

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 3 April 2018 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 Colin Clarke Lead Member for Planning
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes, Lead Member for Joint Working and ICT
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Clean and Green
Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy

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

Apologies for absence: Councillor Kieron Mallon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Community Services
Councillor Richard Mould, Lead Member for Performance Management

Officers: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Cecilie Booth, Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer
Richard Ellis, Interim Executive Director: Wellbeing
James Doble, Assistant Director: Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

111 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

112 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

113 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

114 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

115 **Participation in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme**

The Interim Director: Wellbeing submitted a report to consider Cherwell District Council's progress regarding the resettlement of six refugee families into the district as part of the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS). This report also sought to inform future decision making regarding the resettlement of refugee families in Cherwell District, wider engagement in the asylum seeker dispersal programme and preparation of a bid for Controlling Migration Fund monies.

On behalf of Executive, the Chairman commended officers and other agencies for their hard work supporting the families who had previously relocated to the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the findings of the evaluation report of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) in Cherwell be noted.
- (3) That, having given due consideration, the resettlement of an additional six Syrian Refugee families within Cherwell district be agreed.
- (4) That the establishment of a dedicated post to deal with Syrian Refugee work in Cherwell (funded by VPRS funding) be supported.
- (5) That officers be supported to develop a bid to the Controlling Migration Fund in relation to Cherwell district.
- (6) That, having given due consideration, participation in the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Programme in Cherwell district be endorsed and officers requested to proceed accordingly.

Reasons

Based upon the success of the programme to date, there is an opportunity for Cherwell District Council to resettle additional Syrian Refugee families into the district. A further 6 families would approximately equate to 50 individuals in total. This would align with the request made to senior politicians from the Churches in Bicester group in January 2017.

If further families are resettled, Cherwell District Council should continue to source accommodation from the private rented sector for VPRS use. Also the Council should continue to focus on securing 3 and 4 bedroom properties. This would ensure smaller accommodation is not being taken away from

others in the district in housing need and ensures that the Council has sufficient funding available to support the families being resettled.

If Cherwell District Council choose to resettle more families into the district consideration needs to be given to how these families will be supported. The preferred way forward at this stage is that a procurement exercise would be undertaken to secure a support provider for a subsequent phase of VPRS in Cherwell District.

The evaluation has highlighted that the resettlement of refugees into the district requires significant amounts of officer time to be committed to ensure families are resettled successfully and that a joined up approach is achieved with other statutory agencies and partners. If further families are resettled, it is proposed that a dedicated member of staff is employed using some of the funding available to support the programme moving forwards to help the Council deliver the project further.

The Controlling Migration Fund is designed to support local authorities in England who are experiencing pressures on services from either illegal or legitimate migration. The Fund is available for local authorities to apply for over four years 2016/17 – 2019/20 and focuses on responding to problems caused by high migration into localities and is designed to help deliver benefits to the local population.

Alternative options

Option 1: To approve the findings of the evaluation as recommended in this report and commit to the resettlement of a further 6 families into the district. However, not approve the dedicated staff resource that has been requested. This would mean that considerable amounts of existing staff time would be spent on this project diverting this resource from other housing activities.

Option 2: Not to resettle any more refugees into Cherwell district. By not accepting any more families into the district, the Council may receive criticism that it is not continuing to help families beyond the 6 families already pledged.

Option 3: To resettle less than 6 refugees into Cherwell district. Officers expect to have resettled approximately 30 individuals into the district once the 6 family arrive in the spring. Due to the uncertainty about the number of people within each family arriving until accommodation has been secured there is potential for the Council to not be able to fulfil the petition's request to resettle 50 refugees.

Option 4: To resettle more than 6 refugees into the district. Resettling more families into the district at this time would be difficult. Staff resources in excess of the dedicated post being requested would need to be made available to the project and it would be difficult to find enough private rented accommodation for families.

116 **Notification of Urgent Action: Amendment to the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018 in order to.

Resolved

- (1) That the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018 and to maximise the funding to support local businesses be noted.

Reasons

The timescale for making use of this funding is extremely tight and exceptional arrangements are therefore necessary. The taking of urgent action associated with the proposals set out in this report give the Council the best chance of utilising the available funds and delivering consequent benefits to local businesses. In accordance with the Constitution, the urgent action is reported to Executive for information.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to note the report. This is not recommended as the urgent action has been taken and it is a constitutional requirement for it to be reported to the body that would ordinarily have taken the decision.

117 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

118 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

119 **Community Infrastructure Grants**

The Assistant Director: Communities submitted an exempt report which sought approval of the grant process and criteria for the newly established Community Infrastructure grants pot.

Resolved

- (1) That the grant information pack, associated application form and the criteria for the approval be agreed.
- (2) That the approach of delegating future grant funding decisions above £20,000 to the Lead Member with responsibility for Communities subject to funds being available and subject to the same terms and conditions as will be applied (as amended from time to time) to the proposed grant scheme be endorsed.

Reasons

The grant scheme was established through the last budget setting process with the intention of having a small scale of capital funding available to properly constituted, not-for-profit organisations, who need to secure some investment in property or equipment in order to sustain their community activity and involvement.

This grant programme sits alongside money for community development and infrastructure delivered through various S106 agreements. Usually the grants will be for infrastructure outside the areas of growth and as such are complementary.

Alternative options

Option 1: To determine additional or different grant criteria. This option was not pursued as the criteria are generally in line with other grant schemes managed by officers and provide for a broad and balanced application of funding

120

Crown House Update

The Chief Executive submitted an exempt report which provided an update on Crown House.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and appendices be noted.
- (2) As set out in the exempt minutes.
- (3) That it be noted that the matter will be reported to the May Council meeting for information.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt minutes

Executive - 3 April 2018

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

Chairman:

Date: