

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 26 June 2019 at 2:00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Harry Eaglestone (Chairman), Jane Doughty (Vice-Chairman), Jake Acock, Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Luci Ashbourne, Andrew Beaney, Richard Bishop, Rosa Bolger, Jill Bull, Laetisia Carter, Louise Chapman, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Owen Collins, Nigel Colston, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Marilyn Davies, Duncan Enright, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Steve Good, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Ed James, Richard Langridge, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Norman MacRae, Michele Mead, James Mills, Toby Morris, Kieran Mullins, Neil Owen, Elizabeth Poskitt, Alex Postan, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Harry St John and Ben Woodruff.

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the annual meeting of the Council held on 15 May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Cahill, Andy Graham and Martin McBride.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

15. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

15.1 Attendance at recent events

Councillor Mills advised that he had recently attended an Arc Leaders meeting in London and an Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board meeting the previous evening.

Councillor Mills was pleased to advise that he had been asked by ~~Oxfordshire County Council~~ *Oxford City Council* to become a member of the Citizens Panel Advisory Board on Climate Change. He hoped that this would go some way to underpin the declaration being put forward by Councillor MacRae in due course and he applauded it as an excellent example of cross party working.

15.2 GDPR

Councillor Morris reminded Members that a GDPR Briefing would be taking place after this meeting, and encouraged all to attend if possible.

15.3 Street Cleansing & Refuse and Recycling Update

In response to a number of queries from Members regarding street cleansing, Councillor MacRae advised that he had some information to circulate to them via email which should address their questions.

He was also pleased to report that officers had been working hard to clear the backlog of refuse and recycling container deliveries, and there were now only 37 properties where

the delivery period exceeded 10 days, which would be completed in the near future. He expressed his gratitude to the team for their hard work.

15.4 Housing Update

Councillor Good advised that the keys to 91 affordable housing units in Chipping Norton and 100 units in Witney had been handed over to families. He expressed his congratulations to the team, and also referred to the excellent housing briefing which had recently been provided for members.

In response to a question from Councillor Enright, Councillor Good advised that some of the properties were located near Witney Lakes and the Chipping Norton properties had been established in conjunction with Stonewater Housing Association, which was keen to provide more in the District.

15.5 Community Activity Grants

Councillor Mead advised that the Council had awarded 15 Community Activity Grants in the past cycle of funding to assist in the promotion of health and wellbeing in communities. She advised that the next round of applications would open in August and close in September, with a view to the recipients receiving their funding before Christmas.

16. 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 25 April to 19 June 2019. The recommendations were proposed by Mr Mills and seconded by Mr Morris.

In relation to the 2018/19 financial outturn and performance report, Mr Morris responded to a question relating to the transfer of £57,859 to Earmarked Reserves and how this would be used for work on priority projects to be determined by Council.

Councillor Bolger was pleased that the money would be used for these projects but made a plea for funding towards more emergency accommodation in family sized units.

Councillor Enright felt unable to support the proposal and suggested that the matter be referred back to Cabinet, to consider taking a more proactive approach and identifying a more active use for the funds. Councillor Cooper proposed reference back, which was seconded by Councillor Enright.

In response, Councillor Morris advised that no reference had been made at the Cabinet meeting indicating that the funds should be used differently.

In response to Councillor Bolger, Councillor Mills reiterated that if any Members became aware of suitable properties for emergency accommodation the Cabinet would welcome the opportunity to investigate. Larger properties were not easy to acquire and he assured Members that Cabinet was taking this issue very seriously.

The motion to refer the 2018/19 Financial Outturn and Performance report back to Cabinet was put to the vote and was defeated.

The recommendations as set out in the report were then put to the vote and it was -

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period from 25 April to 19 June 2019 be approved in relation to:-

- a) Orders for Sale Pursuant to the Charging Orders Act 1979. Minute No. CT/132(c)/2018/2019; and
- b) 2018/2019 Financial Outturn and Performance Report the 2018/2019 Financial Outturn and Performance (Minute No. CT/23/2019/2020).

17. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

Mrs Barbara Williams addressed Members and read out her Climate Change Emergency Statement. The full statement is attached as an appendix to the original copy of these minutes, and the key points were:

The need to think radically and self-critically, and be advised by our scientists to find a new approach which will allow life on earth to be sustained;

Priorities needed to change at the local level, for example the “West Oxfordshire Local Plan to 2031” preceded the declaration of the Emergency and the plan needed to be reviewed and revised;

Councillors were asked to declare a Climate and Environmental Emergency and were urged to introduce a Citizens Assembly to guide the decisions needed to address the emergency.

18. NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE CHANGE

Further to the notice of motion received in the names of Councillors Norman MacRae and Alex Postan, Councillor MacRae proposed the following revised motion:-

“Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing us today and the UK is taking a leading role in addressing this issue. Investing in green industries and decarbonising our economy we will leave the environment in a better state for the next generation.

One of the ways in which this has been achieved is by phasing out coal power, leading to the longest time since the Industrial Revolution without using coal to generate electricity.

This Council will recognise this achievement of a reduction in the use of fossil fuel, particularly in light of the Climate Emergency accepted by Parliament recently; commits to work towards the reduction of emissions for the benefit of both present and future generations thus fulfilling our Stewardship responsibility for the planet - handing it to subsequent generations in a better state than which it was left to us!

To enable the Council to fulfil this aim, this Council adopts the following statements:

- *West Oxfordshire District Council recognises the serious and accelerating changes to the world caused by climate change and therefore declares a climate and ecological emergency*
- *The Council is determined to be carbon neutral by 2030 and to encourage others in the District to follow its example*
- *The Council will form a panel of residents to assist in the formulation of its Plans*

In support of this, Council authorises the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Environment, to take the necessary steps to implement the above.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor MacRae thanked Mrs Williams for her earlier submission and reiterated the importance of acting swiftly as well as maintaining a strong rural economy. He compared the government target of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by the year 2050 with the statement the Council was proposing, which was to be carbon neutral by 2030. He reminded Councillors of the continuing work to reduce the use of single use plastics, the project to introduce electric vehicle charging points in the District, and the ambition to encourage biodiversity and ecological systems in planning permissions. There was also ongoing work seeking to ensure that all Council vehicles would be emission free by 2025, as well as any taxis licensed by the authority. With regard to the residents’ panel, Councillor MacRae advised that this would be made up of a cross section of members of the public and randomly selected elected Members who would help set

WODC's objectives. He was also hosting a Climate Change Forum with local sixth formers in November this year.

In supporting the motion, Councillor Postan chose to reserve his right to speak but advised Members that he had fifty years of practical conservation experience to call on.

Councillor Leffman was disappointed that the motion had been amended from the original version published in the agenda, without prior notice to the opposition political groups. However, she did feel that the proposition sounded better and thanked the proposer and seconder for taking steps to declare an emergency.

Councillor Leffman felt the Council had been ahead of the game with recycling and stated that it was imperative to put the Council at the front line. This could be done by further investigation into generating electricity and investing in community projects similar to the one at Charlbury. However, she felt strongly that a cross party working group should be established before asking for any public input and therefore, proposed her amendment as originally written, and as follows:

“Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing us today. Accordingly, this Council declares a state of climate emergency, and commits to work towards the reduction of emissions for the benefit of both present and future generations by:

- a) Committing to a goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions across the District by 2050 or earlier wherever possible, and*
- b) Setting up a cross party working group tasked with recommending how this Council will achieve this goal. This working group will report back to this Council by January 2020, with concrete proposals for our next steps. These steps will include ways in which this Council will begin to reduce its own carbon footprint with immediate effect, how we will support providers to do the same, how we will support and invest in the generation and use of renewable energy across this district, and how we will work with other councils, including our Publica partners, to achieve the UK's goal.”*

Councillor Jackson seconded the amendment because he felt it said what he wanted and, as this was not a party political issue, a cross party working group was an excellent idea. He gave an example of an issue which could be discussed at the Working Group, namely, whether we could be more insistent that developers install solar panels on new houses.

The Leader expressed his concern that Members were downgrading the importance of a Citizens Assembly, which he felt was integral to ensuring all parties were given a voice. He reiterated the importance of accepting invitations to the first panel being established by Oxford City Council and this would be made up of many professionals, including academics, covering a wide range of expertise.

Councillor Acock wholeheartedly supported the amendment as he felt his generation would be worst hit by climate change and it was important to get the foundations right before involving the public.

Councillor Enright stated that he was slightly off balance by the debate but commended Councillor MacRae for the revised motion. He felt that a cross party working group could work alongside a Citizens Panel and would be voting against the amendment because the substantive motion only required tweaking.

At this point, Councillor MacRae proposed amending his motion such that the third bullet point would read as follows, the emboldened text being additional wording:

*“The Council will form a panel of residents **and create a cross party working group to report back to the Council by January 2020** to assist in the formulation of its Plans”*

This was agreed by the seconder, Councillor Postan, at which point Councillor Leffman withdrew her amendment. Councillor Postan then reminded members of the importance of dealing with authorities and agencies, for no commercial interest. The motion would harness knowledge from a range of experts and specialists, drawing ideas from communities as a whole, including our children.

On being put to the vote the motion, as amended, was **carried** unanimously.

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

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 25 April and 19 June 2019 were received.

19.1 Pension Liability

Minute No. A&GP/36/2019/2020

Councillor Cooper queried why the Council had retained pension liability for staff who had transferred to Publica. Councillor Doughty advised that a response would be circulated in due course.

19.2 Homelessness and Housing Issues

Minute No. C/5.3/2019/2020

Councillor Acock referred to the sentence relating to the objectives of the Landlords' Forum and queried the potential increase in rental costs should landlords be encouraged to make private housing available to those the Council was seeking to assist. Councillor Mills advised that the Council was looking at as many different potential solutions to housing issues as possible.

Following a question from Councillor Leverton, Councillor Good confirmed that there was some good news with regard to the service and he described the team as one of the most committed in the Council. He now received a monthly update and was delighted to report that a property large enough to house a family with seven children had been sourced as a direct result of the Landlords Forum. In addition, 34 families had been helped in finding accommodation this month.

Councillor Enright urged the Cabinet Member to consider setting up a private tenants' forum to help support that section of the community.

19.3 Environmental Issues

Minute No. C/5.4/2019/2020

Councillor Leffman queried the 'success' of the Water Day as she felt that there was still a lot of work to be done. In addition, she hoped that, should another Water Day be organised, Thames Water would be able to attend and answer residents' concerns. In response, Councillor MacRae advised that he was in contact with the relevant councillors for the worst affected areas and asked Councillors to inform him if they were aware of issues.

19.4 Cabinet Work Programme

Minute No. E&S/10/2019/2020

Councillor Acock queried why the Single Use Plastics report had not been classified as a key decision when, in his opinion, it was an issue that affected the whole of West Oxfordshire. In response, Councillor Mills undertook to look into the matter and respond to Councillor Acock directly.

19.5 Members' Questions: Digital Transformation
Minute No. E&S/14/2019/2020

Councillor Rylett reiterated the point that members would benefit from knowledge of the Digital Transformation process and asked when information would be provided. Councillor Beaney agreed to enquire and respond to him directly.

19.6 Construction Management Plans
Minute No. DC/8/2019/2020

In response to a question from Councillor Rylett, Councillor Haine provided assurance that a construction management plan would still be considered in the Garden Village application.

19.7 Environmental Problems During Development
Minute No. DC/10/2018/2019

Following a question from Councillor Cooper, Councillor Haine stated that he would enquire about the impact that a developer levy could have on S106 contributions and report back to him.

19.8 Ethical Investments
Minute No. FM/14/2019/2020

Councillor Bolger was surprised to note that there did not appear to be an ethical investment strategy considering the adoption by the Council of the Modern Slavery Charter recently. Councillor Morris advised that the Annual Investment Strategy was reviewed on an annual basis and that Arlingclose would be attending a future meeting of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which would provide an opportunity to raise this important issue.

19.9 Flexible Homelessness Support Grant
Minute No. FM/13/2019/2020

Councillor Enright asked whether it was possible to break down the data relating to homelessness into a granular form to establish, for example, whether domestic violence was a factor in leading to homelessness. Councillor Good assured him that this request had been put forward to officers and that he would follow up the request.

