

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At the Meeting of the  
**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen,  
Witney, on Wednesday 26 February 2014 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: D A Cotterill (Chairman), Mrs L J Chapman (Vice Chairman), A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, N G Colston, J C Cooper, C Cottrell-Dormer, Mrs M J Crossland, H G Davies, C G Dingwall, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, D S T Enright, Mrs E H N Fenton, W A Goffe, S J Good, J Haine, Mrs H R Hibbert-Biles, S J Hoare, H J Howard, Miss V E Hunt, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, R D J McFarlane, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, W D Robinson, G Saul and D A Snow.

59. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2014, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from M R Booty, M Brennan, P J G Dorward, P J Handley, A D Harvey, N A MacRae MBE, J F Mills and L D Poole MBE.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Robinson declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 13 by virtue of being a tenant at Unit D, Swain Court, Witney. Mr Robinson indicated he would leave the meeting if there was any discussion in relation to the unit.

62. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

62.1 Councillor Mr M D (Mike) Howes

The Chairman advised members of the recent death of former Councillor Mr M D Howes.

Mr Howes was first elected as a representative of Chipping Norton in May 2000 and was appointed to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

From 2001 until his retirement in 2008 he served on the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Development Control Committee and the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee.

In 2003 Mike was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a position he held throughout the remainder of his time with West Oxfordshire.

Mr Howes also served on the Local Plan Review Working Party and the Services to Young People Best Value Service Review Group and represented the Council on the Chipping Norton Traffic Advisory Committee and the Chipping Norton Community Education Committee.

A memorial service was to be held on Friday 28 February 2014 at 3.00pm in Chipping Norton.

All those present at the meeting then stood in silence in memory of Mr Howes.

62.2 Commonwealth Day

Mr Cotterill advised that on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March, which was Commonwealth Day, there would be a flag raising ceremony at the Woodgreen Offices at 10.00am.

62.3 Local Development Framework (LDF) Workshop

Mr Cotterill reminded members that an LDF workshop had been arranged for Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March commencing at 2.00pm. Members were requested to advise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services if they were attending.

63. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure Mr Sharone Parnes addressed the council in respect of the disposal of council owned land in Woodstock and other areas of the district. A summary of his submission is attached as Appendix A to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Hoare indicated that that he considered some of the assertions made by Mr Parnes to be inaccurate and offered to meet with Mr Parnes to discuss the issues in more detail. Mr Parnes indicated his agreement to a meeting and apologised if any offence had been caused but reiterated that if information had been more readily available the confusion may not have arisen.

Mr Cooper asked if Mr Parnes was aware that there was a proposal in the Cabinet Work Programme to dispose of land in Long Hanborough. Mr Parnes advised that he was not aware of this but would be concerned if a similar approach was taken to previous land disposals.

Mr Cotterill thanked Mr Parnes for his submission to the council.

64. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out a recommendation made by the Cabinet at a meeting held on 12 February 2014.

Mr Norton proposed the recommendation and this was seconded by Mr Hoare.

On being put to the vote the proposition was carried.

**RESOLVED:** that the recommendation made by the Cabinet at a meeting held on 12 February 2014 approved in relation to:

- (a) Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2014/2015 – 2016/2017 (Minute No. CT/115/2013/2014)

65. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 23 January and 12 February 2014 were received:

65.1 Leisure Contract Review - Update  
(Minute No. E&S/63/2013/2014)

Mrs Biles asked if the roof repairs at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre had been completed. Mr Langridge advised that works were not quite complete and he would keep members advised of progress.

65.2 Local Plan Monitoring Report 2012/2013  
(Minute No. E&S/64/2013/2014)

Mr McFarlane expressed his thanks to officers who had assisted the residents of Broadwell in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and this would help shape development in the area in the future.

Mr Cooper highlighted reference in the minutes to providing comparative data in the future and asked if this was a change of approach for future reports. Mrs Fenton, Vice-Chairman of the Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee, agreed to look in to the matter and respond to Mr Cooper.

65.3 Air Quality Strategy  
(Minute No. ENV/49/2013/2014)

Mrs Biles referred to health data associated with air quality and suggested that the Public Health team at Oxfordshire County Council may be able to provide some information.

