

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 18 January 2017 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: N A MacRae MBE (Chairman), A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, M Brennan, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, 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, A D Harvey, Miss G R Hill, H J Howard, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, R D J McFarlane, J F Mills, T J Morris, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan, Mrs C E Reynolds, G Saul, H E T St John and B J Woodruff.

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2016, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from P J Handley and T N Owen, who were absent on official business, Mrs L C Carter, Mrs L J Chapman, A S Coles, R A Courts, Mrs M J Crossland, E H James, T B Simcox and G H L Wall and from J C Cooper for his late arrival at the meeting.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr H E T St John advised that he had a professional interest in the development of the proposed Garden Village between Eynsham and Long Hanborough and indicated that he would leave the meeting during any discussion of the matter.

51. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

51.1 Lance Corporal Scott Hetherington

The Chairman advised that he had attended the repatriation of Lance Corporal Scott Hetherington of 2nd Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment on 12 January. He paid tribute to those volunteers and others involved in ensuring that such sad occasions were conducted with the dignity warranted.

51.2 Chairman's Award

The Chairman reminded Members that an email had been circulated inviting nominations for the Chairman's Award. The award was intended to recognise an individual who had made a significant contribution to the community.

51.3 Chairman's Charity Dinner

The Chairman reminded Members of the Charity Dinner to be held on Friday 17 March in support of Helen and Douglas House. The Guest of Honour was to be Sister Frances Dominica, the founder of the Charity.

51.4 Royal Garden Party

The Chairman proceeded to conduct a draw to select a Member to attend the Royal Garden Party. The outcome was that Mr Toby Morris would attend.

51.5 Cotswolds Garden Village

Mr Haine referred Members to the announcement he had made at the previous week's Cabinet meeting in which he expressed delight that the Expression of Interest for the development of a garden village on land north of the A40 between Eynsham and Long Hanborough had been successfully selected from amongst the 51 Expressions of Interest received by the DCLG. Only 14 Garden Villages had been selected, together with 3 Garden Towns.

Since the successful bids were announced, officers had received information from the Homes and Communities Agency regarding the support that the Council could expect from the Garden Villages Programme. This would include delivery enabling funding in the region of £200,000, support from HCA's planning team, and support from delivery specialists in HCA's Land Team and their local teams.

Whilst £200,000 might seem a relatively small sum, the specific 'pot' allocated to the Garden Village Programme was only £6million in total. It was anticipated that, having the status of a Garden Village would give access to other more substantial funding pots, and officers were to meet with the Homes and Communities Agency to discuss the details of the support package.

Mr Haine emphasised that Community engagement would be key to the success of the Garden Village proposal and advised that he had already written to the surrounding Parish Councils inviting them to make nominations to a Community Panel to work with the Council to ensure the development is successful; and asking for their suggestions as to a suitable name for the garden village, both Tilgarsley and Oxfordshire Cotswold having been acknowledged as 'working names'.

Mr Haine undertook to ensure that all members, but particularly the ward members for Eynsham and the neighbouring parishes, were kept informed of progress with the garden village proposal, recognising, of course, that it still had to be considered in the context of the Local Plan examination when it reconvened in the coming months.

On that more general topic, Mr Haine reminded Members that the consultation on the proposed changes to the Local Plan came to an end on 23 December. More than one thousand representations had been received, and priority was being given to entering these onto the data base and considering their content, in order to secure a date for the Examination to recommence as soon as possible.

Finally, Mr Haine referred to recent press coverage of an alternative proposal for a garden village to be located to the south of the A40 close to South Leigh, which was being promoted by Gladman developments. He explained that this proposal had only recently emerged in response to the Council's consultation. Should Gladman choose to pursue this as an alternative (as they see it) to the proposals included in the Local Plan, then the appropriate place for this issue to be considered would be through the Local Plan Examination when it restarted, alongside the other alternative development sites that had been put forward in other parts of the district.

(Mr St John left the meeting during Mr Haine's comments)

51.6 Superfast Broadband Delivery

Mr Dingwall advised that, following an announcement by Cotswolds Broadband and its supplier, ITS Technology Group, that they were withdrawing from the project following issues experienced with the network build, the Council was preparing to take on the lead role of delivering superfast broadband to the remaining 10 per cent of properties within the District, ensuring access for those in the most rural areas.

