

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 27 February 2019** at 2:00pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: Maxine Crossland (Chairman); Alex Postan (Vice-Chairman); Jake Acock, Alvin Adams, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Jeanette Baker, Andrew Beaney, Richard Bishop, Rosa Bolger, Laetisia Carter, Andrew Coles, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Merylyn Davies, Pete Dorward, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Steve Good, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, Peter Handley, David Jackson, Ed James, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Norman MacRae MBE, Martin McBride, David McFarlane MBE, Michele Mead, James Mills, Toby Morris, Kieran Mullins, Neil Owen, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Harry St John and Guy Wall.

67. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 January 2019, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Chapman, Nigel Colston, Charles Cottrell-Dormer, David Harvey, Gill Hill and Ben Woodruff.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

With regard to Agenda Item No. 8 (Budget and Council Tax 2019/2020) insofar as it related to public transport issues, whilst not disclosable interests, Councillor Coles advised that he was employed by Stagecoach and was a volunteer with West Oxfordshire Community Transport and Councillor Postan advised that his wife was a volunteer driver with the Villager Bus service.

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

70. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

70.1 Ms Amy Barnes

The Chairman introduced Ms Amy Barnes, the recently appointed Democratic Services Officer. Members welcomed Ms Barnes and wished her well during her time at West Oxfordshire.

70.2 Member Briefing – Safeguarding and ‘County Lines’

Councillor MacRae reminded Members that the Council’s Safeguarding Officer and representatives of Thames Valley Police were to conduct a Member briefing on safeguarding and ‘county lines’ at the conclusion of the meeting. This was the first of a series and a further briefing on Domestic Violence was to be arranged shortly.

70.3 Councillor Andy Graham

Members and Officers joined the Chairman in conveying their congratulations to Councillor Graham on his forthcoming marriage and wished him and his future husband every happiness in the future. Councillor Graham thanked those present for their good wishes.

#### 70.4 Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Consultation

Councillor Mills reminded Members that the roadshow forming part of the public consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was to come to the Corn Exchange in Witney on Monday 4 March. He advised that he and Councillor Morris had attended an earlier event in Carterton which had been most helpful and encouraged all Members to attend.

#### 70.5 Ms Carys Davies

Councillor Mills advised Members that Ms Carys Davies, the Council's Communications Manager, was retiring from the Council's employ after 17 years' service. Councillor Mills thanked Ms Davies for her work on behalf of the Council and Members joined him in wishing her well in her retirement.

Ms Davies thanked Members for their good wishes.

#### 71. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, Mr Nigel Pearce had given notice of his wish to address the Council regarding 'Community Engagement and the Garden Village and West Eynsham'. A copy of his submission is attached as Appendix A to the original copy of these minutes.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pearce for his contribution and suggested that the matter be referred to the Council's Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor McFarlane suggested that it would be more appropriate to refer the issues raised to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Strategic Housing and Development and Councillor Haine indicated that he would be happy to consider these further.

Councillor Morris indicated that the Council's Constitution did not make provision for the referral of a submission to an individual Cabinet Member and the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that paragraph 16 of the Scheme of Public Participation stated that, where a submission was made to a meeting of the Council which did not relate to an item included in the agenda for that meeting, the Council may (a) note the submission; or (b) refer the subject matter of the submission to a specified Committee or Sub-Committee or to the executive for consideration.

Given that Councillor Haine had undertaken to consider the issues raised by Mr Pearce further, it was proposed Councillor Mills and seconded by Councillor MacRae that the submission be noted.

Councillor Leffman sought to propose an amendment, seconded by Councillor Acock, that the matter be referred to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. The Head of Democratic Services advised that such an amendment was inadmissible under the Council's Constitution as its effect would be to negate the substantive motion. Should Members wish to support a referral they should vote against the motion and, if it were lost, make an alternative proposition.

The proposition that the submission be noted was then put to the vote and was carried.

**RESOLVED:** That the submission made by Mr Pearce be noted.

Councillor Cooper requested that voting on this matter by each Councillor be recorded, and the Head of Democratic Services advised that the Council's Constitution required such a request to be made prior to a vote having been taken.

## 72. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Chairman advised that, in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of business, she intended to defer consideration of the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 February relating to the Updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2028/29, Fees and charges for 2019/20, the Council's Pay Policy Statement, the Council's Capital Strategy 2019/20, the Council's Investment Strategy 2019/20, the Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20, Prudential Indicators and the planned contribution of £3,789 to General Fund balances in 2019/20 to allow discussion of these in conjunction with the recommendations relating to the calculation and setting of the Council Tax for 2019/2020 at Agenda Item No. 8.

The Council then considered the remaining recommendation regarding the draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy as set out in the report of the Head of Democratic Services.

Councillor Bolger welcomed the draft strategy as a starting point and asked the Cabinet with responsibility for the Environment and Housing Management to provide regular updates to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its implementation and progress. In response, Councillor Good indicated that he would be happy to do so provided that this was not unduly time consuming or onerous for Officers.

Councillor Graham welcomed the strategy and thanked Mr Jon Dearing, the Group Manager Customer Services, for meeting to discuss the document with him. He noted that certain dates cited had already passed and asked the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment and Housing Management to ensure that the timescales within the document were kept up to date. Councillor Graham also questioned whether it was appropriate for the Council to develop an in house debt and money advice service as this was currently provided by Citizens Advice and questioned whether any discussion with that organisation had taken place. Councillor Good indicated that he would be happy to provide updates as long as this was not unduly time consuming or onerous for Officers and undertook to keep the timescales under review.

