

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 2.00 pm on  
**Wednesday, 27 October 2021**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Rosa Bolger, Jill Bull, Mike Cahill, Laetisia Carter, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Merylyn Davies, Rupert Dent, Colin Dingwall, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Mark Johnson, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Harry St John, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Angela Claridge (Interim Monitoring Officer), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Bill Oddy (Group Manager, Commercial Development), Rachel Crooke (Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer), Barry Clack (Communications Officer), Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officer) and Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Democratic Services Manager).

#### **CL.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

##### Minute Number CL.17

Paragraph 2 on page 7 be amended to read “Councillor Coles .....stated that Councillor Sudbury and Mr Cotton and other representatives were visiting Witney soon..”.

Councillor Dingwall advised that, following his comments made under Minute Number CL.27 – Notice of Motion – Climate and Ecological Emergency, a company had since been formed in West Oxfordshire to look into the potential for using Geo-thermal Energy.

#### **CL.2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock, Luci Ashbourne, Andrew Beaney, Owen Collins, Steve Good, Andy Goodwin, Richard Langridge, Lysette Nicholls, Matthew Parkinson and Ben Woodruff.

#### **CL.3 Declarations of Interest**

##### Item 6 – Recommendations from the Executive

Councillor St John declared an interest as he was a ‘Friend of North Leigh Common’.

##### Item 8 – WODC Land Management Plans

Councillor Coles declared an interest as he was a member of the Witney Woodland volunteers.

##### Item 11 – Sealing of Documents

Councillor Bull declared an interest in documents 11925 and 11926 as she was the owner of Inclusive Care and Education Limited.

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#### **CL.4 Receipt of Announcements**

Councillor McBride addressed the meeting and asked that all Councillors hold a moment of quiet reflection in memory of those people who had lost their lives in public life. He asked that Councillors' thoughts and prayers be sent to all the families affected by these recent events.

#### Civic Events

The Chairman went on to give an overview of a number of civic functions he had attended recently on behalf of the Council. These had included the Chairman's reception at Crocodiles of the World in Carterton and he thanked Councillors for attending and helping to raise £400 for wildlife charities. The event had also been attended by nine chairmen and mayors from around the District.

The second event Councillor McBride referred to was the tree planting for the Queen's Green Canopy and he thanked Councillor Al-Yousuf for joining him there. Planting had taken place at Kilkenny Park and had consisted of twelve apple trees of six different varieties.

Councillor McBride took the opportunity to introduce the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer, Angela Claridge to the meeting and welcomed her to the Council.

#### The Leader's first year

The Leader, Councillor Mead, addressed the meeting and announced that she had been Leader for one year that week and summarised the events and work that had taken place in that time. She referred to the impact of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns and was proud of being able to assist with the roll out of the pop up vaccination centres. Councillor Mead stressed the importance of continuing to wear masks when moving around the building and encouraged everyone to continue to reiterate the 'stay safe' messages.

In response, Councillor Bolger congratulated the Leader on her first year and applauded her for the impact she had on the culture change within the Council.

#### Flooding update

Councillor MacRae addressed the meeting and advised that due to resourcing issues at the County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council had agreed to assist with producing the Section 19 report relating to the flooding event in December 2020. He reiterated that the County remained the responsible authority for flooding and recognised the collective frustration felt by many at the delay to date. Councillor MacRae announced that a Flood Fair would be held at the Town Centre Shop in Witney the following week, which would provide residents with information on the protective measures available and would be attended by representatives from the County Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water.

Councillor MacRae responded to a number of queries from Councillors Enright, Poskitt and Graham relating to the Flood Fair, the reasons for the report being delayed and the role of Shared Principal Engineer.

#### **CL.5 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

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#### **CL.6 Recommendations from the Executive**

Council were asked to consider the recommendations made by Cabinet and the Council's Committee since its last meeting. A list of the recommendations was attached at Annex I to the report.

Councillor Mead introduced the report and proposed that the recommendations be accepted as written.

Councillor Cooper highlighted the first recommendation listed which related to the Cabinet meeting of 13 October 2021 – Adoption of Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. Councillor Cooper stated that it had been five years since the figures were adopted and queried if it would be possible to go back and reassess them to see if they were still relevant.

Councillor Mead expressed her disappointment that she had not had sight of the amendment from Councillor Cooper and the Chief Executive asked for clarification on how the amendment would be worded. Councillor Cooper referred to a previously sent email in which he requested that the recommendation be amended to include a reference to the Oxfordshire Growth Needs assessment.

Councillor Cooper's proposal to amend the wording was seconded by Councillor Graham and on being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The Leader therefore proposed that the recommendations be approved as laid out and this was duly seconded.

**Resolved** that the recommendations set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.

#### **CL.7 Amendment to Committee Membership**

Members received a report from Democratic Services which proposed an amendment to the membership of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The proposal followed a request from Councillor Bolger to replace her on the Committee with Councillor Joy Aitman and had been agreed by the Labour Group Leader in August. It was noted that Councillor Aitman had been acting as a substitute member at subsequent meetings.

The Leader introduced the report and proposed the recommendation as laid out. This was seconded by the Labour Group Leader, Councillor Carter.

