

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Executive**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 2 September 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council  
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management  
Councillor Norman Bolster, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy  
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures  
Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning  
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Public Protection  
Councillor Nigel Morris, Lead Member for Clean and Green  
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing  
Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Performance and Customers

Also Present: Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group

Apologies for absence: Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Officers: Calvin Bell, Director of Development  
Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment  
Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer  
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer  
Adrian Colwell, Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy  
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager  
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

#### **28 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **29 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

#### **30 Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

31 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32 **High Speed 2 (HS2) Update**

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which provided an update on the High Speed Rail - HS2 scheme and Cherwell District.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the process that has been introduced by HS2 Ltd for Safeguarding be noted.
- (2) That the CDC response to the HS2 Environmental Statement be noted.
- (3) That the on-going Legal Challenge to the HS2 scheme and next steps be noted.

**Reasons**

Cherwell District Council continues to take appropriate steps to respond to the HS2 scheme. This includes supporting legal challenge when necessary and engaging directly with HS2 Ltd to secure the best possible mitigation for the District should the scheme be approved by Parliament.

**Options**

Option One: To note the recommendations relating to CDC actions and discretion.

Option Two: To reject these recommendations.

Option Three: To propose an alternative approach.

33 **District Wide Programme of Article 4 Directions to Protect Heritage Interest**

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report which sought consideration of the introduction of a District wide programme of Article 4 Directions to preserve the Character and Appearance of Areas with Heritage Significance.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the process of rolling-out a programme of Article 4 Directions be approved

- (2) That officers be requested to include an article in Cherwell Link on Article 4 Directions.

### **Reasons**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to ensure that local heritage is protected. This is done by understanding local heritage assets and managing change to ensure that the significance is not harmed. The criteria for Article 4 Directions are therefore straight-forward and transparent to aid both Cherwell District Council and the local community in managing local heritage assets appropriately thereby ensuring that their significance is not harmed.

To increase public awareness.

### **Options**

Option One: To accept the programme of Article 4 Directions with phased implementation.

Option Two: To decline the programme of Article 4 Directions as described.

## **34 Funding Provision for Enforcement Action in Connection with Work-in-default and with Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use**

The Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report which sought support in principle for the establishment, through the annual budget setting process, of a capital budget against which the Housing and Regeneration Service could draw when taking enforcement action to bring empty homes back into use, or when needing to undertake Works-in-Default following the failure of a notice recipient to comply with an enforcement notice requiring remedial works.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the establishment of a capital budget, through the annual budget setting process for 2014-15, and in successive years, that will enable enforcement powers delegated to the Head of Regeneration to be utilised effectively, and without the need for the necessary funding to be sought separately in each particular case be supported.

### **Reasons**

Members' concern about the waste represented by long-term empty homes, and their desire to get them back into use is underpinned and ultimately dependent upon the Council's preparedness to take enforcement action in appropriate cases. It is effectively a last resort, but one that will not only get specific properties back into use, but also demonstrate very clearly to other owners of empty property that the Council is serious about reducing the number of empty home in the district. Without recourse to enforcement, where appropriate, the Council could appear toothless.

The Council is responsible for taking action to address unsatisfactory housing conditions and uses a variety of enforcement notices to achieve that. In cases where those notices are ignored the Council needs to be able to undertake Work-in default to ensure compliance.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing is authorised to take empty-dwelling enforcement action (EDMOs), to serve notices to remedy unsatisfactory housing and to undertake Work-in-default action arising, but requires funding to be available it that is to happen.

The most efficient and effective means of providing the necessary funding is by establishing a specific budget and having funds in place at the beginning of each year.

### **Options**

Option One: Support the principle that a capital budget should be established so as to facilitate and enable effective housing enforcement action; and also support the principle that this budget should be determined, on an annual basis, through the budget setting process.

Option Two: Decline to support this approach and require the Head of Regeneration and Housing to seek funding, on a case by case basis, by means of reports to the Executive (as is currently the situation).

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### **South West Bicester Sports Village Progress Update**

The Head of Community Services submitted a report which provided a progress report on the Bicester Sports Village project.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the progress on the construction of Phase 1 (grass pitches, cycle track and landscaping) and the progress on the procurement process for Phase 2 (design and construction of a pavilion and car park) be noted.

### **Reasons**

This is a Project Board update report. There are no Key Issues or decisions required at this stage. Project Issues are captured on the Issues log and reviewed by the Project Board.

### **Options**

Option One: The Project has been approved and is progressing in accordance with these approvals. There are no other Options being considered.

## Performance Management Framework 2013/14 First Quarter Performance Report

The Head of Transformation submitted a report which presented the Council's performance for the period 01 April to 30 June 2013 as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

### Resolved

- (1) That the following achievements be noted:

#### **Cherwell: A District of Opportunity**

- Processing of major applications within 13 weeks has significantly improved to 68.75% this quarter, compared to 25% at the end of Quarter 4, exceeding the target of 50%.
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has reduced to well below target. 34 have been placed in temporary accommodation with an expected target of 41. Work is further progressing with partners (Registered Social Landlords) to ensure delays in 'move-ons' and 'turn arounds' is kept to a minimum.