Councillor Carter expressed some doubt that the strategy accurately reflected the extent of homelessness as a result of domestic violence given that there had been a 31% increase in reported cases in the County and asked the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment and Housing Management to check if the information provided was correct. Councillor Carter advised that she was meeting with the Executive Director Commissioning later that day to discuss the Council's role in addressing Domestic Violence further.

In response, Councillor Good acknowledged that this was a very important issue and both he and Councillor MacRae had been doing a great deal of work in conjunction with Officers to make the best possible progress in addressing Domestic Violence. He confirmed that he would be happy to question the extent of homelessness resulting from domestic violence with Officers.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Mills and seconded by Councillor Morris and on being put to the vote was carried.

**RESOLVED:** That the recommendation in relation to the draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy made by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 February 2019 be approved.

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

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 24 January and 13 February 2019 were received.

#### 73.1 Oxfordshire and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Antisemitism (Minute No. E&S/63.9/2018/2019)

In response to a question from Councillor Bolger, Councillor Beaney advised that the referral from the Council regarding the possibility of adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism was to be considered at a special meeting of the Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the evening of 7 March.

#### 73.2 Oxfordshire Plan 2050: Statement of Community Involvement (Minute No. CT/109/2018/2019)

Councillor Jackson enquired whether the Council had any strategic plan to promote carbon neutral development by introducing such requirements as the provision of enhanced insulation, electric vehicle charging points and solar panels. Whilst he considered that such requirements should be made mandatory by Central Government, Councillor Jackson suggested that West Oxfordshire could become a leading voice in promoting such initiatives. In response, Councillor Mills advised that the importance of clean growth had been acknowledged and Oxfordshire had the opportunity to become a world leader in terms of research and innovation. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership wished to develop a low carbon economy and Oxfordshire had the potential to do so. The County was working with Central Government as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Arc and it had been agreed that there would be a specific additional work stream on the environment.

Councillor Mills emphasised the importance of promoting clean growth and advised that measures should be put in place to take advantage of every opportunity to do so.

Councillor Handley suggested that the impact of RAF Brize Norton and the infrastructure required in the surrounding area should form part of this consideration. Councillor Mills advised that he and representatives of the other Oxfordshire authorities had recently met with the Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP, Government Minister at the Ministry of Defence, when he had stressed the impact of Brize Norton and potential that Carterton and the surrounding area had to offer in terms of the supply chain.

#### 73.3 Potential Impact of Exit from the European Union on Treasury Management and Pooled Funds (Minute No. CT/69/2018/2019)

Councillor Enright suggested that the impact of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union represented the single greatest potential shock to the Council's financial position in a lifetime. In consequence, assessing the potential impact on the Council's funds was work of the utmost significance and Councillor Enright enquired what progress had been made in identifying the options available. In response, Councillor Cotterill advised that the subject had been discussed in detail and at length at the last meeting of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The funds currently held by the Authority and their associated risks had been studied in depth and steps were in hand to transfer funds so as to guard against loss as far as possible. However, Councillor Cotterill cautioned that a great deal of uncertainty remained.

Councillor Morris advised that the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been taken into account and actioned. Councillor Postan indicated that it was essential to have a strategy as well as a plan.

73.4 Internal audit Progress report (Minute No. A&GP/28/2018/2019)

Councillor Poskitt sought an assurance that Disclosure and Barring Service checks would be carried out on all those dealing with vulnerable persons. In response, Councillor Adams acknowledged the importance of ensuring that checks were carried out and confirmed that the audit recommendations would be applied in future.

73.5 Low Carbon and Environmental Plan and Bio-diversity (Minute No. ENV/47/2018/2019)

Councillor Coles noted that, whilst concerns over biodiversity had first been raised in 2016, this issue had still not been incorporated into the Council's Low Carbon and Environmental Plan. He expressed concern that the Council was failing to meet its statutory duty in this respect and requested the Vice-Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to seek reassurance from the Leader of the Council that this matter would be addressed. He expressed the hope that this work could go forward with cross party support.

In response, Councillor Al-Yousuf indicated that he was content that the Leader of the Council would take note of these remarks and did not feel it necessary to intercede.

73.6 Waste and Recycling Contract (Minute No. ENV/51/2018/2019)

Councillor Acock expressed his disappointment at the overspend incurred in respect of the waste and recycling collection contract with Ubico and questioned whether the Council would apologise to the residents of West Oxfordshire for the increased expenditure.

In response, Councillor Al-Yousuf advised that the matter had been considered in detail and at length by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He explained that the growth in expenditure was not entirely Ubico's fault as certain variations had been made to the contract. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had done their utmost to hold the Company to account and had suggested that an independent benchmarking exercise be carried out. The representatives of Ubico present at the meeting had been left in no doubt that the Council expected the Company to do better in the future. The reasons for the growth in expenditure were complex and could not be ascribed to incompetence.

Councillor Graham indicated that it was important to ensure that robust strategies were in place to reduce expenditure and enquired how long the current level of expenditure was likely to be maintained. Councillor Al-Yousuf advised that this was an issue for future budgets. The 2019/2020 contract sum had yet to be finalised and the budget reflected current projections. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment would be able to provide more detailed information.

73.7 Implementation of Car Parking Strategy (Minute No. ENV/52.1/2018/2019)

Councillor Enright noted that car parking was one of the areas of greatest interest and concern amongst local residents. The division of responsibility between district and county council gave rise to further complications and Councillor Enright suggested that the Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee should invite the responsible County Officers and the Council's own Officers dealing with car parking to attend a meeting of the Committee in order to address on street and other car parking issues. He indicated that, in Witney East, there were redundant Traffic Regulation Orders on the old A40 which could be rescinded to provide additional on street

parking. There was also a need to consider the provision of parking on the Madley Park and Cogges estates whose design failed to make provision for on street parking.

