

# Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 18 January 2022

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## COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 26 January 2022 at 2.00 pm.**

Giles Hughes  
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Andrew Prosser, Jake Acock, Mike Cahill, Merilyn Davies, Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Luci Ashbourne, Andrew Beaney, Rosa Bolger, Jill Bull, Laetisia Carter, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Owen Collins, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, Steve Good, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Richard Langridge, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Harry St John and Ben Woodruff.

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Democratic Services officers know prior to the start of the meeting.

## **AGENDA**

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 12)**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2021.
2. **Apologies for Absence**  
To receive any apologies for absence.
3. **Declarations of Interest**  
To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**  
To receive any announcements from The Chairman, Leader, Members of the Cabinet or the Head of Paid Service.
5. **Participation of the Public**  
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.
6. **Recommendations from the Executive (Pages 13 - 16)**  
Purpose:  
To receive and consider recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period since 27 October 2021.  
Recommendation:  
That the recommendations set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.
7. **Emergency / Urgency Delegations and Decisions (Pages 17 - 20)**  
Purpose  
To advise of the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.  
Recommendation  
That the report be noted.
8. **Calendar of Meetings 2022 - 2023 (Pages 21 - 28)**  
Purpose  
To consider and agree the programme of meetings for the civic year 2022 – 2023.  
Recommendations
  - (a) That the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/2023 set out in Annex I to this report be approved; and
  - (b) That the times for the first meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees after the annual meeting of the Council be as set out in Annex I, but that each Committee be invited to consider the timing of its subsequent meetings during the year.

9. **Motion - Thames Water**

The following motion has been received in the name of Councillor Graham:

“This Council asks Thames Water to provide data on all of their sewage plants, including both their historical and future maintenance and expansion plans, and also to provide us all with much clearer data on what sewage is being dumped and where and when.”

10. **Reconsideration of Motion - Re-use of IT Equipment (Pages 29 - 38)**

Purpose

To consider the motion originally proposed and seconded at Council on 28 April 2021, in the context of the comments and recommendation of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation

The Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that:

“The Council donate their ‘end of life’ laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT Bank or IT Schools Africa” and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware.

11. **Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees (Pages 39 - 76)**

To receive the reports of the following meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees. Unless otherwise stated, copies are attached:

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| a) Cabinet  | 10 November 2021 |
| b) Audit & General Purposes Committee                 | 24 November 2021 |
| c) Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee    | 25 November 2021 |
| d) Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee | 1 December 2021  |
| e) Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee          | 2 December 2021  |
| f) Cabinet  | 15 December 2021 |
| g) Cabinet (to follow)                                | 19 January 2022  |

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## 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, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Marilyn 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.

**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.

**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 1 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 1 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

**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**

- a) the Land Management Plans be approved for public engagement and subsequent implementation from March 2022; and



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- 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 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;
- 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

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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 submitting a 20mph request to 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

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|---|--|
|  <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE<br/>DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p> | <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>  |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p>   | <p><b>Council: Wednesday 26 January 2022</b></p>   |
| <p>Report Number</p>  | <p><b>Agenda Item No. 6</b></p>  |
| <p>Subject</p>  | <p><b>Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees or Sub-Committees</b></p>  |
| <p>Wards affected</p>   | <p>All</p>   |
| <p>Accountable member</p>   | <p>Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>  |
| <p>Accountable officer</p>  | <p>Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Strategic Support Officer<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>   |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p>  | <p>To consider the recommendations made by Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting.</p>  |
| <p>Annexes</p>  | <p><a href="#">Annex 1</a> – Schedule of recommendations</p>   |
| <p>Recommendation</p>   | <p>That the recommendations set out in <a href="#">Annex 1</a> to the report be adopted.</p>   |
| <p>Corporate priorities</p>   | <p>To support the Council's priorities to protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy, to meet the current and future needs of residents and to provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services.</p> |
| <p>Key Decision</p>   | <p>No</p>  |
| <p>Exempt</p>   | <p>No</p>  |
| <p>Consultees/<br/>Consultation</p>   | <p>None</p>  |

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The Council is required to consider recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting.

**2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The only decision taken by Cabinet which requires Council approval since the last Council meeting on 27 October 2021, is the one related to an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation as attached. All other decisions were in the Cabinet's gift to make and no other Committees have made recommendations to Council at this time.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. Any financial implications of the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to Cabinet and/or Committees.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. None

**5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. Not applicable

**6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Whilst there may be climate change implications arising from specific items within the schedule, there are none arising directly from this report.

**7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 7.1. The above are as set out in the relevant reports to the meetings of the Cabinet/Committee, and the decisions or minutes of those meetings.


**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1. None

|    | Meeting and Date           | Subject and Agenda Item No. or Minute Reference | Recommendations   |
|----|----------------------------|---|---|
| I. | Cabinet – 15 December 2021 | Item 12 – Consideration to Write off Debt       | <p>b) the Scheme of Delegation and Council's Financial Rules be amended to state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. any amount in excess of £5,000 that is requested for write off must be approved by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance; and</li> <li>ii. any amount in excess of £10,000 that is requested for write off must be approved by Cabinet.</li> </ul> |

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| <br><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE<br/>DISTRICT COUNCIL</b> | <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>  |
| <b>Name and date of<br/>Committee</b>   | <b>Council – 26 January 2022</b>  |
| <b>Report Number</b>  | <b>Agenda Item No. 7</b>  |
| <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Emergency / Urgency Delegations Decisions</b>  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>   | <b>All</b>  |
| <b>Accountable member</b>   | Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council<br>Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a>   |
| <b>Accountable officer</b>  | Elizabeth Griffiths – Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer<br>Tel: 01993 861188 Email: <a href="mailto:elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk">elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</a> |
| <b>Summary/Purpose</b>  | To note decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.   |
| <b>Appendices</b>   | None  |
| <b>Recommendation</b>   | That the report be noted.   |
| <b>Corporate priorities</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Exempt</b>   | No  |
| <b>Consultees/<br/>Consultation</b>   | None  |

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. At its meeting on 13 May 2020, the Council approved Emergency and Urgency delegations to the Chief Executive to enable decisions to be taken which were either an emergency, or where there was urgency such that the matter could not reasonably await the next meeting of whichever body would otherwise take that decision.
- 1.2. The report on the matter included the statement that: *“Any decision under the above provisions shall be recorded and published, and reported to Council, Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee, such report to include the reasons that the powers needed to be used”*.

## **2. WINTER COVID-19 UPLIFT PAYMENTS**

- 2.1. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) increased the level of funding allocated to homelessness services through the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 to ensure that local authorities had the resources needed to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.2. The funding allocated to West Oxfordshire District Council for 2021/22 was initially £253,329, with an additional £100,000 Temporary Accommodation Uplift of £100,000. The proposed spending of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 and Uplift was approved by Cabinet on 24 March 2021.
- 2.3. However, a further payment of £53,117 was made alongside this original grant in the form of a Winter 2021 Covid19, ring fenced to provide rent arrears financial support for vulnerable, low income households who are renting in the private sector.
- 2.4. The DLUHC set out its expectations on how this fund was to be spent in a letter to Chief Executives dated 23 October 2021.
- 2.5. In November, officers contacted the Leader, Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer advising them of the uplift. Following discussions, the Chief Executive advised that this could be dealt with under delegated powers and the expenditure of the Winter 2021 Covid19 Rent Arrears Financial Support payment, was approved by the Chief Executive as recommended.

## **3. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT POLICY**

- 3.1. Approval of an Additional Restrictions Grant Policy (ARG) was taken by the Chief Executive, in liaison with the Leader, on 21 December 2021, following submission of a report from the Head of Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit.
- 3.2. The Council was awarded further grant funding in a third tranche of ARG which would continue to support businesses affected by the pandemic and make top up grant payments to previous recipients.
- 3.3. The briefing report provided details on eligibility, exclusions, the application process and grant allocations. There was also further information on the Business Growth Support Grant, appeals and fraud matters.