65.4 Flood Risk Assessment  
(Minute No. CT/112.5/2013/2014)

Ms Leffman thanked officers for their work in Charlbury that had prevented any flooding problems during the recent bad weather. Ms Leffman asked if support for businesses affected by flooding included those in Burford who had lost trade due to the car park being flooded. Mr Cotterill advised that information was available on the council website and eligibility for assistance would be considered further by Cabinet.

Mr McFarlane expressed his thanks to officers and members for their hard work in dealing with flooding problems and advised that updates that had been provided to people had been very useful. Mr McFarlane asked if there was a need to put more pressure on landowners to clear ditches as this still appeared to be a problem.

Mr Norton advised that the Council would continue to bid for funding for flood alleviation works to build on the good work since 2007. There had only been 12 households and some business premises flooded during the recent wet weather. Mr Norton acknowledged the concern regarding private landowners and advised that the Council would continue to work with them to reduce flooding problems.

Mr Coles asked if there had been any formal meetings with the Witney Flood Action Group. Mr Langridge advised that he had spoken with the group in a personal capacity but was not aware of any other meetings being held.

Mr Dingwall highlighted flooding problems in Crawley and emphasised the importance of local knowledge in identifying landowners and ensuring that ditches were kept clear.

Mrs Biles expressed her thanks for the work undertaken in the Wychwoods and the importance of communication between various authorities and organisations when dealing with flooding matters.

65.5 Rural Broadband  
(Minute No. CT/120/2013/2014)

Mr McFarlane expressed his support for the rural broadband initiative and thanked Mr Langridge, Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Communities and Culture, for including Langford in the pilot project.

66. RECORDED VOTES AT BUDGET MEETINGS AND MINOR CHANGES TO THE OFFICER DELEGATION RULES

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services advising Council of, and seeking approval for a required change to the procedural rules in Part 4 of the Constitution. A number of minor procedural amendments considered necessary for the purposes of clarity or to take account of the change in designation of Council Tax Benefit to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme was also considered.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Mr Norton and seconded by Mr Langridge.

Mr Coles endorsed the principle of recorded votes and transparency at meetings and suggested it would be good to extend the provision beyond budget matters and have recorded votes on all matters discussed at Council.

Mr Coles then proposed an amendment that recorded votes be held for all items at Council. Mr Enright seconded the amendment and suggested that it was common practice at other authorities.

Mr Hoare advised that he would be unable to support the amendment and that the facility for recorded votes was already in the constitution. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that an individual member could ask for their vote to be recorded but there was no provision for a named vote.

Mr Cooper sought clarification regarding the amendment as if the intention was for a named vote for all items discussed that would be unwieldy, time consuming and excessive.

Mrs Biles advised that in other authorities a named vote was taken when requested by a specified number of councillors. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services acknowledged that this practice was used elsewhere.

Mr Norton suggested that it was unfortunate that the amendment had been moved without notice as changing the constitution was a significant decision and it was inadvisable to make such a decision without full information.

Mr Coles acknowledged the concerns and suggested it was a matter that could be looked at further. Mr Coles then withdrew his amendment.

On being put to the vote the original proposition was then carried.

**RESOLVED:**

(a) That paragraph nos. 15(c) and 15(d) of the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution be renumbered 15(d) and 15(e) respectively;

(b) That a new paragraph 15(c) be inserted, as follows:

“Recording of Voting at Budget Decision Meeting

At a budget decision meeting of the authority where making a calculation under the relevant sections of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 or issuing the precept as the case may be was included as an item of business on the agenda for that meeting, the minutes of the meeting shall record in respect of each member present whether they voted for a proposition, or against a proposition, or abstained from voting.

The references above to voting are references to a vote on any decision related to the making of the calculation or the issuing of the precept as the case may be”;

(c) That, for the sake of clarity, the Officer Delegation Rules in Part 4 of the Council’s Constitution be amended as specified in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 of the report; and

- (d) That all references within the Council's Constitution to 'Council Tax Benefit(s)' be amended to refer to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

## 67. THE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2014/2015

The report of the Cabinet setting out its recommendations for the Council's General Fund revenue budgets for 2014/2015, Capital Programme for 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 and the level of Council Tax for 2014/2015 was received and considered.