Councillor Al-Yousuf noted the comments made.

Councillor Poskitt welcomed the review of car parking provision in Woodstock but questioned how this was to be conducted. Whilst questionnaires were being made available to local residents on-line, many visitors used the facilities in the town and it was important that their views were also taken into account.

Councillor Good advised that a great deal of work was being carried out and he would be happy to provide Councillor Poskitt with more detail. He indicated that the points she had made would be taken into account.

**73.8 Single Use Plastics (Minute No. ENV/52.2/2018/2019)**

Councillor Leffman enquired whether the Working Party had yet met and asked that any report be made available to all Members, not just to those serving on the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as it was important that the Council took steps to promote the reduction of single use plastics. Councillor Al-Yousuf advised that the Working Party had yet to meet.

Councillor Coles indicated that the Committee had established the Working Party as Members understood the gravity of the problem. The Working Party had an open membership and all Councillors were welcome to attend. Councillor Good advised that he would do all he could personally to promote the reduction of single use plastics.

**73.9 Fly-tipping (Minute No. ENV/52.3/2018/2019)**

Councillor Handley expressed concern at the increase in instances of fly-tipping throughout the District and suggested that the attitude of some staff at disposal sites contributed to this. Councillor Good advised that the Council's Bring sites were unstaffed and that the County Council was responsible for the operation of waste and recycling centres. He went on to advise that he had recently received a letter from two young people offering their apologies for setting a fire at the bring site in Eynsham.

Councillor Enright suggested that the Council should take a good look at the question of fly-tipping as it was an issue throughout the District. He also made reference to the review of litter and dog bin types and locations currently being carried out by the Witney Town Council and suggested that there was a need to explore the generators of litter.

Councillor Al-Yousuf indicated that he would be happy to see these issues discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

**73.10 Corporate Peer Challenge – Feedback Report (Minute No. CT/115/2018/2019)**

Councillor Cooper reiterated the concern he had previously expressed that the feedback report failed to address issues he had raised in relation to the recently adopted Local Plan which he considered to be a governance matter and questioned why they had not been treated as such.

Councillor Mills advised that decisions on the Local Plan had been taken by the full Council which, being the ultimate Member body at which all Members were represented was not subject to the scrutiny process.

Councillor Graham noted that the report had emphasised the significance of training for Members and asked how this was to be delivered. Given the importance of Member training he questioned why the level of resources allocated for this purpose was so

limited. He suggested that Members should be invited to put forward their ideas as to what would enable them to perform at their best through the political groups.

In response, Councillor Mills advised that funding would be made available for Member training which would form part of the action plan arising from the peer review. He suggested that it would be appropriate for the training to be conducted following the forthcoming elections in May.

Councillor Acock questioned when Members could expect to receive diversity training having been led to believe that this was to have been put in place by the end of 2018. In response, Councillor Morris advised that arrangements were being made to put a training programme in place but that this would take time as it was not just restricted to diversity training. He was not aware of it having been suggested that diversity training would be available before the end of the last year as the training programme had to be developed as a whole.

#### 73.11 Budget and Council Tax 2019/2020 (Minute No. CT/116/2018/2019)

Councillor Cooper made reference to the suggestion he had made at the Cabinet meeting held on 13 February that the Council should take a stall to promote the District at the BBC's 'Countryfile Live' event at Blenheim Palace and asked what progress had been made towards this. Councillor Mills advised that he was awaiting a response to the suggestion from the Council's Officers.

Councillor Leffman questioned whether the additional expenditure occasioned by the increased cost of the waste and recycling collection contract exceeded the efficiency saving of £360,000 secured through Publica. Councillor Mills confirmed that this was the case which was why the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had called Ubico to account for the increased budget as soon as the Council had been made aware of the situation. In consequence, it was essential for the Council to work with both companies to ensure that the anticipated level of savings was delivered.

#### 74. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2019/2020

The Council considered the recommendations of the Cabinet regarding the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2028/29, Fees and charges for 2019/20, the Council's Pay Policy Statement, the Council's Capital Strategy 2019/20, the Council's Investment Strategy 2019/20, the Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20, Prudential Indicators and the planned contribution of £3,789 to General Fund balances in 2019/20.

Councillor Mills, the Leader of the Council, introduced the budget proposals and a copy of the budget speech is attached as Appendix B to the original copy of these minutes. Councillor Mills expressed his thanks to the Officers and Members involved in compiling the budget and to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee for effectively holding Ubico to account. Councillor Mills proposed the recommendations as set out in the report and the proposition was seconded by Councillor Morris.

Councillor Cooper reiterated his wish to see the Council's participation in the 'Countryfile Live' event and thanked Officers for their hard work and assistance. He suggested that a proportion of any surplus could be used to improve mobile phone coverage across the District by working with local churches to explore the option of placing mobile phone masts within church spires and indicated that he intended to ask that this be explored further through the Overview and Scrutiny process.

Councillor Cooper reminded Members that, in approving the establishment of a Revolving Credit Facility with Cottsway Housing of £10 million for delivery of affordable housing in the District, the Council, at its meeting held on 24 October 2018,

had agreed “that the other registered Social Landlords operating within the District be approached to establish the level of provision they could provide in the next tranche of funding”.