An open market review had commenced to be followed by followed by public consultation to determine, with as much accuracy as possible, which premises needed connections.

Mr Dingwall undertook to keep Members advised of progress as the project progressed.

51.7 Garden Waste Service

Mrs Reynolds advised Members that publicity regarding the introduction of a chargeable garden waste service would be sent to all households in a phased programme commencing on 27 January. The dissemination of information had been phased to enable staff to deal with the anticipated volume of enquiries

52. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

Whilst no submissions were received from the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, the Chairman welcomed those Members of the public present to the meeting.

53. 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 16 November 2016 to 11 January 2017.

Mr Haine proposed the following addition to the recommendation regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy at (g):-

“That the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing be authorised to make any minor factually/typographical amendments to the suggested changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule, in liaison with the relevant Cabinet Member, prior to formal publication.”

The amendment was seconded by Mr Morris.

It was then proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Morris that the recommendations at (a) to (g) with the exclusion of that at (c) be approved.

(Mr Cooper joined the meeting at this juncture)

The above recommendations were then put to the vote and were carried.

RESOLVED: that the recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees from 16 November 2016 to 11 January 2017 be approved in relation to:

- (a) Options to Improve Waste Service Delivery - (Minute No. CT/87(b)/2016/2017);
- (b) The Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/2018 - (Minute No. CT/94/2016/2017);
- (d) The Appointment Process for External Auditors - (Minute No. AGP/40/2016/2017);
- (e) The Future Provision of Internal Audit Services - (Minute No. AGP/42/2016/2017);
- (f) The 2017/2018 Budget and Council Tax Base – (Minute No. CT/109/2016/2017) and
- (g) The Community Infrastructure Levy (as amended) - (Minute No. CT/112/2016/2017).

With regard to the recommendation that the Council supports the principle of a Devolution bid with Oxfordshire partners underpinned by governance arrangements of a Combined Authority and elected Mayor, Mr Enright enquired whether the Leader of the Council could provide an update. Recent press reports made it difficult to follow the progress of this fast moving debate and Mr Enright wished to hear how this and any other proposals were progressing.

In response, Mr Mills advised that recent press reports had been prompted by Oxford City Council's consideration through its Overview and Scrutiny function as to what such governance arrangements could look like. The Concept of creating a combined authority had originated in discussions surrounding the future of the Oxfordshire Growth Board when one option considered had been the creation of a combined authority with an elected mayor.

Proposals had not been developed to any great depth as the views of the Department of Communities and Local Government as to what would be expected were still awaited. Locally, it was clear that residents were of the opinion that, if additional residential development was to take place, the necessary supporting infrastructure improvements would need to be put in place. Submission of a successful devolution bid would enable the Council to access funding to support infrastructure development.

Whilst there had been some concern that the creation of a combined authority would result in an additional layer of bureaucracy, Mr Mills believed that replacing the Growth Board with a combined authority was a positive move that would increase transparency and accountability in the decision making process, addressing concerns expressed by certain sections of the community.

Mr Enright enquired whether the County council was still seeking to promote the creation of a unitary County. In response, Mr Mills advised that feedback received from DCLG indicated that both suggested forms of governance could be considered in parallel so long as each had consent and did not encourage discord. He advised that the County Council's position was likely to become clearer during the course of the week.

The recommendation that the Council supports the principle of a Devolution bid with Oxfordshire partners underpinned by governance arrangements of a Combined Authority and elected Mayor was then proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Morris and on being put to the vote was carried.

RESOLVED: that the recommendation made by the Cabinet on 11 January 2017 in relation to the creation of a Combined Authority and directly elected Mayor be approved.

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

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 16 November 2016 and 11 January 2017 were received:

54.1 Deer Park Medical Practice, Witney (Minute No. E&S/42/2016/2017)

Mr Enright enquired whether there was any further information available regarding the proposed closure of the Deer Park Medical Practice. In response, Mrs Baker advised that the Action Group had sought legal advice and had made application for a judicial review. This action had been initiated too late to impact upon the Clinical Commissioning Group's notification letter to patients. The CCG had indicated that it was unable to comment further pending legal discussions. Mrs Baker advised that a decision on the application was not expected until the end of the month. The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to meet on 2 February when it was expected that the matter would be discussed. Mrs Baker paid tribute to the work carried out by Mrs Doughty, the Council's representative to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Ms Leffman enquired whether the impending decision related to the outcome of the application or simply to its acceptance for subsequent determination. Mrs Doughty advised that it was expected that a decision as to whether the application would go

forward was to be made before the end of January; she believed on January 26. She also advised that the outcome of the 'toolkit meeting' held to consider whether the proposed closure represented a substantial change in the level of service provision would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Representatives of the CCG would be present at the meeting which would also be open to the Public. Mrs Baker advised that she would also be present and, having attended previous meetings, testified as to the strength of public opposition to the closure.