Mr Norton introduced the budget proposals and advised that copies of his speech would be available after the meeting. A copy of the Leader of the Council's budget speech is attached at Appendix B to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Norton proposed the recommendations and this was seconded by Mr Hoare who reserved the right to speak later in the debate.

Mr Enright, Leader of the Labour Group, gave his thanks to officers for their hard work during a period of uncertainty due to cost savings. Mr Enright suggested that it was not an ideal starting position for a budget process and his group had played an active part in the process through the scrutiny meetings. Mr Enright expressed support for the continued revenue grant funding of voluntary bodies and highlighted the positive work of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Mr Enright indicated that the freeze in council tax was also positive as any help for families was welcome. Finally Mr Enright highlighted the importance of supporting businesses and urged caution in respect of broadband to ensure that good value for money was being achieved.

Mr Enright then proposed two amendments. Firstly he indicated that there would be a small saving in members allowances as a result of the resignation of a councillor and proposed that this money be donated to the Witney Food Bank as a goodwill gesture.

Secondly it was proposed that £30,000 be taken from the proposed transfer of balances of £62,409 and the money split evenly, £10,000 each, to the Citizens Advice Bureau, extending the business support scheme and the Witney to Oxford Transport Campaign.

Mr Coles seconded the amendments and reserved the right to speak.

Mr Cooper sought clarification as to whether the amendments would be voted on separately. Mr Cooper indicated that there was limited information available to be able to make an informed decision on the proposed changes.

Mr Robinson advised that the budget had been formulated on the premise of breaking even and not using reserves. Mr Robinson suggested that the proposed amendments could have been raised at a much earlier stage in the budget process and it was difficult to judge the merits of the proposals at a late stage. Mr Robinson indicated that he would not be supporting the amendments.

Mr Hoare, whilst acknowledging the merits of the suggestion, advised that only a small amount of savings would be accrued from members allowances in the 2014/2015 budget and the extent of savings in the current budget would be reported to Cabinet in the budget monitoring report. Mr Hoare encouraged Mr Enright to withdraw this part of his amendment.

In respect of the second part of the amendment Mr Hoare echoed the views of Mr Robinson and highlighted the £1 million of savings that were still required. Mr Hoare suggested that putting money in to reserves was a prudent approach. Mr Hoare highlighted the good work of the CAB but indicated that there did not appear to be an increased workload as a result of the economic downturn of the past few years. Mr Hoare advised that the business support scheme would be regularly reviewed anyway to see if it could be extended. Mr Hoare acknowledged the benefits of improved transport links between

Witney and Oxford and highlighted the work that was already being undertaken particularly by the Leader of the Council. Mr Hoare indicated he would not support the amendments and reiterated that matters should have been raised earlier in the process.

Mr Leffman, a trustee of the CAB, thanked the council for their continued support and advised that the workload had increased over the last couple of years. Ms Leffman indicated that she supported the transfer of balances to reserves. Mr Snow advised that he supported the first part of the amendment in respect of Witney Food Bank.

Mr Enright referred to the member's allowances and that he understood that only the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to mid-May could be considered but this would still be worthwhile. Mr Enright reiterated that his group had fed in to the budget process as best they could but the transfer to balances figure had not been available until a late stage.

Mr Howard reported that Carterton Town Council had recently approved grant funding to the CAB.

Mrs Chapman indicated that the overall revenue budget was £11 million so the amendments were just tinkering at the edges. Mrs Chapman expressed support for the CAB and suggested that other funding, such as County Councillor Community Budgets, could help. It was considered that the member's allowances savings were not significant. Mrs Chapman advised she would not be supporting the amendments.

Mr Norton suggested that it may be beneficial for members to discuss, in the future, how best to support the food bank initiative. In respect of transport Mr Norton highlighted the high level discussions that had been undertaken. As a result of the City Deal significant improvements at the Wolvercote Roundabout and the Pear Tree interchange were now affordable. Mr Norton suggested that the views of the Witney to Oxford Transport Group were important in developing links but resources were better used supporting the larger strategic schemes.

The Chairman indicated that he would take the vote on the two amendments separately.