Having regard to that decision, Councillor Cooper proposed an amendment to the Capital Programme that Officers be requested to raise the sum of £10million to provide a further tranche of investment funding to enable registered social landlords to develop additional social housing within the District. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Graham.

Councillor Cooper indicated that such investment would enable the provision of some 40 to 50 affordable homes and suggested that, in addition to setting financial parameters, the budget should also identify policy objectives. By making such financial provision, the Council would be proactive in encouraging registered social landlords to come forward to bid for funds. In addition, interest on the Council’s investment would provide an income stream.

With regard to the ‘Countryfile Live’ event, Councillor Morris advised that he was awaiting information from Officers regarding staffing costs.

Councillor Morris agreed that mobile phone coverage in the District was an issue that needed to be addressed but did not consider it to fall under the definition of Economic Development. The Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee had acknowledged that the figure of £270,000 which was to be set aside in the budget should be earmarked for that specific purpose. Future funding arrangements were uncertain and the impact of the Business rates reset unknown. It was important for the Council to focus on ways in which it could maintain and enhance its current level of income and economic development was an area under its direct control.

With regard to the request for £10million towards affordable housing provision, Councillor Morris assured Members that if an opportunity was presented to the Council from a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), the business case would be considered and explored further if it showed potential. In consequence, he did not believe that the proposed amendment to the Capital Programme was necessary.

Councillor Enright agreed that 4G coverage in parts of the District was poor but considered that improvements should be funded by the commercial network providers, not through public funds. He noted that there was cross party support for investment in affordable housing and acknowledged Councillor Morris’ comments regarding the amendment. Councillor Enright suggested that this was an issue best addressed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy with funding being considered as part of the Council’s investment portfolio, not through the Capital Programme.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that, if agreed, the amendment would impact upon the Council’s treasury Management strategy as it would be necessary to borrow more. This would be a service investment, not a commercial investment and ought not to be allocated through the Capital Programme.

Councillor Mills advised that he would be unable to support the amendment as, whilst he supported the provision of affordable housing, he could not see the need to borrow funds on the off-chance of a scheme coming forward.

He reminded Members that Cottsway had approached the Council with a business case that stood up to scrutiny and it had been agreed to support the project as a pilot for future initiatives. He confirmed that the Council would be happy to give consideration to any similar schemes that were brought forward.



On the question of mobile phone coverage, whilst not wishing to undermine the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Councillor Mills indicated that Members should be mindful of the accord between the Government and the Church of England who were in the process of looking at the technology that may be installed into spires across the country.

Councillor Graham noted that 71% of homes within the District were privately owned, 17% privately rented and 12% comprised of social housing. There were some 2,700 persons in need of housing and Councillor Graham felt that the Council should not be reactive but adopt this progressive initiative to show that it was open to working with RSL's. The Council should use its resources to make changes and Councillor Graham felt that, at present, it was not doing enough.

Councillor Good reminded Members that the vast majority of those 2,700 individuals who had registered on the housing waiting list were not in immediate housing need. He stressed that the Council was 'open for business' and prepared to consider any approach made by an RSL.

Councillor Leffman cautioned that Ubico had failed to carry out a proper analysis of the local employment market and had been faced with additional staffing costs. In part, this was a result of the high cost of housing in West Oxfordshire due to insufficient social housing being available.

The amendment was then put to the vote and

**WAS LOST**

The following 14 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Acock, Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Graham, Jackson, Leffman, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

The following 25 Members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Beaney, Bishop, Cotterill, Crossland, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, James, Leverton, MacRae, McBride, McFarlane, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan, St John and Wall.

Councillor Dorward abstained from voting.

Councillor Davies thanked Members and Officers for their work in developing the budget. She was pleased that West Oxfordshire's Council Tax would remain amongst the lowest in the Country and welcomed the homelessness strategy and the creation of an economic development fund.

Councillor Davies stressed the importance of generating wealth within the local community, a task hampered by poor infrastructure and proposed an amendment that the sum of £30,000 be allocated from within the proposed Economic Development Fund of £270,000 to fund one-off community led initiatives, specifically to support community transport. Public transport was necessary to convey rural based workers to new and existing employment sites and would also aid students and aid local businesses.

In seconding the proposition, Councillor Carter noted that some 50 bus routes had been lost and reiterated that access to transport was imperative in rural areas. Chipping Norton had limited access to public transport and urged Members to support the amendment.

Councillor Leffman expressed her support for the amendment and, as an exemplar, cited the success of the Wychwood bus project which provided daily services with proper onward connections through other scheduled services. Councillor Leffman also

indicated that improved public transport would be of benefit to the environment, encouraging people away from private vehicles to public transport.

Councillor Acock added his support and indicated that Ascott under Wychwood and Shipton under Wychwood also lacked scheduled public transport connections. Bus services could change lives radically and he appealed to Members to vote with their conscience rather than along Party lines.

Councillor Enright expressed his support for the amendment and recognised the pressure that bus services were under. Transport services were an important part of the local economy and Councillor Enright suggested that there were other initiatives that could be employed. He made reference to the proposed park and ride facility that was to be built on the A40 and to concerns expressed that it could be under-utilised. He suggested that if this could be utilised as a transport hub, linking in with rural bus services as part of an integrated transport strategy. The Council could help by providing seed funding to initiate the development of an integrated transport strategy.

Being involved in the operation both commercial and voluntary public transport, Councillor Coles stressed the importance of daily bus services in reducing social isolation, assisting people with getting to and from work or school. Younger people also relied on it for their independence because of the high cost of insuring their own vehicles and an effective public transport network was instrumental in improving the quality of life for local residents.

