

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 4 July 2011 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Michael Gibbard
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Also Present: Councillor Leslie F Sibley
Councillor Tim Emptage

Apologies for absence: Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor Nigel Morris
Councillor D M Pickford

Officers: Sue Smith, Chief Executive
Ian Davies, Strategic Director Environment & community
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer
Philip Clarke, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development
Paul Marston-Weston, Head of Recreation & Health
Kevin Lane, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager
Nigel Bell, Team Leader - Planning and Litigation / Interim Monitoring Officer
Natasha Clark, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chairman confirmed that he had received no petitions and that he had agreed to Mr Bernie Douglas and Councillor George Parish to address the meeting.

17 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

18 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 **Response to Department for Transport Consultation on High Speed Rail**

The Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy submitted a report which enable Members to agree the proposed responses to the seven questions posed in the Department for Transport's consultation upon High Speed Rail with respect to both the proposed national high speed rail strategy and on the recommended line of route for an initial London to West Midlands section of the railway.

Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, addressed the Executive regarding the funding the council had allocated to support its campaign in opposition to the HS2 proposals.

In response to Councillor Emptage's address, the Chairman confirmed that at present up to £50k had been allocated and should additional funding be required, the request would be submitted to Full Council for consideration.

Mr Bernie Douglas addressed the Executive as Chairman of Villages of Oxfordshire Opposing HS2 (VoxOpp).

The Executive commended the Development Control Team Leader and his team for the comprehensive and high quality report.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed that the Council should make representations in response to Consultation questions 1-3 objecting to the national high speed rail strategy in general accordance with the comments expressed in Section 3 of the report (attached as an annex to these minutes as set out in the minute book), those made by the "51M" group to the Transport Select Committee, and subject to the agreement of the Lead Member for Planning, in accordance with the "51M " group's further comments on this matter.
- (2) That it be agreed that the Council should make representations in response to Consultation questions 4-6 expressing severe concerns about the paucity of information and concerns about several details of the scheme as consulted upon in general accordance with the comments contained in sections 4-6 of the report (attached as an annex to these minutes as set out in the minute book), and subject to the agreement of the Lead Member for Planning in accordance with

any further representations made on behalf of "51M" as a critique of the Appraisal of Sustainability.

- (3) That it be agreed that the Council should make representations in respect of Consultation question 7 in accordance with the comments in Section 4.33-4.34 of the report (attached as an annex to these minutes as set out in the minute book).
- (4) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director of Planning Housing and Economy, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, the final wording of the consultation responses to be made in general accordance with resolutions 1-3 above.
- (5) That the Development Control Team Leader be requested to liaise with Bernie Douglas, Chairman of Villages of Oxfordshire Opposing HS2 (VoxOpp), to circulate the report to villages affected by the HS2 proposals.

Reasons

At its meeting of 7 March 2011 the Executive agreed to join other local authorities along the preferred route to campaign against the proposals. Formal agreement of the Council's responses to the seven questions posed in the Department for Transport's consultation upon High Speed Rail with respect to both the proposed national high speed rail strategy and on the recommended line of route for an initial London to West Midlands section of the railway is required before the consultation closes on 29 July 2011.

20

Armed Forces Community Covenant

The Chief Executive and the Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager submitted a report which provided an update on the Oxfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant and Cherwell District Council's response to it.

Resolved

- (1) That the importance of the Armed Forces Community Covenant be noted and that officers working across all Council services be requested to ensure there are clear plans in place to deliver the aspirations of the Covenant.

Reasons

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is an important commitment on the part of the District Council to support armed services personnel, their families, children, reservists and veterans. The Council views the local military as an important part of the community and part of the tradition within the District and will continue to work in local partnerships and across the County to ensure the commitments outlined in the covenant are met.

Options

Option One To approve the recommendations.

Option Two To amend or reject the recommendations.

21

Horton General Hospital and Health Sector Changes

The Strategic Director Environment and Community submitted a report which sought consideration of the progress and current position regarding the implementation of alternative service models for the Horton General Hospital. It also sought consideration of the radical changes in the health sector and the latest position in changes locally.

Councillor Les Sibley addressed the meeting as Leader of the Opposition. He commended the work of the Council in supporting the Horton General Hospital and queried if a similar progress report on the Bicester Community Hospital could be provided.

In response to the address of the Leader of the Opposition, the Chairman requested officers to submit a progress report on Bicester Community Hospital to their September or October meeting.

Councillor George Parish addressed the meeting at the discretion of the Chairman as a leading campaigner for the Horton General Hospital.

Resolved

- (1) That the good progress in implementing sustainable service delivery models at the Horton General Hospital be noted.
- (2) That the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals Trust be urged to implement as soon as possible the revised model for maternity and gynaecology.
- (3) That the establishment of a Community Partnership Network with membership drawn from local health and social care service commissionaires and providers plus relevant stakeholders be supported.
- (4) That officers be requested to submit a progress report on the Bicester Community Hospital to the September or October meeting of Executive.