54.2 Review of Community Hospitals
(Minute No. E&S/43/2016/2017)

Mr Graham made reference to questions raised by Mrs Doughty with regard to staffing arrangements at Chipping Norton and the possibility of staff reverting to NHS control. In response, Mrs Doughty advised that it had been indicated that there were legal constraints surrounding the issue precluding its further discussion in public. She confirmed that the question of health service provision in Chipping Norton was an on-going issue that had been the subject of discussion at the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of HOSC and the County Councillor were aware of local concerns and were meeting to pursue the matter further.

54.3 Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities
(Minute No. E&S/53.1/2016/2017)

Mr McFarlane welcomed the success of the Council's Expression of Interest for the development of a garden village on land north of the A40. He considered the chosen site to be a good location in close proximity to Oxford. The new development would offer local residents the opportunity to get onto the property ladder and enable the Council to access funding to secure infrastructure improvements. Mr McFarlane agreed that community engagement would be important and believed that the development would be good for the District and the Country.

54.4 Treasury Management Activity and Performance
(Minute No. F&M/54/2016/2017)

In response to a question from Mr Postan, Mr Emery advised that the Council's advisors, Arlingclose, were to attend the next meeting of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

54.5 Safeguarding Policy – Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
(Minute No. CT/110/2016/2017)

Mr Fenton enquired whether all Members would be made aware of the new Policy and Procedure documents. In response, Mrs Baker advised that it was intended to offer training to all Members of the Council and stressed the importance of all Members being aware of how they should address concerns and of doing so in a timely fashion.

55. SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES FOR 2017/2018

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services outlining the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and seeking agreement for a scheme of allowances for Members to be effective for the financial year 2017/2018.

In proposing the recommendations, Mr Morris thanked the Members of the Allowances Panel for their work and emphasised the importance of the role of independent persons in reviewing Members' Allowances. The proposition was seconded by Mr Fenton.

In response to a question from Mr Beaney, Mr Morris confirmed that the recommendation was for a 2% increase which was in line with that awarded to the Council's staff over the same two year period.

On being put to the vote the proposition was carried, and it was -

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel as set out in the Appendix to the report, and specified in paragraph 3.4 be approved; and
- (b) That the Strategic Director (Resources) be authorised to amend the scheme of allowances as formally set out in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution (i) to reflect any changes made as a result of (a) above; and (ii) to incorporate the changes recommended by the Internal Audit report referred to below and summarised under paragraph 3.7 of the report.

56. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2017/2018

The report of the Head of Democratic Services seeking agreement of a programme of meetings for the 2017/2018 civic year was received and considered.

In introducing the report, Mr Mills drew attention to the alternative options regarding the date of the Annual Meeting in 2017. Having considered the potential alternatives, Mr Mills suggested that the usual practice be maintained and the Annual Meeting be held on the previously approved date of 26 April and proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. The proposition was seconded by Mr Haine.

In expressing his support for the proposition, Mr Enright requested that, in determining the time of subsequent meetings, Members give consideration to ways in which the Council's business could be made more accessible to members of the public, enabling them to become better informed and contribute to meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Calendar of Meetings for 2017/2018 set out in the Appendix to the report be approved; and
- (b) That the times for the first meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees after the annual meeting of the Council be as set out in the Appendix, but that each Committee be invited to consider the timing of its subsequent meetings during the year.

57. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Head of Paid Service which gave details of documents numbered 11285 to 11305 sealed since the last meeting.

Mr Cooper noted that a number of transactions referred to in the report related to the transfer of land to Housing Associations. He requested that, given the recent allocation of Government funding of some £375,000 to support community led housing schemes, consideration be given to the possibility of facilitating such projects when future disposals were proposed.

The meeting closed at 2:35pm

CHAIRMAN