#### **4. REASONS FOR USE OF URGENCY POWERS**

- 4.1. The use of urgency powers was necessary to enable officers to provide financial support for any households requiring assistance from 23 October 2021 and to deliver services without delay.
- 4.2. In relation to the ARG, officers were requesting to go live with the first grant prior to Christmas, with the Business Support Grant process going live from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The proposals were aimed at addressing the expectations set out by the DLUHC in the letters to Chief Executive on 21 December 2020 & 23 October 2021.
- 5.2. The Winter Covid19 Uplift was ring fenced to provide financial support to renters in the private sector therefore were not open to any other use.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. This report has no legal implications.

#### **7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 7.1. None required as this report is for noting.

#### **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1. None

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| <br><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE<br/>DISTRICT COUNCIL</b> | <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>  |
| <b>Name and date of<br/>Committee</b>   | <b>Council – 26 January 2022</b>  |
| <b>Report Number</b>  | <b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>  |
| <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23</b>   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>   | <b>All</b>  |
| <b>Accountable member</b>   | Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council<br>Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a>   |
| <b>Accountable officer</b>  | Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Democratic Services Manager<br><a href="mailto:amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Summary/Purpose</b>  | To consider and agree a programme of meetings for the civic year 2022/2023.   |
| <b>Annexes</b>  | Annex I - Draft Calendar of Meetings for 2022/2023.   |
| <b>Recommendations</b>  | (a) That the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/2023 set out in Annex I to this report be approved; and<br><br>(b) That the times for the first meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees after the annual meeting of the Council be as set out in Annex I, but that each Committee be invited to consider the timing of its subsequent meetings during the year. |
| <b>Corporate priorities</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Exempt</b>   | No  |
| <b>Consultees/<br/>Consultation</b>   | None  |

## **I BACKGROUND**

Each year the Council considers its Calendar of Meetings for the forthcoming civic year. This is usually undertaken at the beginning of the calendar year so that the management of deadline dates, meeting rooms and availability can be managed.

## **2 MAIN POINTS**

### **General Note**

- 2.1 Officers across the Democratic Services teams have tried to schedule the calendars of meetings to avoid school holidays and provide a quieter time across the month of August. Whilst this has not always been possible, it remains in each Committee's gift, subject to agreement from the relevant Chairman, to agree a revised date should all members be in agreement and / or a cancellation of the meeting if there is insufficient business to be considered.

### **Cabinet**

- 2.2 As in previous years, Cabinet meetings have been scheduled monthly.
- 2.3 It should be clarified that although Cabinet meetings are included in the attached programme for ease of reference, it is entirely a matter for the Leader as to the dates and timings of its meetings. The requirement of the Constitution is that it shall meet at least 12 times a year.

### **Licensing**

- 2.4 Following meetings with officers, we have initiated discussions with the current Chairman of Licensing to consider pre-programming Licensing Panels throughout the civic year. The dates and membership of each panel could be set by the Committee at their first meeting and is helpful for officers looking to bring business forwards. This also eliminates the time it takes to arrange ad hoc meetings and wait for responses from volunteer members.
- 2.5 Two meetings of the Licensing Committee have been scheduled – the first to be used to consider the above approach and to enable officers to deliver regulatory and update training for Members.

### **Times of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings**

- 2.6 The calendar of meetings reflects the previous "normal" start times for meetings.
- 2.7 In relation to all three of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees it has in any event been the practice for those Committees to consider their start time for the remainder of the civic year at their first meeting after the annual meeting of the Council.

### **Area Planning Sub-Committees**

- 2.8 As previously agreed, these meetings have been scheduled at intervals of four weeks rather than once in every calendar month. This improves the ability to determine applications within the required timescales.
- 2.9 Although a four weekly cycle is the objective, as always the impact of Bank Holidays, elections, Christmas, Easter and the annual meeting of the Council mean that this has to be varied on occasion.

### **Audit and General Purposes Committee**

- 2.10 Members will note that the meetings of the above Committee may need to change due to the progress on the Council's accounts. However, the Democratic Services teams across Publica have worked together to ensure that none of the meetings take place on the same day and therefore may not be held on the 'usual' day of the week. This ensures that any officers who work across the three authorities should be able to attend the meetings and deliver their reports in person.

### **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **5 ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

The Council may choose to vary any of the recommended dates shown in Annex I with the exception of those for Cabinet.

### **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

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**WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## West Oxfordshire District Council

### Calendar of Meetings 2022/23


|                          |   |         |
|--------------------------|---|---------|
| <b>May 2022</b>          |   |         |
| Wednesday 18 May 2022    | Annual Council                                  | 2.00pm  |
| Monday 23 May 2022       | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee           | 2.00pm  |
| Wednesday 25 May 2022    | Cabinet   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday 26 May 2022     | Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee | 6.00pm  |
| Monday 30 May 2022       | Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee             | 2.00pm  |
| <b>June 2022</b>         |   |         |
| Tuesday 7 June 2022      | Licensing Committee (initially for training)    | 10.00am |
| Monday 20 June 2022      | Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee            | 2.00pm  |
| Wednesday 22 June 2022   | Cabinet   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday 23 June 2022    | Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee       | 2.00pm  |
| Monday 27 June 2022      | Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee             | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday 30 June 2022    | Audit & General Purposes Committee              | 6.00pm  |
| <b>July 2022</b>         |   |         |
| Wednesday 6 July 2022    | Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny        | 2.00pm  |
| Wednesday 13 July 2022   | Cabinet   | 2.00pm  |
| Monday 18 July 2022      | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee           | 2.00pm  |
| Wednesday 20 July 2022   | Council   | 2.00pm  |
| Monday 25 July 2022      | Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee            | 2.00pm  |
| <b>August 2022</b>       |   |         |
| Monday 15 August 2022    | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee           | 2.00pm  |
| Wednesday 17 August 2022 | Cabinet   | 2.00pm  |
| Monday 22 August 2022    | Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee            | 2.00pm  |

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|--|--|---|
| <b>September 2022</b>  |  |   |
| Thursday 8 September 2022<br>Monday 12 September 2022<br>Wednesday 14 September 2022<br>Monday 19 September 2022<br>Tuesday 20 September 2022<br>Wednesday 28 September 2022<br>Thursday 29 September 2022 | Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Audit & General Purposes Committee<br>Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny<br>Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee | TBC<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>6.00pm<br>TBC<br>TBC     |
| <b>October 2022</b>  |  |   |
| Tuesday 4 October<br>Monday 10 October<br>Wednesday 12 October<br>Monday 17 October<br>Wednesday 19 October  | Licensing Committee<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Council   | 10.00am<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm               |
| <b>November 2022</b>   |  |   |
| Monday 7 November<br>Monday 14 November<br>Wednesday 16 November<br>Thursday 24 November   | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee  | 2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>TBC                             |
| <b>December 2022</b>   |  |   |
| Monday 5 December<br>Wednesday 7 December<br>Thursday 8 December<br>Monday 12 December<br>Wednesday 14 December<br>Thursday 15 December  | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny<br>Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Audit & General Purposes Committee  | 2.00pm<br>TBC<br>TBC<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>6.00pm            |
| <b>January 2023</b>  |  |   |
| Wednesday 4 January<br>Monday 9 January<br>Wednesday 11 January<br>Wednesday 18 January<br>Monday 30 January   | Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Council<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee   | 2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm                |
| <b>February 2023</b>   |  |   |
| Wednesday 1 February<br>Monday 6 February<br>Wednesday 8 February<br>Wednesday 15 February<br>Tuesday 21 February<br>Thursday 23 February<br>Monday 27 February  | Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Council<br>Licensing Committee<br>Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee  | TBC<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>10.00am<br>TBC<br>2.00pm |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>March 2023</b>   |  |   |
| Monday 6 March<br>Wednesday 22 March<br>Thursday 23 March<br>Monday 27 March<br>Thursday 30 March   | Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Cabinet<br>Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Audit & General Purposes Committee                    | 2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>TBC<br>2.00pm<br>6.00pm |
| <b>April 2023</b>   |  |   |
| Monday 3 April<br>Wednesday 12 April<br>Wednesday 19 April<br>Monday 24 April<br>Wednesday 26 April | Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Finance & Management Overview & Scrutiny<br>Cabinet<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Council  | 2.00pm<br>TBC<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm |
| <b>May 2023</b>   |  |   |
| Tuesday 2 May<br>Wednesday 17 May<br>Monday 22 May<br>Thursday 25 May<br>Monday 29 May              | Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>**Annual Council**<br>Lowlands Area Planning Sub- Committee<br>Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee<br>Uplands Area Planning Sub- Committee | 2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>2.00pm<br>TBC<br>2.00pm |

**Notes:** the start times for O&S Committee meetings will be confirmed at their first meeting of the civic year and the calendar updated accordingly.