Reasons

A key issue associated with the Horton General Hospital (HGH) is the ongoing sustainability of the agreed service levels when the commissioning body and arrangements will be changing. There is a perceived threat that the health sector reforms will provide greater competition from the private sector which could impact on the HGH. By having a stakeholder group which brings together the key commissioners and providers i.e. GPs, ORH & OCC, there

will be a local focus and dialogue on how this works in practice and to attempt to influence the future commissioning of services from the HRH.

A further issue relates to the extent of public involvement in the services and the new Community Partnership Network. Each commissioner and service provider is expected to have their own arrangements for this and it will be important not to duplicate and have clarity of responsibility. Past experience does indicate that there is not wide public understanding of the structure and responsibilities of the current health service. In such circumstances and with so much significant change about to happen, it is important at the very least that the new Network does attempt to improve this position.

The principle behind the Community Partnership Network is to have meetings in public with managed, but considerable public participation during the meeting. This worked well for the previous Forum and it is intended to continue for this new body, thereby allowing wider public participation for the sector issues as a whole.

Options

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| Option One | To support the Community Partnership Network. |
| Option Two | To withdraw from involvement in public engagement, communication and changes in the health and social care sector. |
| Option Three | To attempt to engage partially with the health and social care sector through individual organisations rather than a collective stakeholder group. |

22

Value for Money Review of Economic Development

The Strategic Director for Planning, Housing & Economy, the Head of Planning Policy & Economic Development and the Improvement Project Manager submitted a report which sought consideration of the findings of the Value for Money Review of Economic Development and the recommendations arising from the report.

Resolved

- (1) That the Value for Money Review conclusion that Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn be noted.
- (2) That the Economic Development Service Vision to 2016 (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) which sets out a forward looking framework, drawing on the Council's contribution to the emerging Economic Development Strategy be adopted.

- (3) That gross savings of £35,000 with immediate effect, as a contribution towards the Council delivering its Medium Term Financial Strategy, be accepted, recognising this reduces the flexibility of the service to undertake economic development activity in the future.

Reasons

Cherwell's Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn. The Economic Development Service Vision to 2016 sets out a forward looking framework drawing on the Council's contribution to the new Economic Development Strategy, within which the service can undertake its annual service and budget setting activity.

Agreeing to the level of savings proposed by this review assists the Council in delivering its Medium Term Financial Strategy, but reduces the flexibility of the service to undertake economic development activity in the future.

23 **2010/2011 End of Year Finance and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Report**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which summarised the Council's provisional Revenue and Capital performance for the financial year 2010/2011 and reports on performance against the procurement action plan. The figures were still subject to further validation work to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and proper accounting practices. The report also considered the process and timetable for refreshing our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Lead Member for Financial Management advised the Executive that the update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy had been delayed due to the budget being refreshed and uncertainty over the government grant. A full update would be provided to the September meeting of the Executive.

The Executive requested that their thanks to the Finance and Procurement Teams for their work during 2010/11, in particular for the progress made in implementing the Procurement Action Plan, be recorded.

Resolved

- (1) That the provisional revenue out-turn position for 2010/2011 detailed in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book).
- (2) That the continued improvement in accuracy and reliability that the Council has made in projecting the year end position through the embedding of the Corporate Dashboard be noted.
- (3) That the provisional capital out-turn position for 2010/2011 detailed in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book) be noted.
- (4) That the balances on capital schemes which have slipped in 2010/2011 to be carried forward into the 2011/2012 capital programme as set out

in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book) be agreed.

- (5) That progress against the Councils Procurement Action plan and savings achieved as set out in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book) be noted.
- (6) That the update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update be noted.

Reasons

This report illustrates the Council's provisional performance against the 2010/2011 Revenue and Capital Budget and progress achieved against our Procurement action plan and targets.

Options

- Option One** To review current performance levels and consider any actions arising.
- Option Two** To approve or reject the recommendations above.

24

Performance Management Framework 2010/2011 End of Year Performance Report

The Chief Executive and the Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager submitted a report which presented the Councils performance in 2010/11, as measured through the Corporate Performance Management Framework.

The Executive commended officers for the continued operation of performance monitoring and requested that a one page summary of the highlights be produced for circulation to all Members.

Resolved

- (1) That it be noted that, despite tough performance targets and a challenging economic environment, the Council has met or made satisfactory progress on 97% of the performance targets in the Corporate Scorecard (the basket of priority measures) and met or made satisfactory progress on 95% of the performance targets in the Corporate Plan which sets out activities and targets under each of the Council's four strategic priorities.
- (2) That it be noted that the Council has delivered a challenging programme of improvement projects and value for money reviews. Of the 22 projects and reviews scheduled for 2010/11 21 were completed with good or satisfactory outcomes and only 1 delayed due a changing government policy. The improvement programme has directly contributed to the delivery of savings and efficiencies to balance the Council's budget.