Councillor Bolger addressed the meeting and advised that she had enjoyed her time as a member of the Committee but the current timings of the meetings made it difficult to attend for any Councillors with children of school age. She hoped that the start time of meetings could be reconsidered to encourage a wider representation of communities in the future.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Council

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**Resolved** that Councillor Joy Aitman replace Councillor Rosa Bolger on the membership of the Finance & Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect, and for the remainder of the civic year.

#### **CL.8 WODC Land Management Plans**

Members received a report from the Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer which: presented information on the development of Land Management Plans across twelve key sites owned and/or managed by WODC; proposed a set of Land Management Plans to be released to the public for engagement following Council approval, outlining changes to Ubico's management of the sites and longer-term projects that external funding could be sought for externally; and requested approval to allocate funding from the climate budget to deliver projects across the sites that would enhance their biodiversity value.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Councillor Harvey introduced the report and highlighted the amount of work that had been taking place behind the scenes. He outlined the request for funding, signposted Members to the twelve areas of green space that had been selected for their current and potential value for wildlife and introduced the report author, Rachel Crookes to the meeting. Councillor Harvey proposed the recommendations as laid out and these were seconded by Councillor Coul.

Councillor Enright expressed his support and thanked all individuals involved in the comprehensive presentation. He was pleased that residential areas such as Madley Park had been recognised as rich potential for biodiversity habitats.

Councillor Coles welcomed the report and commended the officers for their work. He reiterated the importance of biodiversity and was pleased that Bathing Place Lane had been included in the report. Councillor Coles also stressed the importance of not carrying out routine tree maintenance in the breeding season and Councillor Harvey assured him that this had been taken on board and officers were in discussions with Ubico.

Councillor Poskitt supported the report and queried the collection of grass cuttings, tree planting schemes for the Queen's jubilee and asked if the installation of swift boxes could be subsidised. Councillor Harvey responded to the queries and agreed to come back on the issue of swift boxes once he had spoken to officers.

Councillor Cooper queried why the Council was taking responsibility for some areas that fell under the remit of Parish and Town Councils and was advised that some of these instances had naturally occurred over time and were as a result of historic circumstances.

Following a query from Councillor Prosser relating to flood mitigation measures upstream on the River Windrush, Councillor Harvey explained that this was an ongoing situation and discussions were taking place with the Cabinet Member and officers.

Finally, Councillor Postan asked if this work could be extended to include the verges of major roads which were ideal for encouraging biodiversity. Councillor Harvey agreed that he was happy to discuss with the County Highways department.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Council

**Resolved** that

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- a) the Land Management Plans be approved for public engagement and subsequent implementation from March 2022; and
- b) a sum of £11,800 be allocated from the climate budget for a variety of projects to enhance biodiversity across key sites under WODC's ownership and management in financial year 2021/22.

#### **CL.9 Notice of Motion - Violence Against Women and Girls**

The following Motion was provided to Council in the names of Councillors Rosa Bolger and Merilyn Davies, namely:-

##### **“This Council Notes:**

Across the UK harassment and violence towards women and girls is endemic. Women and girls suffer harassment and abuse every single day. A 2021 YouGov national survey on behalf of UN Women UK found that among women aged 18-24, 97% said they had been sexually harassed, while 80% of women of all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces. Oxfordshire is no exception. In the Thames Valley last year there were almost 20,000 reported cases of stalking and harassment and over 5,000 cases of sexual assault - these are just the ones that were reported.

In the year to March 2020, just 1.4% of rape cases recorded by police resulted in a suspect being charged (or receiving a summons).

Studies have shown that the intersectional nature of discrimination means that women with additional protected characteristics, such as those who are from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority communities, disabled or LGBT+, are even more likely to experience harassment, discrimination and abuse.

##### **The Council Resolves:**

- To ensure that West Oxfordshire District Council does everything in its power to build a District free from harassment violence against women and girls;
- To request the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel - of which WODC is Chair - requires the PCC to report on the performance of Thames Valley Police on tackling street violence against women and what their strategy is moving forward as well as the allocation of resources to support this;
- To recognise that as multiple agencies such as Health, the Police, Fire, and OCC already attend the WODC Community Safety Partnership - and as these agencies will all be crucial in our fight to make our streets safe for women and girls - it is suggested a working group be formed to produce and implement a Rural VAWG Strategy, under the umbrella of the CSP with other relevant parties invited where appropriate; and
- To recognise and promote that this is not a ‘Women’s issues’, men can play a crucial part in culture change in West Oxfordshire.”

Councillor Bolger introduced the motion and, following an impassioned speech, highlighted that 80 women had been murdered since the murder of Sarah Everard. Through the use of Councillor and officer participation, Councillor Bolger demonstrated that this was five times the number of women present in the Council chamber that day. She hoped that this motion would show recognition of the culture change that was so desperately needed and stated that she had worked closely with Councillor Davies to present this to Council. Finally, Councillor

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Bolger asked that her colleagues join with her and vote for the protection and safety of women and girls, despite any political persuasion.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Davies expressed her enjoyment of working with Councillor Bolger on this and reiterated that this was not a political issue. As the Council's representative on the Community Safety Partnership, she assured Members that this was an excellent platform to work with Health, Police and the County Council and enabled the Committee to hold the Police to account by challenging and engaging with them.