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| <br><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE<br/>DISTRICT COUNCIL</b> | <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>  |
| Name and date of Committee  | <b>Council: Wednesday 26 January 2022</b>   |
| Report Number   | <b>Agenda Item No. 10</b>   |
| Subject   | <b>Reconsideration of Motion: Re-use of IT Equipment</b>  |
| Wards affected  | All Witney Wards  |
| Accountable member  | Councillor Jane Doughty, Cabinet Member for Customer Delivery<br>Email: <a href="mailto:jane.doughty@westoxon.gov.uk">jane.doughty@westoxon.gov.uk</a>  |
| Accountable officer   | Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Democratic Services Manager<br><a href="mailto:amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a>  |
| Summary/Purpose   | To consider the motion originally proposed and seconded at Council on 28 April 2021, in the context of the comments and recommendation of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.  |
| Annex   | <a href="#">Annex 1</a> : Report considered by the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held 25 November 2021.<br><a href="#">Annex 2</a> : Draft minute from that meeting  |
| Recommendation  | The Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that<br>“The Council donate their ‘end of life’ laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT Bank or IT Schools Africa” and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware. |
| Corporate priorities  | Not applicable.   |
| Key Decision  | N/A   |
| Exempt  | No  |
| Consultees/<br>Consultation   | None  |

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. At the meeting of the Council held on 28 April 2021 the following Motion was proposed and seconded by Councillors Graham and Enright respectively:-

“This Council notes that The Covid-19 lockdowns have shown how vital technology is to keeping people connected, in particular the vulnerable in society, many of whom have been confined to their homes and unable to see loved ones, and that according to Age UK 51% of digitally excluded people are over the age of 65, while refugees and the homeless also face worrying levels of digital exclusion.

This Council calls for:

1. The Council, public bodies in West Oxfordshire, and local businesses to reform their procurement policies by donating IT locally to those in need rather than scrapping it, using schemes such as the Laptops for Homeless and Vulnerable Initiative;
2. A local re-use and recycling centre to enable *SocialBox.Biz* and its charity partners to collect and distribute old technology to those in need in West Oxfordshire; and
3. Direct council suppliers to support the *SocialBox.Biz* initiative and, together with the Council, to proactively take part in sponsoring and promoting the *SocialBox.Biz* message to local businesses, through traditional media and social media channels.”

- 1.2. The motion having been duly proposed and seconded stood referred without discussion to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment and advice.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The report considered by the Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 November 2021 is attached at Annex 1 and the relevant minute from that meeting is attached at Annex 2.
- 2.2. Following receipt of the officer’s report, the Committee recommend Option 2 to Council as follows:
- “The Council donate their ‘end of life’ laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT Bank or IT Schools Africa” and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware.
- 2.3. Council is invited to consider the matter in the context of its consideration by the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and any further comments from the proposer and seconder.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. As set out in section 3 of Annex 1.

## **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. None

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**


- 5.1. Not applicable

## **6. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 6.1. None applicable.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <br><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE<br/>DISTRICT COUNCIL</b> | <b>West Oxfordshire District Council</b>   |
| <b>Name and date of Committee</b>   | <b>Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee<br/>Thursday 25 November 2021</b>   |
| <b>Report Number</b>  | <b>Agenda Item No. 7</b>   |
| <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Re-use of IT equipment</b>  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>   | <b>ALL</b>   |
| <b>Accountable member</b>   | Cllr Jane Doughty - Cabinet Member for Customer Delivery<br>Email: <a href="mailto:jane.doughty@westoxon.gov.uk">jane.doughty@westoxon.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Accountable officer</b>  | Phil Martin, Group Manager, Business Support Services<br>Tel: 07764352360; Email: <a href="mailto:phil.martin@publicagroup.uk">phil.martin@publicagroup.uk</a>   |
| <b>Summary/Purpose</b>  | To further consider the Notice of Motion regarding re-use of IT equipment referred to the Committee by the Council and to submit comments or recommendations accordingly.  |
| <b>Annexes</b>  | None   |
| <b>Recommendation</b>   | That the Committee recommends to Council that they donate their 'end of life' laptops to Oxford IT Bank as this is a local organisation that supports charities and individuals in Oxfordshire and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware. |
| <b>Corporate priorities</b>   | Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Exempt</b>   | No   |
| <b>Consultees/<br/>Consultation</b>   | N/A  |

## I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. At the meeting of the Council held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021, the following Motion was proposed by Councillor Andy Graham and seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, namely:-

*“This Council notes that The Covid-19 lockdowns have shown how vital technology is to keeping people connected, in particular the vulnerable in society, many of whom have been confined to their homes and unable to see loved ones, and that according to Age UK 51% of digitally excluded people are over the age of 65, while refugees and the homeless also face worrying levels of digital exclusion.*

*This Council calls for:*

- 1. The Council, public bodies in West Oxfordshire, and local businesses to reform their procurement policies by donating IT locally to those in need rather than scrapping it, using schemes such as the Laptops for Homeless and Vulnerable Initiative;*
- 2. A local re-use and recycling centre to enable SocialBox.Biz and its charity partners to collect and distribute old technology to those in need in West Oxfordshire; and*
- 3. Direct council suppliers to support the SocialBox.Biz initiative and, together with the Council, to proactively take part in sponsoring and promoting the SocialBox.Biz message to local businesses, through traditional media and social media channels.”*

- 1.2. The Chairman advised that he was not exercising his discretion for this motion to be debated in accordance with paragraph 11(e) of the Council Procedure Rules, and after it had been proposed and seconded it was referred to the Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and advice.

## 2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The ICT service currently has arrangements in place with a specialist disposal company, who both recycle as well dispose of redundant and broken equipment. The company provides the Council with the required paperwork to comply with Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Data Protection Regulations.
- 2.2. Due to the nature of the information that the Council holds and uses, the ICT team wipe laptops / computer hard drives / discs to minimize the risk of data loss.
- 2.3. Since the start of the pandemic mobile devices such as laptops have been in high demand with the majority of Council staff working from home during the lockdowns. Unsurprisingly the supply of new laptops was affected world-wide so the team have re-deployed and repaired all serviceable laptops to ensure officers have the equipment they need.
- 2.4. The Council only deems laptops / computers ‘end of life’ when they have suffered from a physical component failing and the repair / the parts are uneconomical / technically unfeasible. The ICT will also replace a laptop / computer when its processor speeds / capability are no-longer able to support the software that the Council use to provide services to residents and businesses and/or accept the security patches required.
- 2.5. Currently the Council have 50 laptops / computers awaiting disposal.
- 2.6. If the Committee wished to donate the Council’s old IT equipment for potential re-use by local residents and charities then it could consider the following options:



**OPTION 1.**

- 2.7. Approach SocialBox.Biz, who are a business 2 business consultancy and discuss how the Council would set up an ICT recycling programme for West Oxfordshire as well as getting their existing suppliers to use and help promote this.
- 2.8. As part of the set up the company offers a service where the Council would pay them to come and help set up a donation programme, which would involve them providing specialist advice on securely wiping the data from devices and using open source software to provide a platform which you can then donate safely on.
- 2.9. Whilst Oxfordshire County Council are responsible for disposal of waste and operate the Household Recycling Centers the feasibility of using the Dix Pit site for the collection of donated equipment is questionable as the ICT Team would need to be able to easily access the equipment to ensure the data was completely wiped from the devices. This would mean that storage for both the Council's equipment as well as donated IT equipment would need to be found within the Council Offices.