- (3) That the progress in delivering the Council's strategic objectives and the following achievements be noted:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- **Contributing to the creation of new opportunities in the district:** In spite of challenging economic circumstances the Council has focused on supporting local residents and businesses through its activities. The successful job club partnership has continued with targeted events to improve access and an apprenticeship scheme targeted at young people not in education, employment or training has been continued. The Council's work in this area has been recognised as national good practice and its approach cited by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.
- **Local Housing:** The Council has delivered 370 new homes, 126 affordable houses, including 40 extra care units, maintained the low number of residents in temporary accommodation at 29, and invested £950,000 in better quality housing for vulnerable people including warm front top up grants, and emergency repairs.
- **Regeneration and Growth:** The Council has secured funding to make progress on the Eco Town demonstration projects, worked with developers to begin the Bicester Town Centre Redevelopment Programme, and made progress on Local Development Framework Core Strategy in spite of significant national policy change and reduced resources. High profile projects such as the Miller Road Self-Build scheme are supporting local people to develop new skills and employment opportunities whilst providing affordable housing and work has started on the South West Bicester development.

A Cleaner, Greener Cherwell

- **Waste and Recycling:** The Council has implemented a food waste recycling scheme and exceeded its recycling target. Recycling in Cherwell is now at over 57%.
- **Clean Streets:** The Council has met all its targets for dealing with litter, graffiti, and fly posting, improved enforcement and continued to undertake local environmental 'blitzes' reducing even further the low level of environmental crime. Residents' satisfaction with green spaces in Cherwell has also improved.
- **Climate Change:** The Council has improved its environment credentials by rolling out a new scheme at its depot. This includes greatly improved insulation, low energy lighting and energy saving controls, photovoltaic solar panels, a biomass boiler for heating, a water recycling vehicle wash to save water, together with a much improved fuel installation. This initiative has been short listed for the

Environment and Energy Awards for the Best Energy-Efficient Project 2011.

The Cherwell Climate Partnership has undertaken communications activities to inform local people about the impacts of climate change and further reductions in the Council's Co2 emissions from its fleet and offices have been made.

A Safe and Healthy Cherwell

- **Sports and Leisure:** During 2010/11 there were over 1.2 million visits to Cherwell leisure centres and nearly 700 new participants in activities for older people. The 'Play Well' project has been completed and assessed as outstanding, the 'Get Oxfordshire Active' project (aimed at increasing adult participation in sport) has seen 1840 participants and high levels of satisfaction with the programme. Usage of the Council supported sports sites at the North Oxfordshire Academy and Cooper School have also increased during the year with over 75,000 visits recorded.
- **Reducing Crime and the Fear of Crime:** The Cherwell Community Safety Partnership continues its focus on tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and working to combat fear of crime. Crime figures for 2010/11 show a 20% reduction in serious acquisitive crime and 30% reduction in serious violent crime (in comparison with 2009/10). In relation to fear of crime the residents' survey shows that 88% of residents feel safe in their community and at home up from 82% in 2009/10. In terms of Anti-Social behaviour Thames Valley Police have recorded a 15% drop in incidents when comparing 2009/10 and 2010/11. This has been achieved through effective enforcement and a strong partnership between the local policing team and the Council.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** The Council has continued to work closely with partners to press for the best possible services for the district. A variety of health improvement activities have been delivered including, health trainers working to address health inequalities issues in higher risk wards, the health bus providing a one-stop shop services, increased visits to sports centres and an accessible range of activities such as women only swimming sessions.

An Accessible, Value for Money Council

- **Improving access:** the Council continues to focus on improving access for customers, especially the most vulnerable. During 2010/11 over 60 community groups have been visited by outreach specialists to help improve access. 22 Parish Councils have been supported to develop websites helping to improve local information and the Council has also improved its online access to services with over 100 services now available along with a specialist youth website.

