

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL: WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2018

NOTICE OF MOTION - SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

(Contact: Keith Butler, Tel: (01993) 861521)

1. PURPOSE

To consider the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor A M Graham and seconded by Councillor A S Coles at the meeting held on 28 February 2018 and referred to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to its consideration and determination.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council considers the motion in light of the recommendation made by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 12 February.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. The following motion was proposed by Councillor A M Graham and seconded by Councillor A S Coles, at the meeting of the Council held 28 February 2018:

“The LGBTIQ+ community as most recently defined (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, intersex and Questioning plus) is an important and accepted part of our community.

This being the case, West Oxfordshire District Council will do everything it can to enable the LGBTIQ+ community to flourish and succeed, thus demonstrating the council’s commitment to representing the needs of the whole community.

The council agrees to examine how best to support this community by referring the matter to the relevant committee to consider any particular challenges in West Oxfordshire”

3.2. The Council decided to refer the motion to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, prior to it being determined at this meeting as it wished for more information to be presented to help councillors consider the issue.

3.3. A report providing details and progress on the pilot project set up to support the LGBTIQ+ community was considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 24 May. The report can be viewed on the [Council’s website](#).

3.4. Following consideration of the report the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the Council be advised that the Committee is of the opinion that assistance be provided by West Oxfordshire District Council by way of support and advice on future governance arrangements and general help including signposting and raising awareness.

3.5. The relevant extract from the minutes of that meeting is included in the [Appendix](#) and Members are now invited to consider and determine the motion in the light of the Committee’s recommendation.

Keith Butler

Head of Democratic Services

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Date: 7 June 2018

Background Papers:

None.

II. NOTICE OF MOTION - CHALLENGES OF THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY AND PILOT SUPPORT GROUP

The Committee received and considered the report of the Executive Director (Commissioning) regarding the challenges facing the LGBTIQ+ community and how best to offer support.

Mr Acock indicated that the pilot support group referred to in the report required financial support in order to survive. He noted that the Council had never provided any financial support to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning plus community and felt that it would be a shame if the 6,600 members of that community within West Oxfordshire were to lose the support offered by the group.

Mr Beaney advised that, whilst the Council might be able to consider providing financial assistance once the group was properly constituted, it was difficult for it to do so in the absence of a formally constituted organisation.

In response to a question from Mrs Carter, Mr Acock explained that the principal costs to the group related to the production of publicity leaflets and the hire of suitable premises in which to hold meetings as these took place across the District. Without financial assistance the group would be unable to continue beyond September.

Mr Kelland suggested that current levels of attendance did not represent a significant level of response. Mr Acock disagreed and advised that in London, which was far more heavily populated, attendance at meetings was less than it had been to date in West Oxfordshire. The issue facing the group was a lack of funding and Mr Acock expected that there would be a greater take-up if the group was better able to publicise its meetings.

Mr Kelland also questioned the extent of the LGBTIQ+ community within West Oxfordshire. Mr Acock explained that this was an extrapolated figure and the Executive Director advised that, whilst there was no definitive data, this figure was based upon the formula devised by the Department of Trade and Industry and Stonewall which suggested that between 5% and 7% of the population identified themselves with the LGBTIQ+ community. In West Oxfordshire this would equate to somewhere between 4,500 and 6,500 individuals.

Mr Acock advised that the group did not have a formal membership as meetings were confidential. He emphasised the need for trained people to provide support and advised that he had personally had to help an individual who had become suicidal. A recent survey had indicated that 71% of the LGBTIQ+ community felt uncomfortable to kiss or hold hands in public.

Mr Acock proposed that the Cabinet be requested to recommend that the Council allocates the sum of £5,000 per annum to the pilot support group.

Whilst he was happy to second the proposition in order to generate debate, Mr Cooper indicated that the group had to be properly constituted before any funding was made available.

Mrs Carter acknowledged that it was important that the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community were addressed and questioned whether the group had sought to align itself with the work done already by Citizens Advice or the Police who monitored hate crime. Mrs Carter also suggested that the group negotiate with potential partner organisations such as the Chipping Norton Theatre that might be able to provide accommodation for meetings free of charge or at a reduced cost. Whilst admiring

Mr Acock's enthusiasm and passion, Mrs Carter believed that there were other ways in which the group could move forward.

Mr Acock advised that the group had sought help from various organisations but had failed to receive a positive response. Given the need for confidentiality, funding was necessary as the group was unable to hold its meetings in public locations. Mrs Carter suggested that there were premises such as the Old Mill Café which could provide private areas. She believed that there were other ways in which the issue could be addressed and suggested that the group seek advice on potential locations from fellow Councillors. Mr Acock indicated that a previous approach had not been fruitful.

The proposition was then put to the vote and was lost.

Mr Beaney emphasised that this did not suggest that the Council did not want to help but reflected concerns over the absence of a properly constituted organisation. He proposed that the Council be advised that the Committee is of the opinion that assistance be provided by West Oxfordshire District Council by way of support and advice on future governance arrangements and general help including signposting and raising awareness.

Having been duly seconded the proposition was put to the vote and was carried.

RESOLVED: that the Council be advised that the Committee is of the opinion that assistance be provided by West Oxfordshire District Council by way of support and advice on future governance arrangements and general help including signposting and raising awareness.