**OPTION 2**

- 2.10. The Council could donate their 'end of life' laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT Bank or IT Schools Africa.
- 2.11. Both organisations ensure all data is wiped from the machines using specialist approved software and can provide data erasure certificates upon request so providing the Council with assurance that the risk of data loss / breach is addressed.
- 2.12. The Council could continue to use their existing supplier to disposal of equipment such as monitors and other business related hardware in an environmentally compliant way, which the Oxford IT Bank / IT Schools Africa currently doesn't take, without incurring disposal costs.
- 2.13. The Council could also pro-actively encourage its suppliers and promote the scheme to local businesses, through traditional media and social media channels.

**Oxford IT Bank**

- 2.14. The Oxford IT Bank have recently teamed up with SOFEA in Didcot as part of the Getting Oxfordshire Online initiative ([www.gettingoxfordshireonline.org](http://www.gettingoxfordshireonline.org)) which supports local schools as well as working with local charities to help them provide better online services and provide laptops to local families and vulnerable people (all donations go through the charities, so the end user gets support from a trusted partner).
- 2.15. The Oxford IT Bank will upgraded donated devices with new parts to run the latest operating systems as well as recycling broken machines to help ensure the new owners have a safe and usable device.
- 2.16. The Oxford IT Bank is currently supporting a range of organisations including Oxford Community Action, Asylum Welcome, Routes and ADAPT who are charities that are helping communities and vulnerable people get online to access education and employment.
- 2.17. The Oxford IT Bank is a small scale organisation, so consideration needs to be given to their resilience if key individuals were to leave. Their association with SOFEA will help the organisation scale up its activities as well as helping with the logistics of collecting devices.

**IT Schools Africa**

- 2.18. IT Schools Africa send refurbished computer equipment to schools in Africa and are based just outside of Cheltenham
- 2.19. The organisation is registered with the Environment Agency and is fully compliant with WEEE regulations so mitigating any associated risk to the Council.
- 2.20. IT Schools Africa collect donated equipment free of charge and where possible send all working equipment to Africa, however for equipment that is not suitable, is damaged or has missing parts they recycle or resell this in the UK, the proceeds from this are then used by the charity to further develop its work in Africa.
- 2.21. Recently Cheltenham Borough Council made the decision to donate all their 'end of life' laptops to IT Schools Africa, the ICT Teams worked closely with the company and experienced no concerns or problems.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. The current arrangements in place provides the Council with a safe, compliant and free disposal service for broken and redundant IT equipment, which is also collected free of charge.
- 3.2. If the Council were to move away from this arrangement and chose option 1 the organisation offers a service providing specialist advice on securely wiping the data from devices and using open source software to provide a platform which we would then use to donate safely on.
- 3.3. The cost of this service starts at £600 per day, however this does not include the cost of the resources required for undertaking the work nor the day to day running of the programme, which is difficult to quantify at this point in time as would depending on potential take up levels but we could be looking at a day per week, which would cost approx. £8,000 pa.
- 3.4. Both charities that have been identified in Option 2 will collect the Council's end of life laptops and undertake the work involved in wiping the devices free of charge so there are no additional costs associated with this option.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. As part of the disposal process the ICT team perform a low level format and zero out the disks of laptops to minimise the risk of data loss to comply with data protection regulations. It is essential whatever option is chosen the Council is provided with assurance that any risks from data loss is fully mitigated against.
- 4.2. Any solution going forward must also be compliant with Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).
- 4.3. The Council Microsoft licenses are not transferable to a 3rd party, but every effort would be to return the laptop to the Microsoft Windows license obtained via the manufacturer when the device was originally purchased.

### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. The main risks associated with the proposed change are:
  - The donated devices will be running unsupported software such as Windows 7 so there is an increased risk of the new users being hit by malware / computer viruses as well as experiencing incompatibility issues with other software / hardware. A recent article highlights this specific risk –

[https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/21/malware-reportedly-found-laptops-children-england?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/21/malware-reportedly-found-laptops-children-england?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other)

- The Council could still be at risk from data loss / breaches from not only their own devices but donated equipment if it runs its own recycling programme as whilst the ICT team will wipe the discs, an expert may still be able to recover some data. This risk is currently mitigated by the existing service provider who guarantee that every single hard drive they collect and strip out of devices is fully audited, wiped to NCSC Infosec Level 5 HMG approved standards and documented for our records, totally free of charge.
- The Council could be liable if the device was the cause of a fire, however this would be mitigated by the agreement with the provider and insistence on pat testing of all devices before they are re-deployed.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1. The Committee could choose to either continue with the current arrangements or adopt a hybrid approach which offers both the social benefits associated with recycling / donating relevant devices to be re-used whilst also ensuring it can safely dispose of other IT hardware in a cost effective and compliant way.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Excerpt of the minutes of the meeting of the  
**Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
 Held in the Council Chamber at 6.30 pm on **Thursday, 25 November 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Councillor Andy Graham (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jake Acock, Councillor Jill Bull, Councillor Laetisia Carter, Councillor Owen Collins, Councillor Gill Hill, Councillor Mark Johnson, Councillor Nick Leverton, Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Andrew Prosser and Councillor Alex Wilson.

Officers: Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Operations Support and Enabling), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive) and Phil Martin (Group Manager - Business Support) and Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officer).

**38 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence and Councillor Hill substituted for Councillor Crossland.

**39 Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of Interest were received as follows:

Councillor Beaney declared an interest in the agenda item on the Re-use of IT Equipment, as Oxford IT Bank had made donations to the school he worked at.

**43 Re-use of IT Equipment**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Business Support Services on the re-use of IT equipment. He advised that the Oxford IT Bank provided a great service to Oxfordshire residents, particularly refugees.

Councillor Beaney expressed a preference for Option 2 in the report and agreed that Oxford IT Bank's work was good.

Councillor Graham thanked the officer for the report.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee recommends Option 2 to Council that, "The Council donate their 'end of life' laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT Bank or IT Schools Africa" and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware.

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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 11

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 10 November 2021**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Suzi Coul, Councillor Marilyn Davies, Councillor Jane Doughty, Councillor Jeff Haine, Councillor David Harvey, Councillor Norman MacRae MBE and Councillor Michele Mead

Also present: Councillors Rosa Bolger, Julian Cooper, Colin Dingwall, Duncan Enright, Andy Graham, Alex Postan.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Senior Strategic Support Officer), Angela Claridge (Interim Monitoring Officer), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer) and Giles Hughes (Chief Executive) Commercial Development).

#### **48 Notice of Decisions**

The decisions from the meeting held on 13 October 2021 were noted.

#### **49 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Martin McBride.

#### **50 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **51 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

#### **52 Receipt of Announcements**

##### Cabinet Update

Councillor Mead addressed the meeting and advised that the Cabinet met every Wednesday, as a group initially, and were then joined by officers to go through and discuss the upcoming Cabinet reports, meetings and Cabinet Work Programme. Councillor Mead suggested that if any Councillors had questions or queries that they would like putting to officers, they could ask the Cabinet to pose these directly at their Wednesday meetings.

