

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 18:30

Present: Councillor R Bradburn (Chair)

Councillors R Bradburn, J Carr, Nolan, Townsend, Trendall and Wilson-Marklew

Apologies: Councillors Marland, Darlington and Middleton

Also Present: K Bradburn and Ferrans and 5 members of the public

Officers: T Aldworth (Deputy Chief Executive), M Bracey (Chief Executive), S Bridglalsingh (Director of Law and Governance), R Tidman (Committee Services Manager), S Richardson (Director Finance and Resources), F Robinson (MK Futures Programme Manager), A Rulton (Head of Finance), S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property) and P Thomas (Director Planning and Placemaking)

C25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Darlington, Marland and Middleton.

C26 Cabinet Announcements

Councillor R Bradburn made announcements with respect to Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday and Diwali.

C27 Disclosures of Interest

None Received.

C28 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 September 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

C29 Councillors' Items

None received.

C30 Councillors' Questions

None received.

C31 Questions from Members of the Public

There was one question submitted by a member of the public but as they were unable to attend the meeting Councillor R Bradburn asked that they be sent a written response.

ACTION:

That a written response be sent to the member of the public.

C32 References from Other Bodies

C33 Public Realm and Environment Scrutiny Committee - 11 October 2023

Councillor R Bradburn noted the referral and written response on the Draft Cultural Strategy and in addition added that it had been a great example of pre-decision scrutiny.

Councillor Wilson-Marklew noted the referral and written response on the item related to E-scooters.

RESOLVED:

That the referrals and the written responses be noted.

C34 Housing Planning and Placemaking Scrutiny Sub-Committee - 16 October 2023

Councillor Ferrans introduced the referral, noting that the sub-committee had agreed not to refer the decision back to the decision maker but had made a recommendation that the Cabinet progress as quickly as possible to address the issue of community space including the potential for temporary community space if necessary.

Councillor R Bradburn noted the written response that had been provided and highlighted that the authority had committed to forming a working group to continue dialogue on options for community space in Galley Hill but that until a feasibility study had been completed the Council could not commit to a scheme.

Councillor Ferrans asked whether the working group could be convened as soon as possible with a view to commissioning the feasibility study this financial year.

Councillor R Bradburn indicated that he would ensure that officers were aware of this request.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response be noted.

C35 Milton Keynes Waste Recovery Park (MKWRP) - Future Options For The Operational Delivery Of The Plant

Councillor Townsend introduced the item noting that the waste recovery plant was a jewel for the authority. Since becoming operational in 2018 it had been the best performing plant of its type in the United Kingdom. The benefits of the plant financially and environmentally for the Council could not be understated and it was crucial to continue to take this very important work forward.

The Cabinet heard from one member of the public on the item and the Cabinet member asked that a written answer be provided to them in response to their comments.

The recommendations in the report were agreed by acclamation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the variation of the contract for the Residual Waste Treatment Facility as summarised in the report, be progressed.
2. That authority be delegated to the Director Environment and Property, in consultation with the Director Finance and Resources (s151), the Director Law of Governance (Monitoring Officer), as well as the Cabinet Member for Resources and Innovation and / or the Cabinet Member for Public Realm to:
 - a) agree non-material amendments to the proposed Deed of Variation (exempt Annex A to the report); and
 - b) finalise and enter into the Deed of Variation and any other necessary formal documents to effect the agreed position.
3. That the Cabinet note and endorse the outcomes of continued work to deliver these key points:
 - Owning the asset outright;
 - Ongoing and sustained provision of £0 per tonne gate fee;
 - Increased recycling rates; and
 - Significantly reduced landfill rates
4. That a written response be provided to the comments made by the member of the public.

C36 Support for the Open University's Campus 2030 Project

Councillor R Bradburn introduced the report noting that the Open University had been based in Milton Keynes since its founding in 1969 and like the city itself was a pioneer in its field. The OU was now considering its future including exploring the opportunity to relocate their operations to Central Milton Keynes as well as the potential to provide in-person courses at a scale of up to 20,000 attending students. This aligned with the Council's long held ambition for a city center undergraduate university in Milton Keynes and the benefits this would bring the local area.

The Council continued to support the MK:U project and welcomed its ongoing operation and future expansion. However, it was now appropriate to change the nature of the relationship between Cranfield University and the Council.

The Director of Planning and Placemaking read a statement from Cranfield University.

The recommendations in the report were agreed by acclamation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Cabinet:
 - a) agree their full support for the Open University's Campus 2030 Project; and
 - b) note the huge benefits this will bring to the city and its residents, and the strong position of the Open University to enable the delivery of this project.
2. That the positive role that Milton Keynes Development Partnership have played – and will continue to play – in the project including developing an enthusiastic and enabling relationship with the Open University, fulfilling their ambition to help the city become a better place to live, socialise and work, be acknowledged.
3. That the Open University's Campus 2030 Project, be the priority for any financial support from the Council for higher education, for the foreseeable future.
4. That given there is no funding in place to realise the full ambitions of the MK:U project to develop a large university campus on Block B4, and despite the best efforts of all parties involved, the Partnering Agreement with Cranfield University be brought to an end.

C37 Council Tax Base 2024/25

Councillor R Bradburn introduced the report noting that this report set out how the Council Tax Base was set. It recognised the current decline in collection rate and proposed the commencement of a consultation to consider changes to the discretionary Council Tax policy in respect of Long Term Empty Properties and introduction of a Second Home Premium. The final report would be brought back to Cabinet on the 5 December 2023.

RESOLVED:

1. That the provisional 2024/25 Council Tax Base estimate of **95,784.97** Band D equivalent properties and the potential increase to **96,067.10** Band D equivalent properties (subject to the outcome of consultation,) be noted.
2. That a final decision be made at the 5 December 2023 Cabinet meeting, regarding the 2024/25 Council Tax Base.
3. That the provision for uncollectable amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25 be set at **2.05%** producing an expected collection rate of **97.95%**.
4. That the commencement of a consultation to consider changes to the discretionary Council Tax policy in respect of Long Term Empty Property and introduction of a Second Home Premiums (as set out in the report), be noted.
5. That the proposed 2024/25 funding contribution to parish and town councils of £0.325m, as set out in Annex D of the report, be noted, and recommended to Council for approval as part of the final Budget in February 2024.
6. That the Cabinet recommends to Council that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as adopted by the Council on 22 February 2023, be continued for 2024/25, with amendments that reflect changes to related benefits and to the Council Tax

Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations; retaining the delegation to the Director Finance and Resources to make technical legislative changes.

C38 Update on Delivery of the Council Plan

Councillor R Bradburn introduced the report noting that this year seventy-seven items were set to be delivered and good progress was being made on these despite many external factors. This would not have been possible without the great work of the city officials.

RESOLVED:

That the progress being made on the Delivery Plan for 2023/24, be noted.

C39 Cost of Living Crisis - Winter Plan 2023-24

Councillor J Carr introduced the report noting that this was the second Winter Plan and thanked officers for their diligence and creativity to deliver much needed support to those residents who were most in need.

RESOLVED:

That the 2023/24 Winter Plan be noted.

The Chair closed the meeting at 19.03