that once the document reached the Regulation 19 level, it included far more detail. Councillor Postan noted that there was such thing as a Buffer Zone in legal terms.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Scrutiny Committees and the Members present, Cabinet

Resolved that

- a) the Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation document be approved for public consultation as attached; and
- b) the Chief Executive be authorised to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the documents, and agree the final publication style, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, subject to agreement with their counterparts in the other four partner Local Planning Authorities.

26 Options for the future use of 33A High Street, Burford

Members received a report from the Asset Manager and Valuer and Estates Surveyor which asked them to consider the options for the future of 33A High Street, Burford.

The report advised that the Council owned the freehold of 33A High Street, Burford, shown edged red on the plan attaches as Annex A to the report. The property comprised a ground floor retail unit with ancillary storage space and

a single WC. The subject property was located within the same building as the public conveniences which had independent access from the High Street, along the side of the building. The report focused on the future use of the retail shop only which was used by the Council as a Visitor Information Centre up until March 2021.

This service was closed after a decision by Cabinet on 24 March 2021.

As the building became vacant, an options appraisal, shown in the confidential Annex A to the report, was prepared by the Valuer & Estates Surveyor. In addition, the Council had received interest in the property on a commercial letting basis and a

freehold sale basis, also detailed in the options appraisal at Annex A.

The options for the future of the property were to retain and re-let on a commercial basis or sell on the open market. Full details of the options were outlined at 2.2 and 2.3 of the report.

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An alternative option was that the Council could decide to retain the property but continue a community use. However, it was noted that there would be no financial benefit to this option.

Councillor Coul outlined the report and reminded Members of the previous report relating to Council finances and the need to be prudent. She therefore proposed that Option I in the report be supported which would provide the Council with a healthy financial yield and the option of retain the building for future use.

This was seconded by Councillor Doughty.

Resolved that

- a) Option I be pursued as specified in the report, in line with the principles of the Investment Strategy; and
- b) the Group Manager for Commissioning be authorised to approve the final detailed heads of terms for a lease of the site, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chief Finance Officer.

The Meeting closed at 2.32 pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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