Councillor Jackson made reference to the 'Our Bus Bartons' service which had acquired its own vehicles and provided a viable, sustainable service run by volunteers. He advised that the service would be happy to help others trying to establish similar operations.

Councillor Ted Fenton agreed that support for public transport services was vital and, whilst he applauded the sentiment of the amendment, he did not feel that £30,000 would go far towards resolving the issue. There was a need to take a wider view and try to identify a more imaginative solution as services would not be viable if they were under used or infrequent.

Councillor Morris advised that, whilst he could not support the amendment, he was not saying that he was opposed to the principle of supporting community transport initiatives. The proposal to create an economic development fund had been considered by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had viewed it as a way in which to protect and, if possible, enhance business rates income within the District.

He agreed that the Wychwood and Barton's bus projects had been successful and reminded Members that the Council had provided some initial financial support to help establish the Wychwood service. He suggested the Council could respond to similar requests as and when specific projects came forward rather than reduce the sum set aside for economic development.

Councillor Morris also noted that, following his election, the local Member of Parliament had given his District Councillors allowance to the 'Our Bus Bartons' service.

Councillor Handley advised that the Witney to North Leigh service was to be discontinued in April and reminded Members that the Carterton to Swindon service had already been lost. Whilst he agreed with the sentiment behind the amendment and the significance of a robust public transport network, he considered that, given the

potential costs involved, financial support had to be provided as part of a Central Government initiative with subsidies being provided in support of rural routes.

Councillor Cotterill highlighted the opportunities that existed in securing developer funding through Section 106 agreements to support bus services.

Councillor Graham felt that the Council would be missing an opportunity if it were not to provide seed funding. Support could also be provided through the planning process but funding was required for existing communities, not just for new developments. Bus routes provided essential arteries and offered environmental benefits if some residents chose to use public transport rather than drive. A contribution of £30,000 would represent a starter fund that would draw in further investment and generate momentum within local communities.

Councillor Owen indicated that the current criteria for the award of Community Facilities Grants was narrow and questioned whether it could be extended to encompass community transport initiatives.

Councillor Cooper suggested that the £30,000 surplus had arisen through business rates and that the local economy would benefit from those using community transport services spending money in local shops.

Councillor Haine stressed that, if the bus routes had been viable, the bus companies would not have discontinued them. The Villager bus could service routes that commercial services could not and the sum of £30,000 would be insufficient to subsidise uneconomic routes. Councillor Davies advised that it was not the intention to provide an ongoing subsidy, but to work with other organisations to re-think the way in which services had operated in the past and provide seed funds for alternative schemes.

Councillor Postan pointed out that many of the community buses were supported indirectly by the County Council through the use of bus passes as well as by philanthropic local supporters and volunteers. He agreed that organisations should apply for funds as required as they needed to stand on their own two feet. It would be inappropriate for the Council to approve a blanket sum.

Councillor Al-Yousuf felt that the allocation of funds at this stage would be premature. Whilst he supported the objective of community transport, he considered that applications for financial assistance should be specific and be supported by a business case. Whilst he did not have an objection to the allocation of funds from the £270,000 set aside for economic development, he reminded Members that the savings had yet to be realised.

Councillor Mills stated that he had listened to the comments with interest. He agreed that it was essential that services connected but felt that an integrated transport strategy was best dealt with by the County Council. If a specific proposal was to come forward, the Council would be happy to consider it and work with the local community. However, the proposed amendment was not the most appropriate route by which to do so.

Councillor Mills acknowledged that discussions were already taking place as it was acknowledged that existing services did not operate effectively at present. The Oxford Bus Company had recognised the merits of an inter-connecting hub and spoke model and, whilst mindful of the benefits of an effective public transport network, Councillor Mills suggested that the proposed amendment would not achieve this.

The amendment was then put to the vote and

**WAS LOST**

The following 15 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Acock, Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Dorward, Enright, Graham, Jackson, Leffman, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

The following 25 Members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Beaney, Bishop, Cotterill, Crossland, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, James, Leverton, MacRae McBride, McFarlane, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan and St John.

Councillor Wall abstained from voting.

Councillor Enright noted that, whilst West Oxfordshire's Council Tax was 1/3 lower than that of Oxford City, the City was not parished. Therefore, Council Tax levels were comparable once parish precepts had been factored in. Witney Town Council had found it necessary to raise its precept to fill the holes in services left by other authorities.

Councillor Enright acknowledged that the budget contained some good elements and thanked Officers for their work in its development. He indicated that he would like to see the budget address the priorities of those who live and work in the District but it did not have the mechanisms to do so. The budget focussed on what the Council could do, not what residents required. The creation of an economic development fund was to be welcomed and Councillor Enright suggested that the Authority should look wider to see what else it was able to support by working more closely with others.

County Council funding for core services such as adult social care and youth services had largely disappeared and the Witney Town Council had brought together various groups to see how youth services could be reintroduced to the town. Councillor Enright suggested that the Council should look beyond its direct service responsibilities and, rather than continue to restrict its activities to these, consider ways in which it could help support other service provision.

Accordingly, Councillor Enright proposed the following amendment to the budget:-

*That the Council resolves to create a dedicated fund of £50,000, funded from 2018/19 budget surpluses, as an investment in our community in these service areas. This fund to be used to start discussions with Oxfordshire County Council, the NHS, schools, police, and parish/town councils about finding resources and expertise in the longer term to rebuild capacity and capability in care services”.*

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Coles.