##### Refuse Collections

Councillor MacRae announced that, despite the steady success of refuse collections being at 99%, there had been a number of problems experienced recently due to staff absences at Ubico. This had been exacerbated by the continued unavailability and scarcity of qualified HGV drivers. Councillor MacRae also advised that the fleet's 'narrow lanes' vehicle had broken down and was currently awaiting spare parts to be delivered. In the meantime, Ubico had hired a duplicate vehicle which had unfortunately also failed, resulting in a number of missed collections for those properties located down narrow access routes. Whilst the team were working hard to rectify the issue, there was little that could be done to speed up the delivery of the spare parts required as they were stuck in the supply system.

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Following a question from Councillor Graham, Councillor MacRae explained that he did not know where the spare parts were coming from so could not comment on how long term the issue would be. However, it was hoped that the hired vehicle would be back on the road soon.

#### WODC and Blenheim Housing Award

Councillor Davies was delighted to announce that the Council and Blenheim Estate Homes had won the inaugural Public/Private Partnership of the Year Award at the Estates Gazette Awards. She explained that the new category celebrated partnerships between the public and private sector, for delivering solutions through real estate. Councillor Davies highlighted that the partnership had meant the Council could provide houses at 80% market rent and she thanked all of the officers involved, including Caroline Clissold and Tom See who were both present at the meeting.

Councillor Enright thanked the team behind the award and applauded Blenheim Estates for the turnaround in culture they had achieved in recent years. Councillor Graham also welcomed the news and referred to a document entitled 'A sketchbook for an emerging vision for Blenheim Estate'. He explained that this was a document produced and commissioned by Blenheim that looked at potential emerging sustainable communities in West Oxfordshire, which Councillors may find insightful.

Councillor Davies concluded by reiterating her gratitude to all officers involved and stated that the award was a testament to the Housing team and the Planning officers at the Council.

#### Oxfordshire wide Electric Vehicle Charging Point project

Councillor Harvey announced that the contract for the above EVCP project had now been signed and installation would commence in the next few weeks.

Following a question from Councillor Graham, it was confirmed that the first site to have charging points installed would be the Woodford Way Car Park.

#### Planting Session – Mary Ellis Country Park

Councillor Postan advised that Bloor Homes had organised a tree planting session at the northern end of the Brize Norton Mary Ellis Country Park on Friday 12 November 2021, at 10.30am. He encouraged those elected Members who lived nearby to attend and show their support.

53

#### **Homeseeker Plus Policy Update**

Members received a report from the Housing Manager which updated them on the legislative changes needed to ensure that the HomeseekerPlus Policy met the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Allocation of Accommodation standards and reflected the outcome of the stakeholder consultation.



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HomeseekerPlus was a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme run by seven Local Authorities, in partnership with social housing landlords, operating within Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire. Demand for affordable housing within the HomeseekerPlus area was very high and could not be met in its entirety from the available social housing resources.

The Policy explained who was eligible and who qualified to apply on HomeseekerPlus and set out how applications would be assessed and awarded a subsequent Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze banding based on housing need. A copy of the 2019 Banding Table was attached at Annex E to the report.

In late 2019, West Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet approved the suggested changes set out in the 2019 draft Policy, attached at Annex B, and they had agreed that these should be made available for wider consultation. This report outlined the proposed Policy changes that had been consulted upon and set out the legislative reasons for recommending the approval of the final draft of the HomeseekerPlus Policy.

There were a number of further annexes attached to the report, including those noted above and these were as follows:

Annex A – Draft HomeseekerPlus Policy (Pending Formatting)

Annex C – Summary of Proposed Changes HomeseekerPlus Policy 2019

Annex D – Consultation outcome

Annex F – New Banding Table 2021

Annex G – Equalities Impact Assessment

The report asked Cabinet to approve the policy for adoption and requested that the HomeseekerPlus Management Board be given approval to confirm the date for adoption, once all partners had received approval from their authorities, and professionally format the policy prior to publication.

An alternative option was outlined in full at section 10 of the report and detailed the implication of withdrawing from the current HomeseekerPlus Partnership, sourcing the Council's own Choice Based Letting system and designing its own Policy. It was noted that this would also impact on staffing arrangements, would require a significant financial contribution and extend timescales considerably.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Davies, introduced the report and explained the reasons for updating the policy. She proposed the recommendations as laid out and these were seconded by Councillor Doughty.

Following a question from Councillor Dingwall, officers confirmed that an applicant was asked to specify a preferred area on the application form, however, this did not restrict them if they wished to register their interest on properties in any area.

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Councillor Graham queried if was thought the amendments to the policy would impact on the number of people being accommodated. Officers advised that this report addressed how the Council allocated housing in a fair and transparent manner.

Councillor Davies added that Councillor Graham's question related to the Strategic Planning area of work and meetings were being held to try to marry the two areas together.

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

**Resolved that**

- a) The policy be approved for adoption; and
- b) Approval be given for the HomeseekerPlus Management Board to:
  - confirm the date for adoption once all partners have approval through their individual authorities governance structure (likely to be early 2022); and
  - professionally format the policy prior to publication.

#### **54 Our House and Housing First Project Updates and Funding Extension Options**

Members received a report from the Group Manager for Resident Services and the Housing Manager which updated members on the 'Our House' and Housing First projects since their inception, and recommended the continuation of the projects and outline future opportunities over the next two years.

The report explained that the Council had worked with Countywide partners for many years to provide a collaborative approach to ending rough sleeping in the County and, as a result, Oxfordshire had both an established Young Peoples Supported Accommodation Pathway and an Adult Homelessness Pathway, achieving much success in reducing the numbers of those that were sleeping out.

The report explained that the Adult Homelessness Pathway would be refreshed for 2022-2025 by adopting a more Housing First focused approach, whilst still continuing to deliver effective supported accommodation. However, due to the high concentration of rough sleeping in Oxford City, and the graduation of people from rural areas to the services located in the City, much of the funding and supported accommodation projects were located in Oxford.

The report detailed how the Housing First project operated and how it worked alongside the Adult Homeless Pathway and gave an update on the numbers of individuals helped over the past twelve months. The complex funding streams supporting this work were outlined at paragraph 3.1 and a list of them was provided at Annex A, showing how they related to West Oxfordshire.

There were a number of proposals set out at section 2.26 of the report and these were aimed at reducing the use and time spent in expensive short term, emergency accommodation by

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utilising the funds in the Housing Reserve account, if further grant funding cannot be sourced, benefiting both the Council and the client in the longer term.

There were no alternative options outlined in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Davies, introduced the report and highlighted that this was a very targeted and specific project, designed to help vulnerable people. So far eighteen young people had been helped to find housing and were being supported on the path to independence. She hoped that the continuation of the projects would be supported and proposed the recommendations as laid out.

This was seconded by Councillor Haine, who was very supportive of both causes detailed in the report and he referred to paragraph 2.16 of the report which outlined the projects successes.

Following a question from Councillor Postan regarding a definition for the term 'disability', Councillor Davies proposed that officers respond directly after the meeting.

Clarification was also given on the support given to anyone suffering or fleeing from Domestic Violence and officers gave an outline of the external organisations worked with.

Councillor Enright supported the projects and highlighted a minor grammatical error in recommendation d) which should read 'as set out in 2.33'. Councillor Graham also expressed his support for the initiatives and asked what the strategy was beyond the two year timescale, if and how it would be reviewed and relevant timescales.

In response, Councillor Davies explained that this report was funding specific for two years. Officers advised that the project was constantly under review and would enable the existing bed spaces to remain accessible.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the Cabinet

### **Resolved that**

- a) the recommendation to continue the projects for a further 18 months from April 2022, is agreed;
- b) the outsourcing of the Support element of both projects via waiver, is agreed;
- c) the exploration of external funding sources including bidding for Government and/or community grant funds in order to continue the projects, is agreed;
- d) the use of the Housing Reserve / Housing Grant Underspend, as set out in paragraph 2.33 of the report, to guarantee the continuation of the projects whilst alternative funding options are explored, is agreed; and

- e) delegation of any amendments to these allocations is given to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness subject to compliance with funding allocation conditions.