On being put to the vote the first amendment relating to the donation to the Witney Food Bank

**WAS LOST**

The following eight members voted for the amendment:

A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, J C Cooper, D S T Enright, Ms E P R Leffman, Dr E M E Poskitt, G Saul and D A Snow.

The following 30 members voted against the amendment:

A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, Mrs L J Chapman, N G Colston, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, Mrs M J Crossland, H G Davies, C G Dingwall, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, Mrs E H N Fenton, W A Goffe, S J Good, J Haine, Mrs H R Hibbert-Biles, S J Hoare, H J Howard, Miss V E Hunt, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, Mrs L E C Little, R D J McFarlane, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, and W D Robinson.

On being put to the vote the second amendment relating to the reallocation of £30,000 from the transfer to balances **WAS LOST**

The following four members voted for the amendment:

A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, D S T Enright and G Saul.

The following 34 members voted against the amendment:

A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, Mrs L J Chapman, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, Mrs M J Crossland, H G Davies, C G Dingwall, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, Mrs E H N Fenton, W A Goffe, S J Good, J Haine, Mrs H R Hibbert-Biles, S J Hoare, H J Howard, Miss V E Hunt, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, R D J McFarlane, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, W D Robinson and D A Snow.

Mr Cooper agreed with Mr Enright that it had not been an ideal starting point for the formulation of a budget. Mr Cooper suggested it would have been beneficial to invest in commercial property at an earlier stage.

Mr Cooper highlighted the success of shared services with other councils and that this had been taken further than anticipated and it had been innovative to link up with an authority outside of Oxfordshire. Mr Cooper highlighted the potential impact of benefit changes on the work of the CAB and that this needed to be borne in mind.

Mr Cooper expressed concern at the late notification by central government in respect of the threshold of council tax rises that would generate a referendum. This was also the case regarding pension rights for councillors and a decision was needed at the earliest opportunity. Mr Cooper highlighted the need to continue financing public conveniences including the provision of new facilities at Bladon.

Finally Mr Cooper referred to the provision of broadband and urged caution in respect of council funding and suggested that alternative private funding could also be explored. Mr Cooper indicated that he would be supporting the budget as proposed.

Mr McFarlane suggested there appeared to be general agreement that it was a good budget and in particular demonstrated value for money. Mr McFarlane highlighted the work being undertaken on broadband, flood alleviation, neighbourhood planning and investment in leisure facilities.

Mr McFarlane suggested that business support was important and the fact that major new businesses such as Premier Inn and Morrisons had opened in the district demonstrated this. Mr McFarlane also emphasised the importance of support to rural businesses.

Mr Langridge expressed support for the budget proposals and in particular the continued level of revenue grant funding to voluntary organisations. Mr Langridge gave an assurance that the broadband project would be carefully monitored and all potential solutions would be looked at to ensure value for money.

Mr Langridge highlighted the success of the pilot scheme regarding business support and it was hoped that a wide range of businesses could be helped.

Mr Hoare gave his thanks to the Strategic Director responsible for Resources and his team for their hard work in preparing the budget. Mr Hoare acknowledged that the starting point of the budget had not been perfect but this was a legacy of the previous government's policy.

Mr Hoare highlighted the positive attitude of staff in embracing the changes that had been implemented and continuing to provide a cost effective service to residents. Mr Hoare

advised that operating costs had been reduced and it was positive that free car parking could be retained and council tax frozen for a further year.

Mr Hoare indicated that it was vital to finance broadband as it was a global marketplace and businesses in the district needed to be able to benefit. In respect of investment in commercial property Mr Hoare advised that the decision to invest had been taken at the right time so as to maximise income to the council.

Mr Hoare thanked the overview and scrutiny committees for their input during the budget process. In respect of the transfer of balances to reserves Mr Hoare suggested that two decisions in favour of the council in respect of the New Homes Business and Business Rate collection had helped. It was sensible to put money in to reserves in case the situation changed. Mr Hoare concurred with other speakers about the lateness of announcements from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Mr Hoare concluded by outlining that the budget provided value for money and retained the council position as a low levying authority. Mr Hoare suggested the proposals were prudent and urged members to support the recommendations.