Councillor Graham thanked the proposer and seconder and added his support to the motion. He appreciated the inclusivity of the motion, agreed that there was something fundamentally wrong with this culture and felt that men needed to take more responsibility.

Councillor MacRae supported the motion and drew on his experience as a magistrate, a father and husband.

Councillor Coles addressed the meeting and advised that as a proud gay man he too had experienced some of the negativity that this form of culture encouraged. He acknowledged the difficulties and fear encountered by women as a result of men's behaviour and reiterated that no woman should have to deal with this.

Councillor Chapple fully supported the motion and, having queried the timescales for discussion at external meetings, was advised that the item was on the agenda for the next CPE and Police and Crime Commissioner meetings.

Councillors Poskitt, Coul, Doughty and Carter expressed their support for the motion and thanked their colleagues for highlighting this important and emotive issue. Councillor Carter reminded Members of the amount of work put in to highlighting the issue of domestic violence over the years and welcomed the changes made so far. However, she reminded the meeting that there was still a lot to do. Councillor Carter expressed her gratitude to all officers and Members for their dedication to dealing with domestic violence casework, which could often be draining and depressing. In addition, she hoped that the inclusivity being brought through would encourage more women to stand for election.

Councillor Postan agreed with the comments made and felt that there needed to be a change of attitude at school age, where boys should learn to respect women.

To conclude, Councillor Bolger thanked everyone for their comments and support and reminded the meeting that everyone needed to be better with their attitude towards women and girls.

The Council therefore unanimously

### **Resolved**

- 1) To ensure that West Oxfordshire District Council does everything in its power to build a District free from harassment violence against women and girls;
- 2) To request the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel - of which WODC is Chair - requires the PCC to report on the performance of Thames Valley Police on tackling street violence against women and what their strategy is moving forward as well as the allocation of resources to support this;

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- 3) To recognise that as multiple agencies such as Health, the Police, Fire, and OCC already attend the WODC Community Safety Partnership - and as these agencies will all be crucial in our fight to make our streets safe for women and girls - it is suggested a working group be formed to produce and implement a Rural VAWG Strategy, under the umbrella of the CSP with other relevant parties invited where appropriate; and
- 4) To recognise and promote that this is not a 'Women's issues', men can play a crucial part in culture change in West Oxfordshire."

#### **CL.10 Emergency / Urgency Delegations Decisions**

Members received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer which asked them to note the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.

The report highlighted two decisions that had been taken since the last Council meeting. These related to fee setting for a Fit and Proper Test for Mobile Home Site Managers and a Test and Trace Self Isolation discretionary support payment policy.

Both of the decisions had been taken following a request by officers to the Chief Executive and had been decided in consultation with the Leader.

The report was proposed by Councillor Mead and seconded by Councillor Harvey.

Having considered the report, Council

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

#### **CL.11 Sealing of Documents**

Members received a list of the documents sealed since the last Council meeting.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

#### **CL.12 Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees**

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held since 15 July 2021 were received.

Consideration of Planning application to redevelop the Old Mill, Kingham as a 33 bedroomed Hotel and ancillary facilities  
Minute No. 04/DCC/2021/22

Councillor Levy advised that a number of Councillors had disagreed with the definition of 'major development' in relation to the above application and asked if this could be defined for the future. Councillor Haine recognised that the wording was unclear and noted that this was for a number of reasons included in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Update on Community Infrastructure Levy  
Minute No. 32/CAB/2021/22

Councillor Graham expressed his disappointment that this issue had been left in abeyance for so long and asked if there had been any movement from Government. Councillor Haine

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agreed with the frustration felt and explained that the White Paper had been shelved, however, officers were looking at introducing an update in the next few months.

Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Poskitt advised that she had an amendment to make to the minutes but would raise this at the next meeting.

Councillor Carter requested that the minutes contain more detail and it was agreed to take the comment back to officers. Further discussion was had on how officers should be referred to in the minutes, by name or role, and officers welcomed any further feedback from Members.

Councillor Leverton asked for clarification as to whether married quarters could serve as social housing. Officers agreed to respond to him after the meeting.

Middle Barton Road Accident

Min No. 41/CAB/2021/22

Councillor Jackson asked if there had been any further update on the progress of the victim of the above road traffic accident. He also advised that there had been a good local response following the accident and Speed Watch were supporting a bid from two parish council's to request a 20mph speed limit from the County Council for next year's tranche. Councillor MacRae advised that the gentleman was at home and making progress.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Min No. 10/ENV/2021/22

Councillor Cooper asked for clarification as to what the Allocation of Parking Funds could be used for. In response, Councillor Al-Yousuf explained that this item had been approved and adopted on 30 September 2021. He reminded Councillor Cooper that he had repeatedly raised this question and had been answered at the meeting in June 2021. Councillor Coles, who had chaired the meeting in July, agreed to check his notes and get back to Councillor Cooper.

The Meeting closed at 3.26 pm

CHAIRMAN