## **55 Use of the Internet and Social Media in Investigations and Enforcement Policy**

Members received a report from the Counter Fraud Unit Manager which presented Cabinet with a new 'Use of the Internet and Social Media in Investigations and Enforcement Policy' for adoption.

The report advised that the Council's Policies were based on the legislative requirements of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) and the Codes of Practice relating to directed surveillance and the acquisition of communications data. Councils had come under increased scrutiny in this area by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) during inspections and there were a number of recommendations in their annual reports, procedures and guidance. This included that evidence should demonstrate that consideration had been given to whether the activity could be considered surveillance and the appropriate authorisation sought.

Existing arrangements had been reviewed and the policy for ensuring compliance had been developed.

There were no alternative options listed in the report.

The report had been considered by the Audit & General Purposes Committee on 23 September 2021 and following confirmation from officers on a number of points, the policy was endorsed.

The Leader, Councillor Mead, introduced the report and proposed the recommendations as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor MacRae.

Following a question from Councillor Graham, the Counter Fraud Unit Manager explained the scenarios in which this policy would be used ie any occasion where officers were asked to investigate a criminal offence against the Council. She highlighted that staff should not be using any personal social media accounts and the policy would help protect staff and the public.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the Cabinet

**Resolved** that

- (a) the Policy attached to this report is approved and adopted; and
- (b) the Chief Executive is authorised to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Counter Fraud Unit Manager, Legal Services and the Leader of the Council.

## **56 Community Facility Grant Awards - 2nd Round - 2021/22**

Members received a report from the Business Manager – Contracts, which asked them to consider applications for grant aid from the Community Facilities Grant Scheme.

The report explained that these recommendations represented the second of two rounds of funding for the Community Facilities Grant scheme, with Round 1 awarding £11,563. This had left £188,437 in the scheme and, if agreed by Cabinet, Round 2 would total £134,472.

All applications had been scored against a matrix and funding allocations were proposed in line with this. A list of the applicants and a breakdown of each financial commitment was provided at Annex A to the report.

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An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose to offer differing levels of grant aid than those proposed in Annex A, but within the budgets established for these purposes, however, this could result in the projects not being viable due to insufficient funding.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Delivery, Councillor Doughty, introduced the report and provided a breakdown of each application, details of the individual schemes and the different areas of the District that this would help and support. The applicants were as follows:

- Stonesfield Playing Field Association, who required funding to develop their outdoor sports facilities;
- 1<sup>st</sup> Stonesfield Scouts, who had to rebuild their scout hut following demolition of their previously, unsafe premises;
- Witney Rugby Club had applied for funding towards an extension to their existing clubhouse, work to outside patio areas and to allow winter fitness training to take place inside;
- Ducklington Parish Council required assistance to make improvements to the playground and installation of a multi-games area;
- Witney Mills Cricket Club had applied for funding to purchase a new outfield mower; and
- Filkins Village Centre required funding for playground refurbishment.

Councillor Doughty expressed her delight at being able to recommend these grants for approval and proposed the recommendation as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor Coul. The Leader highlighted how impressive it was that all of the organisations had been successful in raising their own share of funding towards the projects, especially during Covid times.

Councillor Cooper queried why not all of the applicants had secured Parish or Town funding. Councillor Doughty agreed to speak to officers and respond outside of the meeting.

Councillor Dingwall addressed the meeting and passed on his thanks to the Cabinet for continuing to support these community projects. He went on to highlight the inspirational and diverse services that organisations such as Witney Rugby Club provided to residents of West Oxfordshire and Councillor Dingwall reminded the meeting that Community Facility Grants were not a statutory responsibility of the Council. Therefore, he felt that officers and the administration should be thanked for helping communities to continue to bring in additional funding for projects.

Councillors Bolger and Graham added their support to the proposals. Councillor Graham thanked all involved to continuing to assist these schemes which reflected the needs of the community.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the Cabinet

**Resolved** that the grants as recommended in Annex A to the report are agreed.

The Meeting closed at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN

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## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

### **Audit and General Purposes Committee**

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 6.00 pm on  
**Wednesday, 24 November 2021**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Alex Postan (Chairman), Councillor Dan Levy (Vice-Chair), Councillor Joy Aitman, Councillor Luci Ashbourne, Councillor Andrew Beaney, Councillor Julian Cooper, Councillor Rupert Dent, Councillor Colin Dingwall, Councillor Harry Eaglestone, Councillor Duncan Enright, Councillor Gill Hill, Councillor Martin McBride, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Harry St John and Councillor Alex Wilson.

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant) and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

#### **22 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock and Richard Langridge.

#### **24 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **25 Participation of the Public**

There was none.

Prior to the considering the next agenda item, the Chairman asked that an Action Log be added to the Committee Work Programme in future.

Councillor Cooper addressed the meeting and stated that he had requested the Publica Annual Report be considered by the Committee. However, he had been advised that this report was going to be scrutinised by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny, following an all member briefing. Councillor Cooper was disappointed as he felt this could be considered under the General Purposes section of this Committee and historically Councillors had been able to discuss almost anything. He felt that it was important to open up a dialogue with external partners such as Publica and Ubico.

#### **26 Statement of Accounts 2020/2021**

The Committee received a report which presented the Council's audited Statement of Accounts for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report advised that the Chief Finance Officer was responsible for ensuring that the statement of accounts was prepared and published by 31 May following the end of a year. In a more typical year, the draft Statement of Accounts would have been presented to the July meeting of this Committee for review. The Government extended the deadline for the production of the draft accounts to 31 July and the audit of the accounts from 31 July to 30 September.

It was noted that the draft statement of accounts was submitted to the external auditors on 1 July 2021 and there were no objections received during the required inspection period. At

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the Audit & General Purposes Committee in September, Members were advised that due to resourcing difficulties, Grant Thornton had been unable to meet the 30 September publication date. Therefore a revised target date of 24 November 2021 was agreed.

Representatives from Grant Thornton, Pete Barber and Helen Lillington, were present at the meeting and responded to queries from Members.

Mr Barber addressed the meeting and provided an update since the meeting held in September 2021. He explained the challenges that Grant Thornton had faced, resulting in the audit taking longer to complete than planned. Mr Barber went on to advise that the member of staff charged with printing and collating the accounts for signing off, was off sick, therefore, it had been agreed with officers that this would wait until she returned in the next few weeks. He assured Members that whilst very frustrating, officers were very close to finalising the work.

With regards to the Audit Findings Report, Mr Barber advised that Grant Thornton were anticipating issuing an unqualified audit opinion in due course. In addition, the timescales for issuing a Value for Money conclusion had been revised in line with the National Audit Office and the work was expected to be complete by the end of February.

Following a question from Councillor McBride, Mr Barber advised that the staff member was due back on 1<sup>st</sup> December however, if this was not the case, other staff would be brought in to assist. Mr Barber also advised that there would not be any penalties applied and the resilience at Grant Thornton was being addressed. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, Elizabeth Griffiths, concurred with the comments from Mr Barber. She assured the meeting that she had been in regular discussions with Grant Thornton and it had been felt that due to the involved nature of the work, it was prudent to wait until the member of staff returned.

Ms Lillington then outlined the Audit findings report, clarified a few presentational issues and advised that the overriding positive message was that the findings were substantially complete. She highlighted certain areas of focus including the risks around pensions, the in progress Value for Money work and one recommendation relating to estimates and the need to look more critically at investments.

Mr Barber answered a number of queries from Councillor Dingwall relating to the savings required for the following year and the changes that had been made. This was supported by the Chief Finance Officer who explained that this was not a funding gap the authority were in control of. She assured the meeting that officers were continuously reassessing ways to save money and look at efficiencies, with every area of business being challenged.