Mr Norton acknowledged the concerns regarding the late receipt of information from government and this had been raised and pursued through a number of avenues so hopefully the situation would improve in the future.

Mr Norton highlighted that council tax of £81.63 equated to approximately £1.50 per week and this represented good value for money as it covered all services provided by the council. Mr Norton indicated this was the lowest tax in Oxfordshire and highlighted that Oxford City Council levied £265.

Mr Norton then recommended the budget to council for approval.

On being put to the vote the proposition

**WAS CARRIED**

The following 34 members voted for the proposition:

A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, Mrs L J Chapman, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, Mrs M J Crossland, H G Davies, C G Dingwall, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, Mrs E H N Fenton, W A Goffe, S J Good, J Haine, Mrs H R Hibbert-Biles, S J Hoare, H J Howard, Miss V E Hunt, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, R D J McFarlane, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, W D Robinson and D A Snow.

The following four members abstained from voting:

A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, D S T Enright and G Saul.

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the General Fund revenue budgets and use of balances for 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix A be approved;
- 2) the Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2018/2019 as detailed in Appendix A be approved;
- 3) the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix B be approved;
- 4) the report of the Strategic Director at Appendix C be noted;
- 5) the 2014/15 Pay Policy Statement as set out in Appendix D be approved;
- 6) for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2014/15;



- 7) it be noted that at its meeting held on 15 January 2014 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base 2014/15
- a) for the whole Council area as 40,614.82 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)]; and
  - b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as in the attached Schedule 1.
- 8) the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2014/15 (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) is £81.63
- 9) the following amounts be calculated for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:-
- a) £54,095,913 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.
  - b) £47,858,945 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
  - c) £6,236,968 being the amount by which the aggregate at 9(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 9(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
  - d) £153.56 being the amount at 9(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (7(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses);
  - e) £2,921,580 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per the attached Schedule 2.
  - f) £81.63 being the amount at 9(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 9(e) above by Item T(7(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates;
  - g) the amounts shown in Schedule 2 being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 9(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council’s area shown in Schedule 2 divided in each case by the amount at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;
  - h) the amounts shown in Schedule 3 being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 9(f) and 9(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

- 10) it be noted that for the year 2014/15 the Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:-

<b><u>Valuation Band</u></b>	<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	<b>Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley</b>
	£	£
<b>A</b>	805.61	107.01
<b>B</b>	939.87	124.84
<b>C</b>	1,074.14	142.68
<b>D</b>	1,208.41	160.51
<b>E</b>	1,476.95	196.18
<b>F</b>	1,745.48	231.85
<b>G</b>	2,014.02	267.52
<b>H</b>	2,416.82	321.02

- 11) the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule 4 as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/15 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- 12) the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 13) the Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer), GO Shared Service Head of Finance, Joint Head of Legal and Property Services, Trainee Legal Executive, Joint Head of Revenues and Benefits, Joint Operations Lead Officer, Joint Operations Manager, Joint Support Lead Officer, Overpayments Officer, Senior Recovery Revenues Officer, and Recovery Officer be authorised to:-
- collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, and
  - prosecute or defend on the Council's behalf or to appear on its behalf in proceedings before a magistrate's court in respect of unpaid National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.

68. **NOTICE OF MOTION – TRANSPARENCY OF LOBBYING, NON-PARTY CAMPAIGNING AND TRADE UNION ADMINISTRATION BILL**

At the Council meeting held on 22 January 2014 the following motion was received in the names of Mr D A Snow and Mr D S T Enright, namely:

"West Oxfordshire District Council is extremely concerned about the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill currently working its way through parliament, and resolves to advise the Prime Minister of the severe blow this proposed legislation would have on our local democracy. Community Groups, Charities, and Church Based Organisations by their very nature often pursue or campaign on issues that coincide with, or are similar to that of political parties. If this Bill passes into law, any one of these groups could be breaking the law, simply by acting on the wishes of their supporters, and straying into the realms of what the government could deem "campaigning for political purposes". Legislation such as this could potentially silence the very community-spirited people that voted us into office! This Council believes this proposed legislation is

hugely disrespectful to our electorate, whose voice should always be heard, however big or small, and especially in the run up to an election. As a council, we aim to guard this democratic freedom vigilantly".

