

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2021 AS AN ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Philip Whitehead (Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Toby Sturgis and Cllr Bridget Wayman

Also Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Brian Mathew, Cllr Stewart Palmen, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philipe MBE, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Christopher Williams, Cllr Graham Wright and Cllr Robert Yuill

36 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Laura Mayes stated she would need to leave the meeting before in concluded to attend an LGA Children and Young People Board meeting.

37 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

38 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

39 Leader's Announcements

There were no declarations of interest.

40 Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Two questions had been received from Ms Susan McGill and were included in Agenda Supplement 2 together with responses. As a supplementary to the question regarding the Wiltshire Council Annual Governance Statement further

detail was requested of consideration of governance of the Stone Circle companies established by the Council. It was stated that a governance review was taking place in respect of Stone Circle which should be completed by Summer 2021, and that it was aimed that they be self sufficient from a technical perspective in future. It was also confirmed that there was limited financial impact on the council finances, with no revenue budget allocations.

It was stated that a briefing for Members on Stone Circle and information for the public could be provided once the governance review had been completed.

Councillor Ian Thorn asked a question on the responses of Chippenham Town Council and Calne Town Council rejecting proposed road route options for the Highways Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid during the recent consultation, and what impact this had on the proposals.

The Leader, Councillor Philip Whitehead, detailed the background of the HIF bid process, the housing need within Wiltshire over the coming decades and potential investment within Chippenham and benefits of joined up development which needed to be better communicated to residents, and that all responses would be carefully considered by relevant bodies.

Councillor Clare Cape also later asked a question on responses to the HIF consultation and whether these would be responded to appropriately, and the lack of a direct 'no road' option.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed all responses to the consultation would be taken into account, and that free text options allowed people to respond to say that they did not support any road option.

Councillor Thorn asked a question regarding scrutiny of the Furlong Close which had been requested by the Leader at Full Council on 23 February 2021, and whether this should involve all parties.

Councillor Whitehead stated that Overview and Scrutiny would determine how best to scrutinise the ongoing issue and that he noted previous excellent work undertaken by the service.

Councillor Jon Hubbard asked a question regarding the impact of unplanned development, and disproportionate shares of development in communities such as Melksham, noting recent speculative applications around the town. He asked for assurance that smaller towns would not be penalised because of taking a constructive approach to development in the past, and regarding concern with lack of proper infrastructure.

Councillor Whitehead stated detailed master planning was important for long term development, and that there was a need for a fair share. He also provided an update on the 5-year land supply, which he considered was in a defensible position or shortly would be.

Councillor Ernie Clark asked a question regarding whether the council still regarded neighbour plans as a foundation for place shaping, drawing attention to proposals within the Local Plan Review.

Councillor Whitehead noted that the Local Plan Review had been begun very early to enable the fullest consideration, and that as with previous reviews many of the plots included in the first list would be excluded, and that neighbourhood plans being used to identify inappropriate as well as inappropriate sites would be a part of the process.

Councillor Bridget Wayman asked a question regarding the implementation of the Bath Clean Air Zone by Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES). She noted the impact of heavy polluting vehicles being diverted from the main trunk road into smaller towns and villages within Wiltshire, and the lack of agreement by BANES to monitor the impact on Wiltshire of its decision.

Councillor Whitehead noted the importance of upgrading the A350 over time to operate as a major route and reduce the impact on towns of increased traffic, and that the action by BANES could result in a transfer of clean air issues from Bath to the Wiltshire area. He stated the issue had been raised with BANES and with and through the MPs, who had raised it with the relevant Minister. The need as outlined in guidance that heavy polluting vehicles are not displaced into other areas by clean air zones was noted.

A discussion followed involving Members of the Cabinet and other Members present on the Bath Clean Air Zone and its impact on towns such as Westbury and Bradford-on-Avon, and the national issue of transport on major routes being impacted by a decision from an individual authority.

41 **COVID-19 Update**

Councillor Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which provided a summary of the key activities to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet on 3 February 2021. He noted that the rollout of vaccinations was proceeding well and case numbers were reducing, but that it was important that residents continue to take care and following government guidance and restrictions.