- The Council has also continued to improve its engagement with harder to reach groups, supporting the establishment of a Cherwell Faith Forum with local partners and community representatives, embedding the equalities panel and running a 'Knowing our Community' programme for staff and partners, increasing the number of consultations available on the consultation portal and using consultation techniques to ensure the Council hears the views of vulnerable groups, including older and younger people and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Innovative examples of consultation this year include developing a greater understanding of fear of crime issues in urban and rural areas, public budget consultation and the Connecting Communities programme in Banbury.
- **Delivering Value for Money:** the Council has delivered its programme of Value for Money reviews, meeting the challenge of significantly reducing the Council's budget whilst minimising the impact on frontline services. As a result the Council has exceeded its public pledge to reduce costs by £800,000.
- The Council's innovative "invest to save" approach of creating a corporate procurement team with annual targets ensuring the operation is both self-funding and provides additional returns has secured cashable savings of £0.9m against a target of £625,000 from April 2008 to March 2011 with £306,000 achieved in year against a target of £225,000. Further non-cashable savings of more than £160,000 and capital savings of some £720,000 have been achieved over the same period. The cumulative total for contracts let for more than a year from April 2008 to March 2011 is £1.5m. The 2011/12 Procurement Strategy and Action Plan further develops the Council's approach to long-term planning and collaboration – particularly with South Northamptonshire Council – allowing the team to continue to be self funded and guarantee year on year savings.

In 2010/11 the Council adopted two additional cross cutting priorities reflecting the importance of the Eco Bicester project and a pilot programme of work which aims to tackle deprivation and disadvantage in Banbury.

- **Eco Bicester:** The Eco Bicester Project is the Council's initiative to develop the town as a housing and employment growth location with improved infrastructure and facilities and a special environmental awareness and protection objective. It encompasses the national Eco Town initiative, with a new Eco Town development proposed at North West Bicester and a number of demonstration schemes around the town. The work is already having an impact in "putting Bicester on the map", with both national level and international interest. It is fair to say that Bicester appears to be at the most advanced stage of planning amongst the four nationally designated Eco Towns.

Over the course of the year the project has continued to make strong progress. Highlights are: approval by all three councils involved in the Strategic Delivery Board of "Eco Bicester - One Shared Vision"; Cooper School, the Garth Eco House, Catholic Church Community Hall demonstration projects approaching completion; award of an additional £3.3M of government pump priming money; the commitment of the Homes and Community Agency additional capital funding to make the early social housing happen; submission of the 400 home exemplar planning application.

There have also been a number of successful consultation and community involvement events including the Eco Bicester Day, the aim of which was to let people know more about the Eco Bicester concept. The event took place in Sheep Street, and outlined some of the things people can do to be more eco-friendly. There was consultation over bus and cycle routes, and more than 200 people completed Love Food Hate Waste pledges.

- **Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation:** during 2010/11 the focus of the Brighter Futures in Banbury programme has been supporting families, children and young people, particularly those not in employment, education or training, referred to as "NEETs". The Council continues to lead the Brighter Futures in Banbury Steering Group, a multi-agency partnership targeting issues of need and health inequalities in Banbury.

The programme is based on a significant review and analysis of the issues facing local communities the group has secured additional funding to increase access to the family intervention project working directly to support the most vulnerable families, to develop a programme to prevent young people dropping out of college or employment, increased community engagement and access to services, public health campaigns and steps to address issues such as anti-social behaviour.

The programme is piloting improved multi-agency working and learning points will be rolled out across the rest of the district in the coming year. A full annual review of this programme has been undertaken was reported to Executive at its meeting on 23 May 2011.

- (4) That officers be requested to report in the first quarter report of 2011/12 on the following items where performance was below target or there are emerging issues:
- **Delivery of the Rural Strategy:** A small number of activities programmed for 2010/11 have slipped and will be picked up in 2011/12. This area will be kept under review and a progress report given in the next quarterly briefing.
 - **Reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill:** At year end this measure is reporting amber. The target of reducing the amount

of waste sent to landfill by 4000 tonnes is slightly off track with a reduction of 3700 tonnes. Reducing waste and increasing recycling remain strong priorities for the Council and continued focus will be given to meeting targets during 2011/12. It is worth noting that the national trend for the amount of tonnage is reducing and that Cherwell continues to set challenging targets for waste reduction and recycling.

- **NI 187 (a & b) - Tackling Fuel Poverty:** Both parts of this indicator are reporting red at year end this is not unexpected due to the rising costs of energy and benefits dependency. The housing team have undertaken a survey to increase understanding of the issue and is currently developing a series of anti-fuel poverty actions that will be included in the new housing strategy. Measures such as the £99 insulation deal have also been put in place to help support local residents.

- (5) That officers be requested to produce a one page summary of the performance highlights for circulation to all Members.

Reasons

The report shows the Council's performance against the Corporate Scorecard and Performance Management Framework in 2010/2011. From this information the Executive can make a judgement about the progress the Council is making in meeting its objectives, identify the achievements it wishes to celebrate and the areas where action is required to improve performance.

Options

Option One To review current performance levels and consider any actions arising

Option Two To approve or reject the recommendations

25 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 2 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

26 **Value for Money Review of Tourism**

The Strategic Director Environment and Community submitted a report which sought consideration of the findings of the Value for Money Review of Tourism and the recommendations arising from that report.

Resolved

That the resolutions as set out in the exempt minute be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: