

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 25 July 2018 at 2:00pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: Mrs M J Crossland (Chairman); A H K Postan (Vice-Chairman); J R Acock, A Al-Yousuf, A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, Ms R M Bolger, Mrs L C Carter, Mrs L J Chapman, A S Coles, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, Ms M E Davies, P J G Dorward, H B Eaglestone, D S T Enright, Mrs E H N Fenton, E J Fenton, S J Good, A M Graham, P J Handley, A D Harvey, Miss G R Hill, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, N P Leverton, N A MacRae MBE, M D McBride, R D J McFarlane MBE, Mrs M L Mead, J F Mills, T J Morris, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, G Saul and B J Woodruff.

25. MINUTES

Mr Graham drew attention to a typographical error at Minute No. 21 (Motion relating to Support for the LGBTIQ+ Community) which incorrectly referred to the “LGBIQ+ Community”.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the amendment set out above, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 June 2018, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A J Adams, Mrs J C Baker, J Haine, D N Jackson, Ms E P R Leffman, C M Rylett and H E T St John.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to the recommendation at Minute No. CT/33/2018/2019 (Freehold Transfer of Unterhaching Park, Witney), whilst not a disclosable interest, Mr Harvey indicated that he and a number of other Members of the Council were also Members of the Witney Town Council.

There were no other declarations of interest from Members or Officers in items to be considered at the meeting.

28. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

28.1 Mr Colin Adams

The Chairman advised Members of the death of Mr Colin Adams.

Mr Adams, the father of Mr Alvin Adams, represented Witney Central from 2007 until 2012. During that time he served on the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Licensing Committee which he chaired from 2008. Mr Adams also served on the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee and had been Chairman in 2011/2012

Those present stood in silence as a mark of respect.

28.2 Chairman's Events

Mrs Crossland advised that, accompanied by Dr Poskitt, she had recently attended an event in Woodstock with a group of Japanese ladies who were on a fact finding visit to investigate the impact of political power on women in the United Kingdom. Mrs Crossland

indicated that she would be happy to attend events throughout the District and invited Members to notify her of any they wished her to attend.

28.3 Mr Patrick Churchill

Mrs Crossland advised that she had represented the Council at the funeral of Mr Patrick Churchill. During the Second World War, Mr Churchill had landed on D Day with the Royal Marine Armoured Support Group and had subsequently served with the French troops of 4 Commando. In 1945, Mr Churchill had been awarded the Croix de Guerre and on the 60th anniversary of D Day, had been awarded the Legion d'Honneur. The funeral, which had been attended by a huge number of people wishing to record their admiration, had been conducted with dignity and respect and was a fitting tribute to Mr Churchill.

28.4 General Data Protection Regulation Training

Mrs Crossland reminded Members that a further training session on the new General Data Protection Regulation was to be held at the conclusion of the Council meeting.

28.5 University Vice-Chancellor's Innovation Awards

Mr Mills advised that he had recently attended the Oxford University Vice-Chancellor's Innovation Awards. The occasion highlighted the opportunity that Oxford City and the wider County had to play in the world and it had been amazing to see the variety of innovation on display. This had included quantum computing and the use of telephone technology to monitor the operation of water pumps enabling quick action to maintain supplies.

Mr Mills indicated that it was such innovation that had prompted the Local Enterprise Partnership to develop a Local Industrial Strategy and Oxfordshire was one of only three areas to secure Government support; the others being the Northern Powerhouse and the Midland Engine. The Government's support was based upon the fact that Oxfordshire generated some £22 Billion for the Country and was a net contributor to the exchequer. West Oxfordshire had a role to play in Oxfordshire's continuing success for the benefit of its residents.

In announcing the new NPPF, the Government had indicated that it would continue to explore planning freedoms and flexibilities as per the commitment in the Housing and Growth Deal and advised that specific Ministerial Statements would be material considerations alongside the planning framework. The question that faced the District was not a choice between having more residential development or not but a choice between inappropriate speculative development, such as that currently under construction in the Windrush Valley in Witney, or plan led development. Mr Mills emphasised that plan led development would enable the Council to secure the greatest benefits for local residents and the County.

Discussions with Government were ongoing and it was anticipated that there would be a Ministerial Statement in September. This, together with the adoption of the Local Plan, would bring an end to unwelcome speculative development.

28.6 Proposed Closure of Cogges Surgery

Mr MacRae advised that news of the proposed closure of the Cogges Surgery was of great concern not only to those in the immediate vicinity, but to the wider community as the surgery had a wide patient base.

Whilst the District Council was limited in what it could directly achieve, having no statutory powers to oppose the closure, it was taking such steps as were available to reflect local concerns.

Since first learning of the potential closure, the Council had written to the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group expressing concern that it had not received any prior warning of the closure. Mr MacRae had spoken with Mr Beaney, the Chairman of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had agreed to explore ways in which the Council could take matters forward. Mr MacRae had also discussed the matter with Mr Owen, the Council's representative on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and with Mrs Brenda Churchill, the Witney Town Mayor.

Mrs Baker had apprised the local Member of Parliament of the situation and Mr Courts was monitoring developments.

Other groups were also working hard in an effort to clarify the position and public meetings were to be held at Cogges Church the following day and at the Corn Exchange on 2 August.

The Council would continue in its endeavours to establish a clear view of the position.

Ms Bolger welcomed this matter being raised as it was an important issue and any closure would be disastrous. She questioned how the Council could create a role for itself and allocate resources to ensure that primary healthcare provision continued to be provided locally. In response, Mr MacRae advised that it was anticipated that a report would be brought before the Cabinet in August.

Mr Mills advised that, over the last three years, the Council had been pressing the CCG to take a more active and engaged role in the planning system through the Sustainability and Transformation Programme and the Growth Board as it was essential to give thought to the way in which healthcare would be able to accommodate the predicted levels of residential development. Mr Mills acknowledged that the Council had little knowledge of clinical matters but stressed that it had a role to play through the planning process and initiatives such as the Kings Fund Agenda and designing for good health.

Mr Mills thanked Mr MacRae for his intervention but expressed concern over previous engagement with the CCG. Mr MacRae advised that he had only just assumed responsibility for the portfolio and Mr Mills acknowledged that the Council's relationship with the CCG had been strained in the past. However, it was important to develop positive engagement with the CCG and the Council was working hard to do so through the Growth Board. The new Chair of the CCG was more positive in their engagement and discussions were taking place regarding future models for the delivery of primary care. He reiterated that, whilst the Council had no clinical expertise, it had a role to play in delivering that service.

Mr Enright thanked Mr MacRae for his support and advised that all Members were welcome at the meeting at Cogges Church which offered the opportunity for cross party working. He questioned whether the provision of key worker housing could play a role in sustaining hospital and primary care services. In response, Mr MacRae advised that the issue at Cogges was the inability to recruit GP's and expressed doubt that house prices were a significant factor.

Mr Acock asked why the same mistakes as had taken place at the Deer Park Surgery were recurring and suggested that the two issues should be considered together to see how the Council could move forward on both. In response, Mrs Crossland reminded Members that the Council was not the decision making body and Mr MacRae advised that the issues at the two surgeries were very different matters. In this instance, the practice had been unable to recruit partner GP's whilst at Deer Park, the CCG had been unable to let a new contract.

Ms Bolger asked whether all Ward Members could be included in meetings regarding Cogges Surgery and Mr MacRae advised that he could not give such a commitment at this stage.

29. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

There were no submissions from members of the public under the provisions of the Council's Rules of Procedure.

30. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Council considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services setting out recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period from 28 June to 18 July 2018. The recommendations at (a) to (d) were proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Morris and it was:-

RESOLVED: That the recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period from 28 June to 18 July 2018 be approved in relation to:-

- (a) The 2018/19 update to the Council Plan 2016 to 2019. (Minute No. CT/29/2018/2019);
- (b) The funding request to provide additional resources to support delivery of Council Priorities. (Minute No. CT/30/2018/2019);
- (c) The provision of £137,000 from Section 106 contributions within the 2018/2019 Capital Programme to fund improvement projects at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre. (Minute No. CT/31/2018/2019); and
- (d) The revenue allocation of up to £35,000 to enable legal work to be procured to put a Framework for Electric Vehicle Charging Points in place to be funded from earmarked reserves. (Minute No. CT/32/2018/2019).

The Council then went on to give consideration to the recommendations regarding the Freehold Transfer of Unterhaching Park, Witney, at Minute No. CT/33/2018/2019).

The recommendations at (a) to (c) were proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Morris.

Mr Cooper proposed that the recommendation at Minute No. CT/33(b)/2018/2019 be amended to read as follows:-

*"That the Council be recommended to approve the payment of £30,000 to be met from **balances** ~~the Section 106 Commuted Sum budget~~".*

Mr Cooper explained he believed that Section 106 contributions were tied to those developments through which they were generated and had to be applied to specific projects. In seconding the amendment, Mr Graham indicated that he did so on grounds of transparency as it was important to be clear from where funding was derived and applied. The recommendation gave rise to confusion as this was not clearly defined.

Mr Morris advised that, whilst both were secured through a legal agreement, the key difference was that Section 106 contributions were required to facilitate the provision of capital assets whilst commuted sums were provided to cover the cost of future maintenance of open space. Commuted sums provided for this purpose were held under a single budget head, payments being made from this on transfer of land to town and parish councils to contribute towards future maintenance costs.

Whilst he would be happy to ask Officers to identify how this single fund had been accumulated over time, Mr Morris suggested that this was not necessary as the arrangements were sufficiently transparent. The Chief Finance Officer had also confirmed that this was a sensible approach, adopted by most authorities.

Ms Davies questioned how section 106 contributions arising from recent development in Long Hanborough would be applied. In response, Mr Morris indicated that this question illustrated the difference between section 106 contributions and commuted sums, the former being directed towards previously identified capital assets defined during the planning process. Mr Morris was aware that lists of projects were available for Witney and undertook to seek to provide Ms Davies with a list of projects within her ward.

Mr Mills advised that Section 106 contributions were intended to offset the impact of development and suggested that it was equitable for the cost of future maintenance to be met from commuted sums. If met from general fund balances, residents from across the District would be paying for local amenities.

Mr Coles asked whether there were any future plans for the play area or copse, the latter area being maintained by the Witney Woodland Volunteers. Mr Morris advised that there was no suggestion that anything but the management of the play area would change and agreed with Mr Coles that the current uses should be retained.

The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.

Speaking on the substantive motion, Mr Graham questioned how long the budget for commuted sums had been accumulating. In response, Mr Mills advised that it had accumulated through the planning process for many years and, whilst it might be less common in certain parts of the District, Witney Town Council had frequently taken over responsibility for open spaces. He emphasised that the accumulated funds were for ongoing maintenance of open space secured through the planning process, not for more general expenditure. By assuming responsibility for such sites the Town Council could achieve economies of scale.

Mr Handley expressed his support for the proposition and enquired whether the option to assume maintenance responsibilities was open to other local councils. Mr Morris advised that, should any town or parish council wish to take on land owned and maintained by the District Council, it should make that desire known.

The recommendations at (a) to (c) were then put to the vote and were carried.

(Mr Acock, Mr Cooper, Mr Graham and Dr Poskitt requested that their votes against the recommendations be so recorded)

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

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 28 June and 18 July 2018 were received.

31.1 Application of Monies Received Through Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy Minute No. E&S/20/2018/2019

In response to a request from Mr Cooper, Mr Beaney agreed that the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider the application of commuted sums received through section 106 agreements.

31.2 Diversity Training Minute No. E&S/19.7/2018/2019

Mr Acock stated that the Council did not have a Diversity Officer and asked when one would be employed. He also asked when diversity training would be provided to Members. Mr Beaney and Mr Morris undertook to discuss these questions and respond.

Mr Mills made reference to previous Notices of Motion in which the Council had expressed its support for diversity and undertook to consider the question of Member training.

Mr Handley expressed concern at the lack of recent training on the Overview and Scrutiny function. Mr Mills reminded Members that funding had been set aside for Member development and the question of Overview and Scrutiny Training would be considered.

Mr Postan advised that the question of Member training had been discussed at the Publica AGM the previous evening.

31.3 Proposed Meeting with the Environment Agency and Thames Water
Minute No. ENV/16.2/2018/2019

Mr Fenton asked whether there had been any progress in arranging the proposed meeting with Thames Water and the Environment Agency. In response, Mr Harvey advised that the Environment Agency had established a task force to address the question of pollution of the River Windrush and Officers were seeking to establish whether it would be in a position to attend a meeting in early October or later in the month. Town and parish councils would be invited to attend, together with other interested groups and the meeting would be open to all Members. The event would offer the opportunity for an in-depth review of relevant issues.

Mr Coles welcomed the meeting and asked if a report on recent instances of pollution of the Windrush could be brought to the September meeting. In response, Mr Harvey indicated that these issues could be considered at the meeting with the Environment Agency in October.

31.4 Implementation of Car Parking Strategy
Minute No. E/10.2/2018/2019

Mr Enright enquired whether the results of the study of car parking in the Corn Street and Woodgreen areas of Witney were available and whether there were any plans to extend the study to modern estates such as Madley Park or Shilton Park where parking problems were evident.

In response, Mr Harvey advised that Officers were still collating the information from the recent surveys. This would help to inform parking policy going forward and he invited Members to advise Officers of any particular difficulties encountered elsewhere.

31.5 Unauthorised Encampments on Council Owned Land
Minute No. ENV/16.4/2018/2019

Mr Enright asked whether any progress had been made in preventing unauthorised use of the land at Deer Park. He noted that plans were to be put in place to provide waste receptacles when such incursions took place and to clean up sites rapidly thereafter. He also noted that it was intended to provide an information leaflet for residents outlining the Council's response to such instances but that this had not been completed prior to the most recent occurrence. Mr Harvey confirmed that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be happy to back this initiative.

31.6 Approval of West Eynsham Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document
Minute No. CAB/28/2018/2019

Mr Acock enquired as to the cost of reinstating a rail link between Witney and Oxford. Mr Mills advised that this had been considered as part of the County Council's transport strategy and that the information would be available on the County's website. However, it was impractical to reinstate the previous route as it had been built over in many locations

and there was an extant consent for gravel extraction on part of the route. In consequence, a totally new route would have to be identified.

31.7 Funding of Council Priorities
Minute No. CAB/30/2018/2019

Mrs Carter asked whether there could be additional resource for environmental monitoring in the light of the large amount of new construction being undertaken in the District, in order to respond to community concerns. Mr Morris undertook to reply to her at a later date.

32. NOTICE OF MOTION - CULLING OF BADGERS

The following motion had been received in the names of Mr A S Coles and R M Bolger, namely:-

“Farming and agriculture play an important and valued role in the life of West Oxfordshire and contribute much to our local economy. DEFRA is now considering extending the badger cull into areas of low-risk, including Oxfordshire.

Because all the unbiased scientific evidence suggests that culling badgers makes no meaningful contribution to the eradication of bovine tuberculosis in cattle, which is having such a devastating impact on farming communities, this Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State asking that the independent advisory panel be reinstated, and that the extension of the cull be halted until the panel has reviewed the policy on how effectively to tackle bovine tuberculosis.

This Council further resolves to ensure that no culling will take place on its land until the advisory panel has completed its review and the government has implemented its advice”.

In proposing the Motion, Mr Coles set out his opposition to the cull in some detail and a copy of his submission is attached as an appendix to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer advised that he had some experience of cattle farming over the years but now maintained a herd 90 head fewer than when he had started in 1971.

Four years ago there had been no bovine TB in Oxfordshire but cattle had now to be tested for the disease every 60 days. This was a nightmare with 264 head of cattle in nine fields. Whilst he had previously sold bulls for breeding, they were now only sold for beef. Whilst there had been four badger setts on his land, Mr Cottrell-Dormer now found there were 14. As badgers preyed on the eggs of ground nesting birds and hedgehogs, their numbers were now in decline.

In Germany, some 50,000 badgers had been culled and there were no instances of bovine TB in that country. Mr Cottrell Dormer suggested that the problem of bovine TB could not be solved without a nationwide badger cull.

In Somerset, instances of bovine TB had fallen and numbers of ground nesting birds and hedgehogs were now increasing. The disease had been eradicated in the Republic of Ireland and in New Zealand, where a possum cull had been implemented.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer advised that culling implied a reduction in numbers, not extinction and indicated that he could not support the Motion.

Mr Colston stressed that farming made an important contribution to the local economy. Oxfordshire was now considered to be at high risk from bovine TB, the disease having crossed into Gloucestershire from the South West and being found in Northamptonshire having crossed the barrier of the M1.

In expressing concern for the welfare of the badger, there was no consideration for the impact of bovine TB on the farming community. In the past, almost every farm in Oxfordshire maintained a dairy herd whilst today there were only three in West Oxfordshire. In the 1960's and 1970's, badgers were rarely sighted and bovine TB was virtually non-existent. However, since the 1973 Badger Act, their numbers could no longer be controlled by gassing and had risen out of control.

Bovine TB cost the farming industry £100million each year and 15% more cattle had been destroyed in the previous year. Mr Colston advised that 23 of his own breeding cows had been lost due to TB and noted that the lack of livestock had a detrimental impact upon the nature and appearance of the countryside. In many areas there were now more badgers than cows.

There was strong evidence of a reduction in bovine TB within the cull areas which was confirmed by experience in other countries. The disease could be carried in both cows and badgers resulting in tighter bio-security measures with cattle being held indoors, together with movement and trading restrictions.

Vaccination was not a viable option and Mr Colston questioned what message would be sent to rural communities if the Council passed such a motion which did nothing to raise the plight of farmers and the impact on the countryside. He suggested that the third element of the Motion was irrelevant as the Council's landholdings were limited and did not provide a habitat suitable for badgers.

Mr Colston urged the Council to reject the Motion and support the 25 year programme proposed by Owen Patterson MP in 2003.

Mr Handley agreed that badgers had been rare 30 years ago but were now far more common. It was important to protect rare breeds of cattle which were decreasing year on year as herds developed through selective breeding. Farmers were under ever increasing pressure which, sadly on occasion, led to depression or suicide. Many had sought to improve their stock and introduce technology but this was expensive and some were still paying for equipment having already ceased dairy farming. Breeds such as Hereford cattle were the most effective in turning grass into meat.

Mr Handley condemned the proposition as a 'townie' motion and suggested that the cull had not gone on long enough to produce definitive evidence.

Mr Fenton advised that he had voted against a similar Motion put before the County Council. Scientific evidence was inconclusive and the cull had to continue to establish whether it would result in a reduction of bovine TB. He considered that it would be inappropriate to stop the experiment half way through and felt that the cull must continue to obtain conclusive evidence.

Mr Cotterill indicated that he could not support the motion. He reiterated that badgers preyed on hedgehogs and the eggs of ground nesting birds and noted that bovine TB could be spread by badgers far too easily through their urine rather than direct contact.

Germany had been free of the disease since 1997 following a cull. In the UK, £50,000 had been spent on the cull, rising to £71,000 in 2015/2016. The problem was that badgers were not being culled in sufficient numbers to provide a definitive result. When an intensive cull had taken place in the Republic of Ireland, instances of bovine TB had dropped dramatically.

Mr Acock stated that he had lived in the countryside all his life and represented a rural ward. He respected wildlife and found culling unjust, unfair and, on the evidence available, ineffective.

He proposed an amendment to the Motion calling on the Secretary of State for the Environment to introduce a programme of vaccination in badgers in place of a cull as it lacked compassion to kill these animals without evidence. He believed that expenditure on a cull was a waste of resources that could be better employed elsewhere at a time when residents were using food banks and the NHS was in crisis. He commended the book 'Badgered to Death' by Dominic Dyer, which proposed vaccination as a more effective alternative to a cull, to Members.

The amendment was seconded by Mr Cooper who cited the work carried out by the cross bench group of peers in which Lord May, himself a professor of zoology, had indicated that there was no proof that bovine TB was passed from badgers to cows.

Mrs Crossland asked Mr Coles whether he was prepared to accept Mr Acock's amendment. In response, Mr Coles indicated that he found the amendment unnecessary as the Motion as proposed gave the option of vaccination should the independent panel consider it appropriate

Dr Poskitt advised that vaccination did not offer a cure as, whilst it would protect uninfected animals, it could make the disease worse in those already infected. Mr Colston concurred, indicating that vaccination would work best on the young which did not leave the sett in the early stages of their life. Mr Colston noted that a proposed five year project in Pembrokeshire, which had lasted for only three years, had resulted in costs of some £700 per badger vaccinated.

Mr Postan indicated that he would vote against the amendment as members of his family had died having drunk infected milk.

As the proposer of the original Motion, Mr Coles declined the opportunity to sum up on the amendment. The amendment was then put to the vote and **WAS LOST**.

Returning to the substantive Motion, Dr Poskitt indicated that this was a question that had been debated throughout her professional life. Rather than a further study, Dr Poskitt suggested that what was required was an independent review of all the previous work already undertaken. Such a Cochrane Review, which was common in medicine, re-examined the existing body of work in a specific field. Dr Poskitt stated that culling was only one element of control, as was vaccination. New Zealand, Australia and Eire had all gone down the culling route and had seen a reduction in bovine TB which had not been found in Northern Ireland where no cull had taken place. Whilst she recognised the underlying emotion, Dr Poskitt indicated that she could not support the Motion. A further review would not give any assurance and what was required was a meta-analysis of previous research.

Dr Al-Yousuf stated that, whilst he loved badgers, he agreed with Dr Poskitt in favouring a scientific approach. He indicated that he would have liked to have received more evidence in support of the Motion which he believed had been based on a political rather than a scientific approach. When faced with deciding between emotion and Government Policy, whilst he was prepared to keep an open mind, Dr Al-Yousuf felt that Members had not been provided with the necessary scientific arguments to reject Government Policy.

Mr Mills advised that DEFRA had considered the position in March/April and designated Oxfordshire as a low risk area. Whilst the risk was lower than in Gloucestershire or South Somerset, Oxfordshire was an edge area as defined by the Government. With regard to the call for unbiased scientific evidence, some £35,000 had been spent over the last five years. Advice from the Chief Veterinary Officer in 2017 suggested that, whilst they could not eradicate the disease, culls could deliver a level of effectiveness in controlling bovine

TB. Mr Mills believed that culling had a part to play in the control of bovine TB and could not support the Motion.

Summing up, Mr Coles thanked Members for their contributions on an emotive issue which commanded strong feelings from all sides of the debate. He respected the various points of view expressed which needed to be debated in a proper and professional manner. In terms of the concerns expressed over hedgehogs and nesting birds, Mr Coles acknowledged that badgers would prey on these species but were also a competitor for food sources. He questioned whether it was appropriate to cull one species in favour of another when both had co-existed for many years. He also indicated that hedgehogs were in decline even in areas where badger populations were low.

In terms of Mr Colston's comments regarding dairy farmers, Mr Coles emphasised that he wished to support the farming community. With instances of bovine TB on the increase, it was apparent that the badger cull was not working. In addition, economic factors had a greater impact on the farming industry than badgers.

In relation to Dr Al-Yousuf's comments, Mr Coles suggested that it fell to Members to carry out their own research.

Mr Coles agreed with Mr Mills with regard to risk areas. There were two groups; high or low risk or edge and Oxfordshire was predominantly low risk with the exception of two areas at high risk.

In accordance with Rule 15 of the Council Procedure Rules, Mr Coles requested that the vote on the Motion be taken by roll-call with each member present signifying whether he or she was voting in favour of the question, against the question, or was abstaining, which would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The request was supported by the requisite three Members and the Motion was then put to the vote and **WAS LOST**.

The following nine members voted for the Motion:

Councillors J R Acock, R M Bolger, A S Coles, L C Carter, J C Cooper, M E Davies, D S T Enright, A M Graham and G Saul.

The following 28 members voted against the Motion:

A Al-Yousuf, A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, Mrs L J Chapman, N G Colston, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, Mrs M J Crossland, H B Eaglestone, Mrs E H N Fenton, E J Fenton, S J Good, P J Handley, A D Harvey, Miss G R Hill, E H James, P D Kelland, R A Langridge, N P Leverton, N A MacRae MBE, M D McBride, R D J McFarlane MBE, Mrs M L Mead, J F Mills, T J Morris, T N Owen, A H K Postan and B J Woodruff.

The following two members abstained from voting:

Councillors Dr E M E Poskitt and P J G Dorward,

33. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Head of Paid Service which gave details of documents numbered 11534 to 11549B sealed since its last meeting.

The meeting closed at 3:50 pm

CHAIRMAN

Submission by Mr A S Coles

I'm proposing this motion today because I believe, living in a predominantly rural district, we have a duty and a responsibility to support our farming and agriculture communities whose contribution to West Oxfordshire and our local economy is really significant.

Certainly the threat posed by bovine tuberculosis is significant and not one that we can ever ignore or downplay. Farmers live in an almost constant state of fear, certainly ahead of routine testing of their cattle and the implications that a positive test could bring and the impact that would have on their business and livelihood. This is the absolute tragedy of the current policy - vast amounts of public funds are being spent in a forlorn hope.

After 5 years of badger culling, more than 35,000 badgers have been killed and an estimated £50million pounds of taxpayers' money spent. Yet DEFRA are still unable to provide reliable evidence that culling badgers is having any impact on reducing TB in cattle. In fact there are examples where the opposite is true. The Randomised Badger Culling Trial from 1998 to 2006 showed that some badgers left the culled areas because of the disturbance which has the potential to spread bTB into new areas currently unaffected by the disease. So rather than eradicating bTB, the cull can actually end up spreading the disease. Hardly the kind of help our farmers need.

It's important when attempting to tackle such a problem as bTB we follow the science. A previous government commissioned study into the issue of bTB transmission from badgers to cattle found that data indicated that badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to cattle TB control in England. More recently the Independent Expert Panel, appointed by DEFRA, assessed the culls ineffective and inhumane. Shortly after reporting on the ineffectiveness of controlled shooting, the panel was dissolved. All the unbiased scientific opinion suggests that we will never get rid of bTB by killing badgers. As one farmer put it, the badger is nothing more than a scapegoat.

What we need, what our farming communities desperately need, is practical solutions that actually work. Measures that will actually eradicate this awful disease. The very fact that the government's own figures state that 34,000 cattle were slaughtered due to a bTB incident in the 12 months to March 2018, an increase of 13% on the previous 12 months, proves that the current method of culling badgers in order to eradicate bTB isn't working. It's also worth remembering that cattle and badgers are not the only carriers of bTB. The disease can infect and be transmitted by domestic animals such as cats and dogs, wildlife such as deer and farm livestock such as horses, goats and pigs. It's not unreasonable to ask why one species is being targeted while others are completely ignored. Although can you imagine the response of the public if the government suddenly proposed a publically funded cull of horses, cats and dogs?

In February the Government announced a review of its bTB strategy under the chairmanship of Professor Sir Charles Godfray. The review is due to be completed in September. It strikes me as completely contradictory that the government is proposing to extend the pointless Badger cull into areas including Oxfordshire while at the same time actually reviewing its current effectiveness. Surely it would be sensible to carry out the review before committing more public funds on a questionable and unpopular programme that clearly isn't working. As much as I welcome the review, I believe an independent review, free from political meddling and interference is essential if we are ever to truly get a grip of the current crisis.

For this reason, neither I, nor any farmer whose livelihood depends on cattle should be backing the current policy. Instead, we must rely on science. Good, solid, impartial, means-tested science.

Therefore my motion proposes that this council writes to the Secretary of State, asking that the independent advisory panel be reinstated and the extension of the cull be halted until the panel has reviewed the policy on how effectively to tackle bovine tuberculosis. And that no culling takes

place on WODC land until the advisory panel has completed its review and the government has implemented its advice.

I'm hoping I can count on the support of Councillor Dorward and Councillor Acock in this as they, along with all members of the Labour and Co-operative Group recently opted to take the BBOWT Pledge for Nature. BBOWT being the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. BBOWT have for the last two years been collecting samples from badgers killed on Oxfordshire's roads and sending them to the University of Surrey to be tested for bTB. None of the dead badgers have so far proven to be infected, NONE. BBOWT along with The National Trust, The Woodland Trust and many other notable organisations all oppose the badger cull. Members are probably aware that Oxfordshire County Council recently debated this issue and they too voted to oppose the licensing of the cull in Oxfordshire.

So I urge all members to support this motion, I'm not looking to score cheap party political points here, this issue is far too important. I approached the new cabinet member for the environment regarding the motion and expressed my wish to work with him and the ruling group. We need to work together to give our farmers the backing and support they so desperately need and the help to eradicate this truly awful disease once and for all.

Andrew Coles
25/7/18