Councillor Mills reminded Members that this had been discussed at the last Cabinet meeting with many Councillors expressing their desire to see such an important issue dealt with.

19.10 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
Minute No. C/17.3/2019/2020

Councillor Haine answered questions on the delay in implementing CIL and explained that viability evidence was being checked/reassessed. This would indicate whether the charging schedule would need to be changed prior to referring the matter for subsequent examination and adoption. If it did not need to be changed, he was hopeful that CIL would be in place by the end of the year.

20. NOTICE OF MOTION – HONORARY ALDERMAN

The following motion had been received in the names of Councillors James Mills and Toby Morris:-

“This Council recognises the outstanding service given to the Council and the people of West Oxfordshire by the former Councillor, Charles Cottrell-Dormer. Council resolves (i) to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council to take place at 2 pm on Wednesday 31 July 2019 for the

purpose of considering conferring on Charles Cottrell-Dormer the title of Honorary Alderman, as allowed by s249 of the Local Government Act 1972; and (ii) that the ordinary meeting of the Council scheduled for that date shall commence at 2:15 pm, or at the conclusion of the extraordinary meeting, whichever is the later”.

Councillor Mills outlined the motion and explained that the Council had wanted to recognise Charles Cottrell-Dormer’s 50 years of public service. However, Charles had stated that he did not wish the proposal to be taken forward.

Councillor Leffman commended Charles Cottrell-Dormer’s longevity of service, thanked him for all he had done and wished him a happy retirement from the Council.

Councillor Enright recalled his first encounter with Charles in 2012 and described his 50 years of service as extraordinary.

Councillor Colston advised that Charles had been a Councillor with his late father on the Chipping Norton Rural District Council in the 1960s and commented that his presence would be missed, in particular at the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee.

The Chairman of the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee, Councillor Haine, concurred with this sentiment and described Charles Cottrell-Dormer as a valuable asset to both the Development Control Committee and the Sub-Committee.

21. NOTICE OF MOTION – A40

The following motion had been received in the names of Councillors Jake Acock and Dan Levy:-

“This council recognises that the A40, with its extensive daily traffic jams, is no longer fit for purpose. Proposed improvements, including a park and ride at Eynsham, will not meet the needs of local residents, as they do not allow for the increased traffic that will result from the housing that is scheduled for the area.

This council therefore asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, to ask for an alternative means of high speed transport between Carterton, Witney and Oxford (also known as the Witney to Oxford Railway, with a link to RAF Brize Norton) to be considered as part of LTP5, the next phase of the County’s transport plans. This will have the double benefit of taking cars off the roads, and increasing the potential for economic growth in West Oxfordshire by improving connectivity across the District.

This council also charges the Cabinet to conduct a consultation among residents of West Oxfordshire, to assess their acceptance of such a solution, so that the results can be presented to the County Council.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Acock felt that the people of West Oxfordshire should be given the opportunity to express their concerns. With the volume of house building taking place, many people would be likely to need to commute via the A40, so a high speed rail link would be necessary to relieve congestion and reduce emissions.

On seconding the motion, Councillor Levy stated that many residents had spoken to him about the state of transport in the District and having recently signed up to the Local Plan, he did not feel that the Council could abdicate its responsibilities. He described the impact that a delayed journey could have for staff, patients or visitors to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and referred to the potential to use park and ride, bus lanes and the railway.

Councillor Rylett advised that the County Council had opened up consultation on park and ride and bus lane options and residents were united in their frustrations about the A40.

Councillor Langridge stated that the vast majority of residents supported the idea of a rail link and he felt that, as elected members, the Council should reflect residents' views.

Councillor Enright cited the significant number of developments taking place along the A40, the impact of which were unknown at this time. In his experience, rail travel had been expensive and unreliable compared with the coach service. He felt that buses linking the transport options would be desirable and reminded Members that extensive consultation had taken place in the previous year. He did not feel that the train was the only option but it should not be discounted.

Councillor Haine did not support the motion as he felt the cost of reinstating the railway was not financially viable, resulting in the need to build thousands more homes to help pay for the railway.