In response to a query from Councillor Dent, Mr Barber explained the management of the Local Government Pension Scheme, of which Oxfordshire County Council were the administrator for this authority; WODC were a long standing member and it was the Pension Fund Board that took the decisions relating to investments. Members noted that the County Council were held to account by the scrutiny committee, who in turn were scrutinised by the Board.

Further discussions were had relating to the Value for Money aspect of the report, how that related to the Council Tax bandings agreed by Council and the financial support provided to GLL in previous years. Mrs Dyer, Chief Accountant, provided clarity on a number of figures



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within the report, which had previously been included in the outturn report, considered in July.

Councillor Cooper received clarification on paragraph 2.17 of the report which related to the Additional Restrictions Grant and the Contained Outbreak Management Fund which had provided support for businesses and the local economy along with helping vulnerable groups of residents in the District.

Councillor St John asked if it was possible to receive a figure which would show how much the Council were required to pay Publica for their services, with a view to comparing this over the years.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the external representatives and officers at the meeting, the Committee

**Resolved that**

- a) the Grant Thornton Audit Findings for West Oxfordshire District Council report be noted;
- b) the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, including the Annual Governance Statement be approved; and
- c) the Chief Finance Officer and the Chair of the Committee be authorised to write a letter of representation on behalf of the Committee and Council to Grant Thornton to enable the opinion to be issued.

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chairman advised that a work programme for the Committee would be considered at the next meeting.

Councillor Cooper queried the arrangement between Publica, GLL and Ubico as he did not feel there were clear lines of communication, particularly in relation to the re-opening of Woodstock pool over the summer.

The Chief Finance Officer took the opportunity to thank Grant Thornton for their hard work and determination in delivering this report and the Finance Team for their continued support and dedication.

CHAIRMAN

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## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Held in the Council Chamber at 6.30 pm on **Thursday, 25 November 2021**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Councillor Andy Graham (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jake Acock, Councillor Jill Bull, Councillor Laetisia Carter, Councillor Owen Collins, Councillor Gill Hill, Councillor Mark Johnson, Councillor Nick Leverton, Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Andrew Prosser and Councillor Alex Wilson

Officers: Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Operations Support and Enabling), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive) and Phil Martin (Group Manager - Business Support) and Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officer)

#### **37 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility had provided the following update on the Member's question about the Members' Portal,

“Officers have recently met and acknowledged some of the concerns that Members have raised. The portal is there as a tool to help them so it's important to us that it isn't seen as a hindrance.

We will shortly be issuing a survey seeking feedback on the portal so that we can capture issues and take them forward. In the meantime, we note the points raised around logging on and have asked IT to produce a quick guide for members.

Moving forward we really want the portal to be something that members actively use for updating their register of interests, declaring and gifts/hospitality and making their expenses claims. It is pleasing to see from the data that some members are already doing this but we acknowledge that some may be unsure. With that in mind we will be rolling out a selection of bite sized training sessions in due course.”

Councillor Leverton reminded the Committee of his question about whether armed forces properties were classed as social housing. Officers agreed to respond to this question outside the meeting.

#### **38 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence and Councillor Hill substituted for Councillor Crossland.

#### **39 Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of Interest were received as follows:

Councillor Beaney declared an interest in the agenda item on the Re-use of IT Equipment, as Oxford IT Bank had made donations to the school he worked at.

#### **40 Participation of the Public**

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

#### **41 Chairman's Announcements**

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The Chairman noted that officer's weekly updates on the Afghan refugee resettlement programme were very helpful.

## **42 Long Term Empty Homes Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Customer Enabling Manager on the current status of Long Term Empty Homes in the District.

The Business Manager – Operations Support and Enabling highlighted the enforcement action available to the Council which included:

- Enforced Sale – Allows the council to force the sale of a property to recover debts owed to the council that are registered as a charge on the property
- Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) – Enables the council to secure occupation and responsible management of some privately owned house and flats that have been empty for two years or more
- Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) – Enables the council to purchase and sell an empty property for the purpose of providing housing accommodation or facilities connected to housing accommodation

She noted that both EDMOs and CPOs were time consuming to implement. She also noted that Council Tax premiums were put on properties that were empty for over two years. The officer advised the Committee that it was hoped to establish the Empty Homes Officer post as a permanent role.

Councillor Collins asked how many EDMOs and CPOs there are in place. The officer replied that there were none currently as officers worked with residents to get properties into use and there is a strategy in place to manage empty homes.

Councillor Prosser commented that this was a useful report and asked to see the figures split by urban areas and also by second homes. The officer agreed to respond to the questions outside the committee and added that second homes are not classed as long term empty homes as they are furnished.

Following a question from Councillor Poskitt, officers confirmed that individual flats are counted as one property and are included in the empty homes strategy.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, the Committee

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

## **43 Re-use of IT Equipment**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Business Support Services on the re-use of IT equipment. He advised that the Oxford IT Bank provided a great service to Oxfordshire residents, particularly refugees.

Councillor Beaney expressed a preference for Option 2 in the report and agreed that Oxford IT Bank's work was good.

Councillor Graham thanked the officer for the report.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee recommends Option 2 to Council that, "The Council donate their 'end of life' laptops, computers and phones for re-use to either the Oxford IT

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Bank or IT Schools Africa” and continue to use the existing arrangements for all other ICT Hardware.

#### **44 Our House and Housing First Project Updates and Funding Extension Options**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager for Resident Services on the Our House and Housing First Project Updates and Funding Extension Options presented by the Chief Executive. He noted that the project’s focus was on younger people and included providing skills training as well as housing to the clients.

Councillor Bull asked about the funding for the scheme and whether West Oxfordshire’s funding would be spent on the young people of the District. The officer advised that the project is intended to address the needs of young people in West Oxfordshire. He acknowledged that some people with West Oxfordshire connections may present as homeless in Oxford City and therefore may be referred back to the District including into this project.

Questions were raised by Councillors Acock, Graham and Carter requesting further detail on the funding of the project as well as on tenancy failures. Members requested that the questions be responded to by officers before the Committee’s comments on the report are returned to Cabinet.

Councillor Poskitt noted that homeless people do not see District Council borders and do need a lot of officer input. She commented that the project seems to be very successful and hoped that this good work had been spread to other Districts.

The Chief Executive responded saying that West Oxfordshire works with all the other Oxfordshire Councils and a common approach was being developed across Oxfordshire. The Housing First approach recognises that people need a home before being able to tackle other issues they may have.

Councillor Wilson requested information on the type and condition of houses used for the project. The officer replied that Cottsway properties which are suitable for conversion were used.

Councillor Leverton stated that over the last three years this was the best initiative he had seen and that he supported the project one hundred percent, subject to the answers to the questions raised.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, the Committee noted the report and, subject to the responses to the Committee’s questions, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee would send comments on the report to Cabinet and recommends that Cabinet:

- a) Agrees the recommendation to continue the projects for a further 18 months from April 2022
- b) That Cabinet agrees to outsource the Support element of both projects via waiver
- c) That the Council agrees to the exploration of external funding sources including bidding for Government and/or community grant funds in order to continue the projects
- d) That the Council agrees to use Housing Reserve / Housing Grant Underspend as set out in 2.35 to guarantee the continuation of the projects whilst alternative funding options are explored

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e) Approves the delegation of any amendments to these allocations to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness subject to compliance with funding allocation conditions.

#### **45 Committee Work Programme**

The Committee received and considered the report which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Work Programme for 2021/2022.

Following a discussion about the number of reports due to be considered in the January 2022 Committee. The Chairman proposed that a second, additional meeting be arranged in January 2022.

Having discussed the matter, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be updated accordingly and that a second meeting be arranged in January to accommodate the volume of work.

#### **46 Cabinet Work Programme**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 12 October 2021.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted

#### **47 Members Questions**

Councillor Hill asked about the recent information sent to Parish Councils on rural domestic abuse. Councillor Beaney advised that domestic abuse issues had arisen at this Committee regularly including the best way to communicate with rural areas in the District about it. He offered to discuss the matter with officers and update Councillor Hill outside the meeting.