Terence Herbert, Chief Executive, provided further updates along with other senior officers. Details were provided on the full reopening of schools, including number of tests, positive cases, and there was particular praise for all headteachers and school staff for their work operating under difficult conditions over the last year. Updates were also provided on development of the Wellbeing Hub, and plans that this continue during the recovery phase and beyond, plans for operational recovery with deployment of council staff as restrictions were reduced, longer term impacts on economy and youth services and assistance with Covid-19 testing. An update was also provided on preparations for the May 2021 elections to ensure these would be safe and effective.

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, reported that the Committee met on 9 March 2021 to consider the Cabinet report. A full update had been received from the Chief Executive and many questions raised as detailed in the minutes of that meeting.

In response to questions, comments and issues raised by Members, officers explained that any change to term time arrangements as a result of Covid-19 would follow update from government, but that this was not intended at present, that the council had offered assistance to the NHS and CCG if they required additional vaccination sites and noting the safety of all vaccines being delivered and how to report any adverse effects. Continuing to develop links between the Wellbeing Hub and local communities was raised, as well noting the great work undertaken in schools throughout restricted periods with partial operation and remote learning.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet,

- 1) Continues to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.**
- 2) Encourages all residents to answer a call received from 0300 456 0100 as it may be the local contact tracing team within the Council.**
- 3) Continues to encourage all residents to follow national guidance and to note that the stay at home message continues until 29 March.**
- 4) Continues to encourage residents to attend for vaccination when invited and to continue to follow national guidance after vaccination.**
- 5) Encourages residents to consider postal vote for the upcoming elections.**
- 6) Notes the work underway to support response activities and roadmap development as we exit lockdown**

Reason for Decision:

Wiltshire Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver in a rapidly changing environment.

42 Special School Transformation Programme Update

Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, presented the report providing an update on the Special School Transformation programme, following the decision of Cabinet on 19 November 2010 to approve the establishment of a new maintained special school with a single leadership team for the existing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools, and other decisions associated with that approval.

The report highlighted key milestones and noted significant progress that had been made delivering the programme. Approval had been received from the Department for Education's Office of the School Adjudicator in May 2020 for the closure of the three existing schools, to become a new school across three

sites, which opened on 1 September 2020. Families and communities had suggested the name of Silverwood for the new school, and the new executive head was working with the governing body to support the ongoing transformation.

The next stage was the build at Rowde and the construction partner working closely with stakeholders, with the intention that the new site at Rowde be completed for September 2023. Concerns remained in the community around the speed limits on local roads, and this was being looked at as part of transport arrangements for the site.

The Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, Councillor Jon Hubbard, noted that he had received a briefing on the report and had raised a number of questions, and was satisfied adequate plans were in place to address these.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet note the update provided in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To update Cabinet on the Special School Transformation programme and progress against key milestones in implementing the recommendations agreed by Cabinet in November 2019.

43 **School Capital Programme 2021 to 2026**

Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, presented the report on the School Capital Programme. She praised the team for their outstanding work delivery major projects, and provided details of previously approved schemes, new schemes for approval and the schools maintenance programme. Details were provided of carbon reduction measures in maintained schools, that new schools would be built to be carbon neutral, and details of a contingency fund.

The Cabinet noted the update and added their thanks to the team for the work maintaining the quality of the school estates.

The Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, Councillor Jon Hubbard, stated he had received a briefing on the report and supported the comments of the Cabinet Member, as well as noting the scale of the work to undertake maintenance including replacing mobile or temporary classrooms.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet,

- 1) Notes the progress on previously approved schemes at Appendix A.
- 2) Considers and approves the new schemes, subject to planning approval and completed S106 agreements, requiring a total commitment of £10m as outlined at Appendix B.
- 3) Approves the Schools Planned Maintenance Programme totalling £3.5m for 2021/22 as outlined at Appendix C.
- 4) Authorises the Director of Education and Skills to invite and evaluate tenders for the projects described in this report, and, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, to award the contract for the project (subject to approval of any necessary statutory proposals) and to authorise, in consultation with the Head of Estates and Development, in accordance with the relevant scheme of sub-delegation (under Part 3 Section D1 of Wiltshire Council's constitution), the acquisition of all land (and the completion of any legal documentation) reasonably required in order to facilitate the Schools Capital Investment Programme.

Reason for Decision:

The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places to meet the demand arising across Wiltshire, whether from demographic or population change, strategic housing development growth or military moves.

