

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen,  
Witney, on Wednesday 7 September 2016 at 2:00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: N A MacRae MBE (Chairman), Mrs M J Crossland (Vice Chairman), A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, M Brennan, Mrs L C Carter, Mrs L J Chapman, A S Coles, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, R A Courts, C G Dingwall, P J G Dorward, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, P Emery, D S T Enright, Mrs E H N Fenton, E J Fenton, S J Good, A M Graham, J Haine, P J Handley, A D Harvey, Miss G R Hill, H J Howard, R A Langridge, Mrs L E C Little, J F Mills, T J Morris, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan, Mrs C E Reynolds, G Saul, H E T St John, T B Simcox and G H L Wall.

27. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the special and ordinary meetings of the Council held on 29 June 2016, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from E H James, P D Kelland, Ms E P R Leffman, R D J McFarlane, W D Robinson and B J Woodruff.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr A D Harvey declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 13 – Sealing of Documents by virtue of being a tenant of Newman Court, Witney.

30. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

30.1 Tragedies

The Chairman referred to recent tragic events across the world and invited members to join him in a few moments of quiet reflection.

30.2 Councillor and Mrs Robert Courts

The Chairman congratulated Mr and Mrs Courts on the recent birth of their son, Henry.

30.3 Fraud Awareness and Audit Committee Effectiveness

The Chairman reminded members that this meeting was to be immediately followed by Fraud Awareness Training, to which all Councillors were invited; which would be followed by Audit Committee Effectiveness training for members of the Audit and General Purposes Committee, and a meeting of the Leisure Management Contract Working Party.

30.4 Local Plan Workshop

Mr Mills reminded Councillors of the workshop scheduled for 9:30 am on Thursday, 15 September, to which all members were invited.

30.5 Homeseeker Plus and Syrian Refugees

Mr Courts advised Members that as of today it was possible for residents to register for the new Homeseeker Plus service and system, and that anyone previously on the housing waiting list would need to register in order to be able to bid for properties when that part of the process became available on 5 October. He also advised that the final Syrian

refugee family was expected soon, and that the Council had, as promised, provided a mix of private and social housing for the refugee families which had been housed.

In referring to these matters, he praised the staff for their hard work and dedication, and the Head of the Paid Service was asked to pass those comments on.

### 31. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC: MR STUART BROOKS

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, Mr Stuart Brooks addressed the meeting on the question of West Oxfordshire District Council's contribution to Planning Inquiries.

In summary, Mr Brooks invited the Council to consider (i) whether concessions should be agreed late in the process prior to a public inquiry and whether those concessions should be subject to a more rigorous authorisation process; and (ii) whether it placed itself at a disadvantage by relying on officers alone to defend appeals for large projects or whether it should commission its own expert witnesses in every case.

The text of his submission is attached as Appendix A to the original copy of these minutes.

The Chairman thanked Mr Brooks for his contribution, which the Council noted.

### 32. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees from 30 June to 24 August 2016.

The recommendations were proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Courts and on being put to the vote were carried.

**RESOLVED:** that the recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period 30 June to 24 August 2016 be approved in relation to:

- (a) The Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016 (Minute No. AGP/11/2016/2017);
- (b) The Purchase of an Investment Property (Minute No. CT/39/2016/2017);
- (c) The Multi-Year Settlement and Efficiency Plan (Minute No. CT/46/2016/2017);
- (d) The increase in the 2016/2017 Capital Programme for the maintenance of Council Buildings (Minute No. CT/47/2016/2017); and
- (e) The Purchase of an Investment Property (Minute No. CT/51/2016/2017).

### 33. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 30 June and 24 August 2016 were received:

#### 33.2 Quality of Care/Review of Community Hospitals (Minute No. E&S/18.2/2016/2017)

In response to a comment from Mrs Carter, the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Health, Mrs Baker, assured members that the Council would be making representations in due course.

#### 33.3 Digital Nominations (Minute No. E&S/20/2016/2017)

Mr Cooper stated that the presentation at the meeting had been useful and informative and queried whether it should be run again. It was considered that this could be raised at the meeting of the Committee the following week.

33.4 Open Space Grass Cutting  
(Minute No. E/21.3/2016/2017)

Dr Poskitt sought clarification of how she could establish whether the Council was responsible for cutting specific areas of land, and was advised to contact Bob Lightfoot at UBICO.

34. MOTION ON NOTICE: EQUALITY AND TOLERANCE

The following motion had been received in the names of Messrs N A MacRae and A M Graham:

*“We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. We believe that hate crimes have no place in our country, whether they are based on race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. West Oxfordshire District Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable. We reassure all people living in West Oxfordshire that they are valued members of our community”.*

Mr MacRae proposed the motion, stating that it was self-explanatory, and referring to the fact that other Councils had considered and carried similar motions in recent weeks.

