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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 2 December 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)

Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management

Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Rob Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Andrew Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development

Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Philippa Tatham, Economic Growth Officer

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group, and Councillor Creed, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

67 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman advised that he and the Deputy Leader had visited Castle Quay earlier that day to see the fitting out of the new council offices. It had been an interesting visit and they were pleased to see everything was on track.

69 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

70 **Public Realm Strategy Frameworks**

The Assistant Director Growth and Economy submitted a report to seek approval of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington by Executive for inclusion within the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that the Frameworks were presented as high level policy documents. The Frameworks' suggested public realm interventions were therefore aspirational at this stage and did not have funding allocated to them, with the exception of the three projects which were currently being developed for (i) Bicester Market Place; (ii) Bicester Bure Place and (iii) Kidlington High Street.

Resolved

- (1) That the inclusion of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups be approved.

- (2) That delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Growth and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, to arrange the final presentation of the Frameworks and make any necessary minor amendments to it, including any typographic or formatting errors prior to publication, be agreed.

Reasons

The Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington (urban centres) identify the constraints and opportunities facing Cherwell's three urban centres and propose a number of key public realm interventions for each urban centre.

Executive's approval of the Strategy Frameworks will enable the Frameworks to sit as guidance within the evidence base for the draft Local Plan 2042 and act as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups, with the Frameworks' suggested interventions for public realm improvements to be considered for inclusion in the development of the future Area Plans for Banbury; Bicester; and the Four Parishes area (Kidlington, Water Eaton, Begbroke and Yarnton).

Alternative options

Option 1: The Council could decide not to approve the Frameworks for use as guidance. If this option is chosen, the Frameworks would not be approved as Executive guidance and added to the evidence base for the Local Plan Review, nor would the Frameworks be used as guidance by the Area Oversight Groups.

71

Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 for the purpose of inviting representations.

The Chairman advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had considered the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 at their extraordinary meeting on 12 November and scheduled meeting on 26 November. The Committee had adjourned their consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 to 6pm on Wednesday 4 December. As it was extremely important for Executive to have all comments from OSC prior to their own deliberations, the Chairman proposed that Executive consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December. The proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Conway and, on being put to the vote, agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- (1) That consideration of this item be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December 2024, due to adjournment of Overview & Scrutiny

Committee (OSC) to 6pm on Wednesday 4 December 2024 to enable Executive to consider comments from OSC.

72 **Local Development Scheme**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to produce the Council's key planning policy documents.

The Chairman advised that as the meeting had adjourned consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042, as the Local Development Scheme was linked to this item, he proposed that Executive consideration of the Local Development Scheme also be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December. The proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Conway and, on being put to the vote, agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- (1) That consideration of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December 2024, due to the adjournment of Executive consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042, as the LDS was linked to the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042.

73 **Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-24**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-24 for publication by 31 December 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-2024 be approved for publication by 31 December 2024 subject to any final changes considered to be necessary by the Assistant Director – Planning and Development to secure accuracy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

Reasons

The publication of an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is a statutory requirement that provides transparency and accessibility to information about developer contributions secured by the Council through Section 106 Agreements.

The report has been produced in collaboration with Financial Services and the information contained within it is considered to represent the most robust data available at this time.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward and Infrastructure Funding Statement. This is not a lawful option and would leave the Council in breach of its statutory duty.

Option 2: Seek review of the key statistics and proposed Infrastructure Funding Statement. Officers consider that this is not required as the information is the most accurate and available at this time.

74

Temporary Accommodation Provision

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to propose the utilisation of 15 rooms at Whately Hall, Banbury for use as temporary accommodation, continuing the current provision.

Resolved

- (1) That the extension of the continuous booking of 15 rooms at the Whately Hall for use as temporary accommodation until the end of the financial year be approved.

Reasons

Extending the agreement with the Whately Hall would assist the Council in meeting the temporary accommodation responsibilities it has to homeless households until other options outlined within the report become available. Households are currently placed in the accommodation, so extending would give some certainty to those households in the short term regarding the location of their placement.

Alternative options

Option 1: To end the arrangement with the Whately Hall and end block bookings

This is an option. It would however not lead to an overall reduction in hotel placements. It would also mean that the households currently placed in the 15 rooms would require immediate rehousing in establishments that are not identified and would have to be sourced within the commercial hotel market. It would also not allow time for other options to become available. This is rejected.

Option 2: To end the arrangement with the Whately Hall and explore alternative options for a block booking.

The Council has explored making a block booking with commercial hotels within the last 3 months. The offer at the Whately Hall is considered favourably for the reasons outlined in the report. A wider procurement exercise could take place to ensure that the Council is certain it is receiving best value. Due to the fact that residents are placed at the hotel currently and due to the other factors outlined in the report, this is rejected at this point, but

will be reviewed again within the next 3 months following a review of demand and supply or temporary accommodation.

It is anticipated that Town Centre House will be available from February 2025, based on current demand levels being maintained, it is not anticipated that the provision at Whately Hall will be required when Town Centre House is available.

Option 3: End the arrangement with the Whately Hall and do nothing. If the Council did nothing, 15 households would require immediate rehoming in alternative temporary accommodation. This is highly likely to be another hotel. Many of these households would be housed in other hotels within Cherwell, but depending on availability, some may have to be housed out of the area. The issues with this approach for the Council and the households within temporary accommodation are outlined within the background of the report.

75

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to enable members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2025/26.

Resolved

- (1) That the report, and financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That the comments of Budget Planning Committee, which endorsed and recommended and unchanged Scheme, be noted.
- (3) That Full Council be recommended to agree to retain the current scheme for 2025/2026.

Reasons

The current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their council tax payments. One of the main advantages of the banded scheme is that it reduces the number of changes that the customer will experience enabling more effective personal budgeting.

Budget Planning Committee considered the proposed CTRS scheme for 2025/26 at its meeting 16 July 2024 it resolved that the Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes) be retained for 2025/26.

Alternative options

Option 1: The alternative option is to undertake a review of the current CTRS scheme but the rationale for not taking this course of action is that the current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their

council tax payments. The current scheme has also been recommended by the Budget Planning Committee.

76 **Finance Monitoring Report October 2024**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which updated Executive on the council's forecast financial position as at the end of the October 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of October 2024 be noted.
- (2) That the movements in reserves requested as set out in the annex top the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (3) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024/25 and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2024/25 be approved.
- (4) That the reduction in capital budget for S106 Development of Activity Play Zones from £0.600m to £0.142m to reflect the actual cost to the Council be approved and it be noted that the remaining £0.458m is to be met by the Football Foundation.

Reasons

The report updates the Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2024/25. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of March 2025, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

77 **Adjournment of Meeting**

Having concluded the items of business, in line with the resolutions under items 8 and 9 (Minutes 71 and 72), at 7.20pm the Chairman adjourned the meeting to 1pm on Thursday 5 December for consideration of the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 and Local Development Scheme.

Chairman:

Date:

Annex to Minutes - Reserves Funding

Uses of/ (Contributions to) Reserves

Specific requests

| | Type | Description | Reason | Amount £m |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Communities | Ringfenced Grant | Homelessness Prevention Grant | Use of the reserve to fund 3-month extension of block booking of 15 rooms at Whately Hall for temporary accommodation | 0.080 |
| Total Ringfenced Grants | | | | 0.080 |
| Resources | Earmarked | Interest rates Equalisation | Whilst interest rates remain high, it is prudent to contribute surpluses to the interest rate equalisation reserve as the reserve can be used to mitigate interest rate pressures in the future. | (0.522) |
| Total Earmarked Reserves | | | | (0.522) |