At that meeting it was agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 11(e) of the Council Procedure Rules, the Motion stand referred without discussion to the Cabinet. The motion was considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 12th February and the Council was invited to consider a report outlining the recommendations of the Cabinet.

Mr Snow thanked those members and members of the public who had offered support to his motion. Mr Snow, in light of the fact that the bill had now been passed, indicated that he would be withdrawing his motion.

Mr Snow expressed his disappointment that the matter had not been fully debated at the last council meeting and suggested that the impact of the legislation should be assessed in the future.

Mr Enright indicated his agreement to the withdrawal of the motion. Mr Enright echoed the concerns regarding the delay in considering the matter and expressed the hope that in future such matters could be debated urgently.

#### 69. NOTICE OF MOTION – SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PUBLIC HOUSES

The following motion had been received in the names of Mr D S T Enright and Mr G Saul, namely:

“Pubs are important local assets and West Oxfordshire District Council has a record of supporting pubs across the District. They are under threat as a result of a number of pressures including the economic situation, the structure of the tied beer trade, and high property prices.

The Council therefore resolves to create a really simple "toolkit" or online nomination form so parishes and other bodies can nominate pubs as assets of community value, and promote the power to relevant bodies, as an enhancement of the details already available at <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/residents/communities/community-rights/>.

In addition the Council supports the introduction of a statutory code, as follows, and will write to CAMRA and our MP to share our support:-

1. The Beer Tie, whereby landlords can only buy products from their PubCo, works for some licensees. However, for many others it means they can only buy limited products at inflated prices. We want every landlord to have the choice of whether to go free-of-tie. This would allow licensees to operate in a re-constructed market which would actually be more competitive.
2. When a new licensee takes over a pub, or when an existing rent contract expires and is renegotiated, there should be a fully transparent and independent rent review completed by a qualified surveyor.
3. There must be a truly independent body to monitor the regulations and adjudicate in disputes between licensees and pubcos”.

Mr Enright suggested that pubs were important assets in communities and it was hoped that the motion would help in taking the discussion forward by looking at how the council could be proactive in protecting pubs. Mr Enright indicated that pubs were under increasing pressure due to the economy and availability of cheaper alcohol from supermarkets.

Mr Enright highlighted that the second part of his motion concerned management and business issues. In particular it was often the case that the property was worth more than the business so there was often pressure to convert to residential.

(Mr Cottrell-Dormer and Mr Goffe left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Enright outlined the process for registering a community asset and suggested it would be good for the council to develop a toolkit, possibly online, and signpost advice so that communities could be proactive in protecting their assets. Mr Enright expressed the hope that the matter could be referred to the Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee for discussion.

Mr Enright acknowledged that some of the issues were beyond the control of the council but it was an opportunity to share ideas on a wide range of matters.

Mr Enright then proposed that the matter be referred to the scrutiny committee for consideration.

Mr Saul then seconded the proposal.

On being put to the vote the proposition

**WAS CARRIED**

70. NOTICE OF MOTION – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS ON ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following motion had been received in the names of Ms E P R Leffman and Mr J C Cooper, namely:

“This Council resolves to amend the procedural rules in Part 4 of the Constitution as follows, with additional wording shown in italics:

- (i) in Rule 2 relating to Ordinary Meetings of the Council, the amendment of paragraph (vi) to read “receive any announcements from the Chairman, leader, members of the cabinet or the head of the paid service and receive questions and answers on any such announcements”; and
- (ii) the amendment of Rule 10(a) relating to Questions by Members (without notice) to read:

A member of the Council may ask the leader or the Chairman of a Committee any question without notice upon an item in the report of the executive or a committee when the item is being received or is under consideration by the council.

*Additionally, a member of the Council may ask the chairman, leader, members of the cabinet or the head of the paid service a question arising from an announcement made pursuant to Rule 2(vi).”*

In accordance with paragraph 21(b) of the Council Procedure Rules the above Motion (being a Motion to add to the Council Rules of Procedure), when proposed by Ms Leffman and seconded by Mr Cooper, stood adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

71. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Chief Executive which gave details of documents numbered 10946 to 10959A sealed since the last meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm

CHAIRMAN