The approved Wiltshire School Places Strategy 2017- 2022 and its Implementation Plan identifies the priority basic need schemes requiring capital investment in the short, medium and longer term and these latest proposals for inclusion in the Schools Capital Programme will enable the priority works to be progressed. The Council also has Landlord responsibilities for the effective management and maintenance of the schools (for which the Council is responsible) estate and the approved programme will enable urgent and priority repairs and maintenance projects to proceed.

44 **Wiltshire Council's Housing Board**

Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing and Communities, presented the Annual of the Wiltshire Council Housing Board. It was stated that there had been maintenance issues particularly when access to housing was restricted by Covid-19 arrangements, but that overall things had progressed well.

Rent arrears was being monitored closely due to impacts arising from more people being on Universal Credit, and housing support was working with tenants to ensure they accessed income support. Subgroups had been set up to looking at detail at matters such as the housing retrofit programme, and all the council housing stock would be retrofitted over the next 10 years. Work was underway to encourage residents to apply for grants to improve infrastructure and communal areas.

The Chairman of the Environment Select Committee, Councillor Stuart Wheeler, confirmed that he had received a briefing on the report, and had been pleased to note the programme on upgrading the fabric of council housing, which produced a carbon saving for the council and significant heating saving costs for the tenants.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet note the Annual Report.

Reason for Decision:

Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet.

45 **Registered Provider Partnership Review**

Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing and Communities, presented the report regarding Registered Social Housing Providers (RPs), with whom the current partnership agreement expires in March 2021.

It was stated a new five-year agreement was being sought with providers and considered there was an opportunity to be clearer with providers on the council's priorities and to improve cooperation. It was noted that there were varieties of affordable housing, and the council could not enforce specific types but could encourage. RPs would be asked to explain how they would be meeting strategic affordable housing delivery in accordance with the Local Plan, accelerate provision of affordable homes and improve environmental standards of affordable housing stock and respond to the Climate Emergency, and support other council aims including delivery of affordable housing to both urban and rural areas.

The Cabinet discussed the report and update, raising issues of lack of communication to local communities from some RPs, and welcoming the efforts of the council to create a more effective partnership.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet establishes a new 5 Year partnership arrangement with Registered Providers to support the delivery of affordable housing in Wiltshire.

Reason for Decision:

To allow for a new Partnership arrangement with RPs to support the continued delivery of affordable housing in line with the Council's Business Plan.

46 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

The Leader, Councillor Philip Whitehead, took the opportunity to pay tribute to Councillor Toby Sturgis, who was not standing for re-election on 6 May 2021. Councillor Sturgis had been a Member of the Cabinet since the inception of Wiltshire Council in 2009 and the Leader offered his thanks for all the work and support he had provided to himself and the previous Leader.

47 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

It was,

Resolved:

To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute 48 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

Paragraph 3 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

48 **Porton Science Park - Collaborative Innovation Centre Fit Out**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Philip Whitehead, introduced the report regarding a request to undertake initial fitting out of the ground floor of the Grown On Space at the second phase building at the Porton Science Park in respect of Porton Biopharma Ltd, with agreements to secure the repaying of the full cost of the works.

The Cabinet discussed the report, supporting the proposals to assist the further development of the centre of excellence at the site. The Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, Councillor Pip Ridout, detailed questions which had been raised during scrutiny of the proposal and endorsed the proposals.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet,

- 1) Agree that the Council undertakes the fit out of the Grow On Space at the Porton Collaborative Innovation Centre subject to the Council first**

entering into an Agreement for Lease with Porton Biopharma Limited, or such other document or documents as are required to ensure repayment of the fit out works;

- 2) Delegates authority to the Director of Housing and Commercial Development (in consultation with the Legal Services, Procurement and the section 151 Officer as appropriate and the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, MCI and Communications and Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment) to enter into an agreement for lease, lease and such other legal document(s) (including any contracts for carrying out of the said fitting out works) as are required to give effect to the proposal set out in (1) above; and
- 3) Allocates £1.4 million to cover the estimated costs of the fit out works in the 2021/22 capital programme.

Reason for Decision:

To support an important local employer and national contributor to public health.

To secure an important tenant from the outset of opening the new Phase 2 building, thereby generating income and helping to promote the remainder of the building and the wider science park.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.25 pm)

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These Cabinet decisions were first published 18 March 2021 and would come into effect 26 March 2021. The minutes were then published on 22 March 2021.