Councillor Leffman echoed the sentiments expressed, indicating that County Council services had been run down as that Authority was unable to meet residents' needs, exacerbated by demographic changes. However, the sum of £50,000 would be a drop in the ocean and Councillor Leffman suggested that, if the Council was serious about building service capacity, it should follow the example of Cherwell District Council which had joined in a partnership process with the County Council to deliver joint county and district services.

She suggested that the Council should support the creation of a unitary county if it could be demonstrated that better services could be provided in this way and considered that there should be more dialogue between West Oxfordshire and the County Council.

(Councillor James left the meeting at this juncture)

Councillor Morris reminded Members that this was a forecast surplus and, until the year end, the precise extent of any surplus would remain unknown. The Council would be happy to consider the question further once the outturn report had been produced.

Councillor Enright indicated that he would be happy to omit the suggested quantum from the amendment.

Councillor Cooper noted that the Woodstock Town Council had supported County Council services by providing support for youth services in the town.

Councillor Coles advised that he had worked in adult social care in the past and was aware of how badly those services had suffered in recent times. This was not a question of statistics as peoples' lives were so badly impacted by service cuts and Councillor Coles urged Members to support the amendment.

Councillor Mills indicated that Oxfordshire was a financially successful area and reminded Members that the question of unitary status was no longer under consideration. The six Oxfordshire authorities had been working together successfully for a long time through organisations such as the Health Improvement Board, even when there had been a disagreement over the future shape of organisational structures.

Collaborative working was widespread and the District Council would be happy to consider other opportunities to deliver specific services. There was a need to change the way in which services were structured but Councillor Mills did not believe that the proposed allocation of £50,000 for unspecified purposes would be helpful. He confirmed that the Council would be prepared to consider any approach for assistance in respect of specific schemes in the event of a business case being put forward but he was not convinced that the proposed amendment represented the correct way in which the Council should proceed.

The amendment was then put to the vote and

**WAS LOST**

The following 14 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Acock, Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Graham, Jackson, Leffman, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

The following 22 Members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Cotterill, Crossland, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, Leverton, MacRae, McBride, McFarlane, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan and St John.

The following four Members abstained from voting:

Councillors Beaney, Bishop, Dorward and Wall.

Making reference to the previous amendments, Councillor Acock stated that he did not see the budget as presented as a peoples' budget. He expressed his thanks to Officers for their work in preparing the budget but felt that it should be a peoples' budget.

Councillor Bolger then proposed the following amendment:-

*“That the Council resolves to educate itself further on the principles of Community Wealth Building and resolves to allocate the proposed “£270,000 to fund one-off initiatives” (BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2019/20, page 2, para 3.5) strictly to employee-owned businesses, local co-operatives, locally based start-ups and other local community based businesses”.*

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Bolger stressed that local investment should be retained locally in order to create wealth within the District. Local and devolved government should play their part in such initiatives.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Saul indicated that, whilst welcoming the creation of an economic development fund, the proposal remained vague in terms of implementation and priorities. The amendment directed the emphasis on supporting local businesses, helping them establish, compete and grow.

Councillor Morris reminded Members of the rationale underpinning the creation of the economic development fund and indicated that, as well as protecting the Council's Business Rates income, the fund would have the additional benefit of creating jobs and supporting the local economy in towns and villages. However, he did not wish to see the operation of the fund being unduly prescriptive as there should be the opportunity to consider each application that came forward alongside its business case.

Councillor Enright suggested that the Council's Business Development Manager would be key to the process and that the proposed amendment would enable Council funds to circulate again and again within the District. The Council could work in conjunction with organisations such as the Oxfordshire credit union and Councillor Enright stated that he would not wish to see the fund used as blanket rate support.

Councillor Postan acknowledged the benefit of inward investment and Councillor Poskitt suggested that the Council should be pro-active in the operation of the fund, developing new initiatives.

Councillor Leverton cautioned against the inadvertent creation of a local cartel and considered that a competitive market place was a healthy market place.

In response, Councillor Mills indicated that he was familiar with similar arrangements to those proposed such as the Preston model and a similar one in Cleveland, Ohio. Whilst these might appear to be attractive, he pointed out that these had been focused on regenerating urban areas and suggested that there was a danger that the competitive element would be diminished over time resulting in a loss of best value.

The economy in Oxfordshire was strong and the County was one of only three making a net contribution to the Treasury. He indicated that he had often made the case to others to re-invest within the local area and pointed out that all of the recent investments such as the purchase of Des Roches Square and the loan to Cottsway Housing had been local. Initiatives such as the Blenheim Housing Model had also demonstrated the Council's willingness to be innovative and creative.

The collation of data was important and there was a need to address the needs of an increasingly ageing population. As there was no increased funding available, this would have to be done through improved delivery methods and Councillor Mills expressed concern over the concept of local protectionism.

The amendment was then put to the vote and

**WAS LOST**

The following 10 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Graham, Jackson, Poskitt and Saul.

The following 26 Members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Beaney, Bishop, Cotterill, Crossland, Dorward, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, Leverton, MacRae, McBride, McFarlane, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan, St John and Wall.

The following four Members abstained from voting:

Councillors Acock, Leffman, Mullins and Rylett.

Having established that there were no further amendments to be proposed, the Chairman moved onto debate the substantive motion.

Councillor Graham acknowledged that there were some positive elements and thanked Officers for their work in its preparation. However, he found it difficult to reconcile it as a budget for the whole community. He did not feel that it presented a cohesive, community based approach and expressed concern that it failed to engage all parts of the Council. In particular, he felt that the amendments put forward had received scant consideration by the majority group and expressed the hope that there would be greater engagement and consultation with all parties in the future. Accordingly, he felt unable to support the budget.