#### **A Cleaner Greener Cherwell**

- The amount of waste recycled this quarter has improved to 58% compared to the last quarter of 55%, the target for this year is to maintain above 57%. The Street cleansing team have completed a 'Litter Blitz' week with the community of Hardwick. This involves road shows, swap shops, collection of large bulky items for free and more importantly engaging with the community and educating about recycling.
- EcoTown work is due to start on site at the initial housing development at Northwest Bicester in September. A2 Dominion will begin construction of the spine road to serve the development. The construction of the first homes is expected to begin in early 2014.

#### **A Safe, Healthy and Thriving District**

- The new sports pitches at South West Bicester are making progress, the contractor has completed the sports pitch construction including the drainage, next stage is to seed the pitch. The cycle track will then be constructed in August/September.
- Supporting the local health sector in building a new community hospital in Bicester has progressed; construction is underway of the new facility.

#### **An Accessible Value for Money Council**

- Improvements to the website have started with a new online form systems being implemented; this will allow the customer more options and a customer friendly online form to report issues. This will also extend to include more of the Councils services online.

- (2) That the following performance related matters for review or consideration in future reports be noted:

#### **Cherwell: A District of Opportunity**

- Processing of Minor Applications within 8 weeks is reporting as Red, this is 51.72% compared with 73.74% last quarter. The target is 65%. Processing of Other Applications within 8 weeks is

reporting as Amber, this is 76.56% compared to 86.28% last quarter, the target is 80%. This is due to the focus concentrating on the submission and process of Major applications which takes longer to complete. Priority action is being enforced by seconding the Development Management Staff; this together with new appointments to the team will ensure maintaining throughput of applications and ensuring they are manageable moving forward.

#### **A Cleaner Greener Cherwell**

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill is reporting as Red, 6566 tonnages against the target of 5900. The landfill tonnages are ahead of expectation. The waste and recycling team are working on reducing this for the next quarter.
- The number of Flytips is reporting as Amber, across the District there have been 100 flytips in quarter 1, only 4 flytips over target which is 96. We are experiencing an increase in either single item or small flytips in garage areas. A joint approach with the housing associations to tackle the issue is underway, this includes education of areas and also signage to discourage the flytipping.

#### **A Safe Healthy and Thriving District**

- Reducing domestic burglary incidents by 2% is reporting as Amber, Cherwell has received 50 reports of Burglary compared to 44 reports. This slight increase at this time of year is a common trend however, joint working with Thames Valley Police through the Joint Agency and Tasking Co-ordination (JATAC) meeting is underway to promote securing homes and sheds during the holiday period.
- Maintaining current levels of visits/usage to district leisure centres is reporting as Amber, 295,570 visits compared with 309,900 at Quarter 1 in 2012/2013. This is due to the teaching swimming pool being closed in Bicester which is having an adverse effect. Spiceball and Kidlington levels have increased and slightly exceed the target.

#### **An Accessible Value for Money Council**

- Implementing and embedding shared back office systems and services to secure efficiencies is reporting as Amber, this was also Amber at the end of the last quarter. Work is progressing in this area with the Human Resources Business Case having been approved and the 3 way ICT business case is also being developed.
- The percentage of housing benefit recovered, including outstanding is reporting as Red, 15.82% has been recovered compared with Quarter one 2012/2013 of 12.56%. The team are looking into this area to ensure targets are achievable. Invoices being paid within 30 days is reporting as Amber, 96.05% have been paid within 30 days against a target of 98%. This reduction in performance is due to missing information on the invoices which is delaying the process. Proactive steps have been taken with regular communication of requiring all information, this has been sent to all staff via email.

- (3) That the progress on issues raised in the Quarter two report be noted.

## **Reasons**

This report presents the Council's performance against its corporate scorecard for the first quarter of 2013/14. It includes an overview of successes, areas for improvement and emerging issues to be considered.

## **Options**

Option One: 1. To note the many achievements referred to in paragraph 1.3.; 2. To identify any performance related matters for review or consideration in future reports identified in paragraph 1.4; 3. To note progress on issues raised in the Quarter four performance report highlighted in paragraph 1.5.

Option Two: To identify any additional issues for further consideration or review.

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## **Quarter 1 2013/14 Finance and Procurement Report**

The Head of Finance and Procurement submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital performance for the first 3 months of the financial year 2013/14 and projections for the full 2013/14 period. These were measured by the budget monitoring function and reported via the Performance Management Framework (PMF) informing the 2013/14 budget process currently underway.

The report also presented information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy during 2013/14 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the projected revenue & capital position at June 2013 be noted.
- (2) That the quarter 1 (Q1) performance against the 2013/14 investment strategy and the financial returns from the two funds be noted.
- (3) That the contents and the progress against the Corporate Procurement Action Plan and the Procurement savings achieved at June 2013 be noted.

## **Reasons**

This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2013/14 Financial Targets for Revenue, Capital, Treasury and Procurement Monitoring.

## **Options**

Option One: To review current performance levels and considers any actions arising.

Option Two: To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

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The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman:

Date: