

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Cabinet

held at 2.00pm on Thursday 12 July 2012  
at The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



**Open to the public, including the press**

### Present:

Members: Councillors Matthew Barber (Chairman), Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman), Yvonne Constance, Reg Waite and Elaine Ware

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, Adrian Duffield, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed, Anna Robinson, and Miles Thompson

Non-participating members: Councillors Jenny Hannaby, Dudley Hoddinott, Robert Sharp, and Richard Webber

Number of members of the public: Nil

### **Ca.15 Apologies for absence**

None

### **Ca.16 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** To adopt as a correct record the Cabinet minutes from the meeting held on 15 June 2012 and agree that the chairman signs them.

### **Ca.17 Declarations of interest**

None

### **Ca.18 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

None

### **Ca.19 Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet**

Councillor Dudley Hoddinott asked a series of questions on the resourcing of the planning policy team to deliver the core strategy as follows:

1. Why was the underspend from last year's budget not spent to accelerate the core strategy production, rather than waiting until this year and asking for a supplementary budget increase?
2. If the core strategy will not be adopted until 2013 at the earliest, why did the current year's budget not include provision for these extra resources?
3. Will the project manager be properly qualified and be certified by the Association for Project Management?
4. Will proper project management tools be used to manage the project to the projected timescale?
5. Will progress reports be submitted to Scrutiny Committee by the Cabinet member for planning?

## **Ca.20      Resourcing of planning policy team to deliver the core strategy**

Cabinet considered the report of the head of planning on resourcing the planning policy team to speed up delivery of the local plan core strategy. Cabinet noted that the council had to adopt a core strategy as soon as possible and had asked the officers to consider what resources would be needed to achieve this.

The officers presented Cabinet with options:

- To continue with the existing staff resource structure but with temporary exchange of more junior posts with a senior post for six months
- To recruit an additional senior planner for 18 months, a part-time project manager for 18 months, and provide consultancy support

The head of service believed that most progress would be made through the second option; Cabinet members agreed. It was important to get the core strategy right, as it would last for 15 years. Over the 15 years of the adopted core strategy, this would cost less than £10,000 per annum. Adoption of the core strategy would also allow access to funds from the community infrastructure levy.

In answer to Councillor Hoddinott's questions, the leader reported that Cabinet was trying to progress the core strategy, whereas the previous administration had delayed it. The council would recruit a qualified project manager but there were several professional bodies to choose from. The project manager would use proper project management techniques and would be required to report progress to the cabinet member for planning.

As the cost of providing this additional resource was over £100,000, Cabinet had to seek approval from the Council for the supplementary estimate to fund this.

### **RESOLVED:** To

- (a) recruit a part-time project manager for up to 18 months, an additional full-time senior planner for 18 months, and secure additional consultancy support to expedite the delivery of the local plan core strategy; and

### **RECOMMEND** Council: To

- (b) approve a one-off supplementary budget increase of £145,000 to fund the additional resources to expedite the delivery of the local plan core strategy.

## Ca.21 Neighbourhood Planning - Faringdon

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report that sought approval to designate Great Faringdon parish as the neighbourhood area for the production of a Faringdon neighbourhood plan. The corporate plan included a specific objective to encourage communities to develop neighbourhood plans as a means of shaping their local environment.

The council was developing the Faringdon neighbourhood plan with Faringdon Town Council. The cabinet member for planning declared that he was also a Faringdon town councillor but that this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest. He highlighted the advantages of this neighbourhood plan as:

- providing an excellent learning opportunity which might help inform how neighbourhood planning could be pursued more widely across the district
- demonstrating a clear commitment to localism and the more collaborative approach to plan-making supported by the new planning system
- helping to inform the emerging core strategy

The neighbourhood planning regulations required the council to publicise any applications to designate the plan area. The town council had applied for the whole of the parish of Great Faringdon to be designated as the plan area. Cabinet supported this proposal. The town council had indicated that it had no wish to consider strategic housing sites as part of the neighbourhood plan.

Cabinet noted that the plan development process consisted of three main stages. Once the plan had been drafted it would be subjected to an examination stage, followed by a referendum, and then publication. The costs could be in the region of £14,000 to £21,000. To assist, the government had provided a grant of £20,000 as Faringdon had been chosen as a front runner in this scheme. This grant was to cover administration costs of the examination stage, the referendum, and publication. Should the costs exceed £20,000, there would be a need to seek additional funds from the council's contingency budget.

**RESOLVED:** To designate the whole of Great Faringdon parish as a neighbourhood area under section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the purpose of producing a neighbourhood plan for Faringdon.

## Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting closed at 2.21 pm