Councillor McFarlane disagreed and saw this as a good budget for all in West Oxfordshire. It had been carefully put together and made provision for growth in affordable housing, support for the homeless and a capital programme that would see improved leisure facilities. The Local Plan had been put in place during the course of the year and, whilst increased costs associated with the waste and recycling collection contract with Ubico represented a challenge, savings secured through the development of shared services had been reinvested in service provision in the District.

Councillor McFarlane felt that, at £99.38 at Band D, the level of Council Tax represented good value for money for local residents. The budget did not rely on the use of balances to support revenue expenditure and retained the key policy of free car parking. Whilst there were still challenges in the medium term, West Oxfordshire remained a good place to live, work and visit.

Councillor Baker added her support and indicated that she was proud to be a Member of an innovative, creative Council that worked across all political parties. She was particularly pleased that the Council had managed to retain its grants budget for 2019/2020 with £137,500 set aside for Community Facility Grants and £189,600 available Community Revenue Grants.

Councillor Cooper expressed some concern that the first he knew of the projected budget surplus was at the Cabinet meeting on 13 February. He indicated that he was still awaiting details of the likely costs associated with holding a stall at the 'Countryfile Live' event and wanted to see more of a return across the District as a whole. He indicated that he would not support the budget as it was not pro-active.

Councillor Morris stressed that this was a balanced budget and acknowledged that the difficulties faced in its development could give rise to frustration. He explained that the difficulty was that many elements remained uncertain or unknown until the final phases of the process, only being finalised in 'dribs and drabs'. As an example, he advised that he had been unaware of the potential underspend until 24 hours prior to the Cabinet meeting in February and it had been equally likely that there would have been a deficit.

He indicated that all Members had been offered the opportunity to comment on the development of the budget through the scrutiny process and that the observations that had been made had been taken into account.

Councillor Morris stated that he believed that this was indeed a budget for the people. The Council remained the second lowest charging Shire district, had maintained the level of grant aid to the voluntary sector, commenced phase II of the Carterton Leisure Centre and made provision in the Capital Programme for improvements to the Windrush Leisure Centre in Witney. Added to this, 64% of residents responding to the budget consultation had expressed their support. Looking at the budget as it stood, Councillor Morris believed it to be good for West Oxfordshire.

Councillor Mills took issue with suggestions that the Council did not listen to its residents. Whilst he recognised that there were issues surrounding the waste and recycling contract, Councillor Mills reminded Members that the shape of the service and the introduction of a co-mingled recycling collection had been a direct response to the preferences expressed by residents. Local people wanted the opportunity to live in their own homes and the Council was working on various projects to help them to do so. If there had been an easy solution it would have been implemented by now.

In terms of housing and growth, the year one target for the provision of affordable housing had largely been met and, in moving towards a low carbon environment, the Council had invested in solar energy generation and had been shortlisted for an award for its work with Southill Solar. Such initiatives showed that the Council invested in the local economy and the community.

West Oxfordshire was a fantastic part of the world and the Council's enduring aim was to ensure that it remained as such. It invested in the health of the community through its preventative agenda and investment in sports and leisure. Whilst it was not in a position to address all the problems in the public health system, the Council was able to play its part.

Councillor Mills also confirmed that he would like to see the Council taking a stall at the Countryfile live event.

In conclusion, Councillor Mills stated that he believed West Oxfordshire to be a creative, innovative Council as a result of the efforts of all Members and expressed the hope that this would continue so as to build on the current levels of success. He drew attention to the recommended level of Council Tax for 2019/2020 of £94.38 at Band D and urged Members to support the recommendations as set out in the report.

The recommendation was then put to the vote and

**WAS CARRIED**

The following 26 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Beaney, Bishop, Cotterill, Crossland, Dorward, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, Leverton, MacRae, McBride, McFarlane, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan, St John and Wall.

The following 14 Members voted against the amendment:

Councillors Acock, Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Graham, Jackson, Leffman, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

There were no abstentions.

#### 75. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2019/2020 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

The report of the Cabinet setting out its recommendations to enable the Council to set the Council Tax for 2019/2020 was received and considered.

Councillor Morris proposed the formal resolution and advised that paragraph 3.1 on page 4 of the report should read "...a Council Tax of **£99.38** at Band D..." and not £94.38 which referred to last year's figure. This was seconded by Councillor Mills and

On being put to the vote the motion

**WAS CARRIED**

The following 25 Members voted for the amendment:

Councillors Adams, Al-Yousuf, Baker, Beaney, Bishop, Cotterill, Crossland, Dorward, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Handley, Leverton, MacRae, McBride, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan, St John and Wall.

The following 14 Members voted against the amendment:



Councillors Acock, Bolger, Carter, Coles, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Graham, Leffman, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

Councillor Jackson abstained from voting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2019/20;
- (2) That it be noted that at its meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019 the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base for 2019/20:
  - (a) for the whole Council area as 43,593.56 [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 Schedule 1 attached to the report.
- (3) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2019/20 (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) is £99.38
- (4) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) £50,430,613 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) £42,490,459 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
  - (c) £7,940,154 being the amount by which the aggregate at 4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 4(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) £182.14 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (2(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) £3,607,826 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per Schedule 2 to the report.
  - (f) £99.38 being the amount at 4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 4(e) above by Item T(2(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 to the report being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 4(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 2(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 4(f) and 4(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;

- (5) That it be noted that for the year 2019/20 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:

Valuation band	Oxfordshire County Council £	Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley £
A	979.22	137.52
B	1,142.42	160.44
C	1,305.63	183.36
D	1,468.83	206.28
E	1,795.24	252.12
F	2,121.64	297.96
G	2,448.05	343.80
H	2,937.66	364.56

- (6) That 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 2019/20 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- (7) That the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (8) That the following Council/Public Officers: Chief Finance Officer, Group Manager – Customer Services, Joint Principal Solicitor, Joint Legal Executive, Joint Operations Manager, Joint Support Lead Officer, Overpayments Officer, Senior Recovery Revenues Officer, Senior Revenues Officer, Revenues Officer, and Recovery Officer be authorised to:
- (a) collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, and
  - (b) 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.