Councillor Morris agreed that the A40 was a significant issue and investment was well overdue. However, he advised that the London Commuter Dormitory Consultation was open and he did not feel that the Council should be duplicating the work of other organisations.

Councillor Ted Fenton agreed with Councillor Haine about the financial outlay that would be required for the railway. He highlighted that trains were inflexible and commuters wanted more convenient travel options, such as the car. He felt there was a need to create more transport hubs.

Councillor Postan highlighted the need for personal transport in rural locations and did not feel that one single solution existed but a combination of all of those put forward. He also felt that the future of automaton cars needed more Government funding.

Councillor Leffman suggested that trams could be a cheaper and more flexible solution and she lamented the difficulty of infrastructure being needed before the house building took place. She felt the Council should be lobbying the County Council to think differently.

A number of members felt that the County needed to think more imaginatively and consider mono-rails or similar.

The Leader responded stating that he had empathy with the issues being raised about the A40 but that the Council was not the transport authority. He felt that decades worth of studies had been undertaken and whilst the connectivity strand was very important, it was worth noting that the pressure on the housing market would increase if the District developed into a London commuter belt. He reminded the Council how difficult it had been when the Local Plan was not in place.

In summation, Councillor Acock felt that Witney residents had not had their voices heard.

Councillors Acock, Rylett, Leffman and Levy requested that the vote be recorded, and the motion was then put to the vote, with the voting being as follows:

For the motion: Councillors Acock, Aitman, Chapple, Coles, Collins, Cooper, Davies, Enright, Jackson, Langridge, Leffman, Levy, Mullins, Poskitt, Rylett and Saul.

Against the motion: Councillors Al-Yousuf, Beaney, Bishop, Bull, Chapman, Colston, Coul, Crossland, Doughty, Eaglestone, Hilary Fenton, Ted Fenton, Good, Haine, Harvey, Hill, Leverton, MacRae, Mead, Mills, Morris, Owen, Postan, St John and Woodruff.

There being 16 votes in favour and 25 against, the motion was **defeated**.

22. NOTICE OF MOTION – EQUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The report of the Head of Democratic Services relating to the motion which had been proposed and seconded at the meeting of the Council on 24 April 2019 and arising from

consideration of the matter by the Economic and Social and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees was received and considered. The motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Enright and seconded by Councillor Coles, was as follows:

“This Council is very concerned at the continued growth in use of voluntary sector emergency provisions such as food banks, and also recognises the increased demands on public services, resulting from inequality and insecurity.

The Council therefore agrees to add a statement at the end of each officer report, giving a statement or impact assessment of policies on equality and the environment in West Oxfordshire.

This will focus attention on the importance of tackling inequality, insecurity and environment, and encourage us all to look after each other and build strong community responses led by innovative and creative local government.”

In speaking to the motion as originally presented, Councillor Enright was saddened that Councillors felt the matter had not been treated well at scrutiny and assured them that the motion had never been meant as a criticism of officers but as an opportunity to address the issues in reports. He felt the use of an equality section would help to tease out any elements of concern.

This was seconded by Councillor Coles, who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Bull spoke as the Inclusion Champion and felt that equality was already addressed in what the Council did. Members had had reassurance from officers that equality issues were considered as part of the report processes and felt that the inclusion of an additional section was not necessary.

Councillor Morris was heartened by how ingrained the process already was in report writing and felt that other information often came forward through scrutiny.

Councillor Leffman referred to page 50 of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny minutes and asked that officers come forward with their equalities criteria.

Councillor Harvey was pleased with the request from Councillor Leffman and hoped that by asking for the criteria first, Members would be able to draw their own conclusion.

Councillor Coles felt it was unfair to accuse the motion of inequality and assured Members that he had never been critical of the work of officers but hoped this would help councillors to understand how officers reached their conclusions. He also highlighted that it had been an interesting debate at Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the proposal had only been lost on the Chairman’s casting vote.

On being put to the vote the motion was **defeated**.

23. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

The Council received and noted the report of the Head of Paid Service which gave details of documents numbered 11666 to 11681A sealed since its last meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.14pm

CHAIRMAN