Mr Graham seconded the motion and spoke of the importance of individuals being able to live as they wished, with protection from hate, insults, and stigmatism. He referred to the rise in hate speech and crime in the context of the EU Referendum, and of consequential steps, which he supported, which had been taken by the government. However, this was not solely the responsibility of government but a role for all, with local authorities needing to lead by example.

Mr Coles also spoke in support of the motion, expressing his gratitude for it being brought before the Council, referring to a previous motion he had proposed at Council, and to the appropriateness of the Council having flown the rainbow flag to show solidarity for the LGBT community in Florida earlier in the summer. Great Britain had a long and proud tradition of tolerance which he expected to continue, with the aim of people living in a way which would respect and enhance the freedom of others.

Mr Wall briefly expressed support for the motion, in the context of local incidents of which he was aware.

On being put to the vote the motion **WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

35. MOTION ON NOTICE: BUSINESS RATES RETENTION SCHEME

At the meeting of the Council held 21 October 2015, Mr G Saul had proposed:

*“While welcoming the proposal that Councils should set their own business rates and retain 100% of the proceeds, this Council supports the Local Government Association in calling for:*

- *Measures to ensure that local areas with less ability to generate business rates income do not suffer as a result of these changes; and*
- *The power for all councils to vary business rates up as well as down in order to raise funds for vital infrastructure projects; and*
- *Protection of the funding of local services in November’s spending review so that the financial pressures now facing local councils are not exacerbated by further spending reductions.*

*In addition, this Council requests:*

- clarification of the “extra responsibilities” that local government will be expected to fund through business rates income; and
- details of existing grants that may be lost.”

The Council had resolved to refer the matter to Cabinet for consideration and report back to a future meeting of the Council, when more detail on the proposals would be available. Following the Government’s publication of a consultation paper, a report had been considered by Cabinet on 27 July 2016, which had sought to address the specific issues raised in the Motion, and which also noted that a great deal of the detail would only be resolved through and following the consultation process.

The relevant minute of that meeting had been circulated with the report, and Cabinet had decided “*That the details of the consultation paper be noted and the Council be recommended to request Officers to provide a full response to the Department of Communities and Local Government incorporating the issues raised in the Notice of Motion*”.

In speaking to the matter, Mr Saul emphasised that he had spoken at previous Council and Cabinet meetings and did not need to repeat the points made. However, he was content with the recommendation made by Cabinet and with the incorporation of relevant points into the proposed response to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and in particular (i) the need to be able to vary business rates up as well as down, as a lower level decision; and (ii) the principle of seeking a fair and stable system of local government finance.

On being proposed by Mr Saul, and seconded by Mr Morris, the Council -

**RESOLVED:** That the recommendation arising from the Cabinet meeting held 27 July be approved, and that accordingly Officers be requested to provide a full response to the consultation to the Department of Communities and Local Government, incorporating the issues raised in the Motion proposed by Mr Saul.

### 36. NOMINATIONS TO ATTEND ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES

The Council considered the previously circulated report of the Head of Democratic Services, which had been prepared at the request of the Chairman of Council to enable consideration of the future arrangements for nominations to attend Royal Garden Parties.

The Chairman spoke briefly to the report, and explained and elaborated on his view that the proposals would better recognise long service. Council -

**RESOLVED:** That the arrangements proposed in the report for the approval of future nominations to attend Royal Garden Parties be approved, as follows:

- On receipt of notification from the Palace, Members would be invited to register their interest in attending by completing a ballot form;
- When the nomination list closed, providing that they had not previously attended a Garden Party as a representative of the Authority, the applicant with the longest service with the Council would automatically receive one of the invitations;
- Subject to (d) and (e) below, a ballot would be drawn for the remaining place in the traditional manner;
- As previously determined by the Council, the Chairman would attend on one occasion during his/her term of office, and on an occasion when the Chairman exercised their right to attend, the senior applicant would take the other place and there would be no draw that year; and

- (e) In recognition of the fact that there could be occasions when it was appropriate for a member of staff to attend a Royal Garden Party in recognition of long service or some other notable event, the Head of Paid Service would make the name of any such member of staff known to the Chairman, who, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, would determine whether it was appropriate to offer a place to the member of staff. If a place was offered, it would be the place otherwise reserved for ballot.

37. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Head of Paid Service which gave details of documents numbered 11240 to 11265A sealed since the last meeting.

The meeting closed at 2:30 p.m.