**76. NOTICE OF MOTION – REEMA SITES IN CARTERTON**

The following motion had been received in the names of Councillors Norman MacRae and Michelle Mead, namely:-

*"In 2003 this council granted outline planning permission on sites in Carterton for the demolition of existing military housing and its redevelopment for residential purposes – also for military housing. Unusually that permission was given a 10 year 'life', recognising the*

*importance of the development and also the time it might take for the development to come to fruition.*

*Reserved matters approval for the part of the site known as REEMA North was granted in 2013 and the development was partially commenced, thus ensuring that the planning permission would not expire.*

*Government funding for the development of the site has been put back on more than one occasion, with priority being given to other military requirements rather than the provision of decent housing for military personnel. These delays have had a range of impacts – on the economy of Carterton town centre; on the education system whereby schools have suffered as a consequence of the delay in receiving the anticipated pupil numbers; and by contributing to delays in the progress of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.*

*Following the most recent announcement of a delay in the funding which would allow this development to go ahead, in early 2017 this council offered to provide funding itself. Whilst discussions and negotiations have continued during the intervening period, the most recent update we have received is that whilst a financial model has been developed, it is likely to be many months before that is signed off by the Treasury, and even then the proposition will have to be put to the market.*

*In the meantime there is continuing pressure on the private market, both sale and rental, in Carterton and the surrounding area, from military personnel who cannot secure military housing on or close to RAF Brize Norton. This situation will be further exacerbated with the return of the US Air Force to RAF Fairford in 2022 if this urgently required housing is not provided in time.*

*Given all of the above, it is proposed that:-*

*This Council calls on the Leader to write to HM Treasury and ask that funds are released without further delay in order to facilitate the commencement of the immediate construction of Military Houses at the REEMA sites at Carterton”.*

In introducing the Motion, Councillor MacRae stressed that this development was required as a matter of urgency to provide decent accommodation for service personnel and affordable housing for local residents.

Councillor Graham expressed his support for the Motion, indicating that the redevelopment of these sites was long overdue.

Councillor Cooper advised Members that the impact of the development would be District wide because it would free up properties in the private rented sector, in turn having a positive effect on the rental market as a whole. He acknowledged the efforts to encourage the timely redevelopment of the sites made by Members and Officers but felt that the relevant Government Departments operated in isolation, failing to recognise the obvious need for more accommodation to meet the needs of those working at the Base and former service personnel employed in associated companies located in the vicinity. He indicated that he would do all he could to support the project.

Councillor Postan expressed his support for the Motion as this redevelopment was essential to Carterton.

Councillor Handley reiterated that this redevelopment was long overdue. There had been numerous meetings with Government representatives and, despite previous assurances; the project had still not come to fruition. Accordingly, Councillor Handley expressed concern that the Notice of Motion failed to ascribe a timescale for the

commencement of development as Carterton could not afford to wait for the sites to sit empty for another 10 years.

Councillor Handley also reminded Members that, as a result of the over-capacity of school places in the town, schools in Carterton faced a funding deficit. The town also lacked and was losing facilities and required additional residential development to halt this decline and support its economic viability. In addition, he suggested that if funding for redevelopment was not forthcoming in the next year, the Carterton chapter of the Local Plan should be reviewed.

In response, Councillor Mills advised that redevelopment of the REEMA sites was not only important to Carterton, but to the District as a whole. Leaving these sites empty had a detrimental effect on the town, the local schools and the viability of the town centre. He felt that recruitment and retention for the RAF should be a priority on a par with equipment renewal. The impact on the rental market extended beyond West Oxfordshire with some personnel based at RAF Brize Norton living in properties in the Vale of White Horse District. The impact would be exacerbated by the return of USAF personnel to RAF Fairford. The development of RAF Brize Norton offered significant opportunities and employment opportunities offered by companies such as AirTanker and Airbus would reduce out-commuting from the District.

Councillor Mills indicated that he was doing all he could to encourage the timely development of the sites and advised that he had spoken with other Leaders across Oxfordshire seeking their support. He had recently met with the Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP and the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP to seek their support in securing funding and felt that the Treasury had to recognise the economic potential of RAF Brize Norton. Councillor Mills urged all Members to make use of their contacts in support of the Council's position.

Councillor Crossland agreed wholeheartedly with all of the comments made and reiterated that Carterton had suffered as a consequence of this delay.

Councillor Postan advised that he would take steps to support the redevelopment and urged others to do likewise. He suggested that all neighbouring Ward Councillors should also write to HM Treasury to voice their support.

Councillor MacRae thanked all Members for their support and indicated that the impact of further delay would extend well beyond Carterton. He urged Members to offer their support in any way they could.

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

77. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Head of Paid Service which gave details of documents numbered 11640 to 11645A sealed since its last meeting.

The meeting closed at 5:50 pm

CHAIRMAN