Councillor Hill also asked about the information on terrorist threats recently received. Councillor Levertton advised that this had come from Oxfordshire County Council which was suggesting the setting up of an emergency committee in each parish for events such as floods, power failures, bombs etc.

Councillor Poskitt requested a poster containing emergency contact details that can be put up on web pages as well as hard copy on local notice boards. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss this with the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and circulate their responses to Parish Clerks.

Councillor Doughty informed the Committee that there was an emergency helpline over last Christmas's floods and this will be introduced if flooding occurs again. She also noted that there is a rota in place for emergency support this winter.

Councillor Bull reminded Members that there was a flood day exhibition recently in Witney, organised by Councillor MacRae, where all relevant information was available.

Councillor Nicholls requested a follow up on the NHS Dental Services issue.

Councillor Bull updated the Committee saying that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised this again this morning. She noted that it is a nationwide problem.

Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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The Meeting closed at 7.23 pm

CHAIRMAN

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## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 1 December 2021**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Derek Cotterill (Chairman), Geoff Saul (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Julian Cooper, Rupert Dent, Harry Eaglestone, Gill Hill, Dan Levy, Alex Postan, Andrew Prosser and Harry St John.

Also present: Councillor Michele Mead.

Officers: Jan Britton (Managing Director), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Democratic Services Manager).

#### **21 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **22 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Good.

#### **23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **24 Participation of the Public**

There was none.

#### **25 Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the remainder of the civic year.

Councillor Cooper queried whether any scrutiny could be undertaken into the potential for adding solar panels to all Council owned buildings. He felt that buildings such as outdoor pools could be earning income even when closed. In response, the Chief Finance officer explained that all Council buildings were being considered and scoped. She advised that a bid had been placed to look at installing something similar at Carterton Leisure Centre and she would update the meeting in due course.

With regards to any future business cases, these would be considered as and when they came forward.

Councillor St John received clarification on the latest position with regard to CIL and as a result it was noted that this would not be put on the work programme at present.

Councillor Postan advised that the Audit and General Purposes Committee were introducing a work programme and hoped that Members may be able to assist with income generation ideas.

Having considered the work programme, the Committee

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**26 Cabinet Work Programme**

Having considered the Cabinet Work Programme, the Committee

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**27 Approval of Extension to Agreement for Support Services with Publica**

The Chairman introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval to extend the Support Services Agreement with Publica Group (Support) Limited for a further four year term until 31 October 2026.

The Committee were being asked to consider the report and decide whether to pass any comments to Cabinet, prior to their meeting.

The Chief Finance Officer answered a number of questions from Councillors including how much the average cost per resident was and how much it cost to transfer the services. Members noted that there was no data provided to compare the transfer cost but the report did highlight that the service Publica provided demonstrated value for money. The Chief Executive also reminded the meeting that it would cost more money to transfer these services back.

Following further discussions relating to the value of WODC's shareholding in Publica, the Locality Director explained that this was not a traditional trading company.

The Chief Executive addressed Members and explained that due to timescales, the contract needed to be reviewed now, however, the desire to see an analysis of future agreements and a comparison of reverting back to in-house services would be taken into account moving forwards.

Councillor Cooper highlighted the savings that Publica had delivered, alongside the low Council Tax rates for the District. He did feel that Publica could improve on their communications, along with other external companies such as Ubico. The Chairman agreed with these comments and reminded Members that Publica had been set up to save money and services were still being delivered. However, he was saddened that the offices were no longer as populated as they used to be.

Councillor Postan noted that Publica had liberated WODC from the defined benefit pension scheme and felt that it should be recognised for its idea and achievements.

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Councillors discussed the impact that any additional Council's joining Publica could have and were advised that this report had been supported by the other partner councils. Officers explained that if at any point, one of the partner Council's did not wish to continue with a particular element of the service, they would need to be disentangled, resulting in costs.

However, each Council had the scope to carry out their services how they wanted to and were not hampered by different ways of working. The Chairman felt that it was imperative that each Council remained sovereign, retained its own Cabinet and made decisions through Council.

The Publica Managing Director, Mr Britton, addressed Members and assured them that the agreements covered the issue of additional Councils joining, with the partner councils having comment and control.

Councillor Postan was keen to establish the hourly rate of Publica but officers explained that this would prove difficult and a better route would be to determine a global cost for support services.

In response to comments made about staff resourcing and not having time to carry out certain requests, officers advised that each Council chose where to put their resource. Mr Britton explained that this was not a uniform service and each Council could choose the service they wanted.

In conclusion, the Committee noted that it would be useful to look at alternative options, prior to any future reviews, in a timely manner.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

## **28 Update of 2022/23 Budget**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Finance Officer which provided an update on the developing budget for 2022/23. Members were asked to note the report and submit any comments to Cabinet as required.

The report detailed several main drivers of the change to the budget from last year's position, outlined in full at paragraph 2.1. At the time of writing the report the current revenue budget position was a deficit of £830,000. Officers hoped to fund the one off cost of the local plan as much as possible from existing planning grants and the balance may be funded from ear marked reserves such as Council Priorities. The report noted that the current draft did not include any increase to fees and charges.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report and explained that this version concentrated on revenue and there was not definitive decision on the spending review. Officers were awaiting government confirmation on a number of aspects of the budget and long term savings were being considered to bring waste costs down. She assured Members that senior officers

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and managers were very conscious of the need to maintain control of expenditure and were mindful of any additional costs.

Councillor Al-Yousuf addressed the meeting and raised a number of queries including the proposed £5 Council Tax increase, asked for clarification on the role of the Civic Pride Officer detailed on page 38 along with why Suez were the only bidder detailed at paragraph 3.4. In response, Mrs Griffiths explained that the post of Civic Pride Officer had been established at the request of the Waste Team. The role was aimed at responding to and enforcing fly-tipping breaches and had been successful at partner councils.

With regard to the kerbside recycling contract, this had gone out to tender but there had been no response from the market for various reasons. She assured Members that officers had investigated the reasons and a sensitivity analysis had been completed. The Chairman reiterated that the market was small with only six national contractors.

The Chief Executive provided an update on the second bullet point of paragraph 3.12 relating to requests for growth and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Three items had been identified including the Inclusive Economic Partnership which sought to promote inclusion in access to economic growth. Mr Hughes highlighted the measures that could be taken to spread economic benefits to everyone in Oxfordshire including skills training and removing educational barriers.

Members raised further questions on a range of subjects and were provided with clarification from officers. The topics included:

- Play equipment and the responsibility of parish and town councils;
- How much an increase in the tax base would bring in;
- The Windrush Leisure Centre and alternatives to making repairs;
- Replacement tenants for Talisman Unit 1 and Des Roches Square; and
- Replacement Ubico vehicles.

With regard to the current situation with the Windrush Leisure Centre, Mrs Griffiths explained that the aim was to prolong the life of the centre as long as possible and any replacement would need funding. Officers were looking at other sources of funding but future decisions would need to be made about where the Council spent its funds.

Having considered the report and having heard from the officers present, the Committee

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**29**

#### **Update on Council's Investment Task & Finish Group**

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Saul addressed Members and provided an update on the progress made so far. He advised that the group's scoping

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document would be presented to the Committee at their next meeting and outlined their primary role.

Councillor Saul advised that the group hoped to look at the Statement of Investment Principles and would be inviting Arlingclose along to a future meeting. Questions from members of the group were being collated and they would be meeting informally to discuss these prior to sending to Arlingclose.

**Resolved** that the update be noted.

### **30 Members Questions**

Councillor Cooper had submitted a question as detailed on the agenda as follows:

“When does the District Council want both money raising and expenditure proposals for the 2022/23 budget?”

The Chief Finance Officer advised that this was an issue raised with every relevant service manager and proposals were fed into the budget. If a suitable proposal was received, along with a business case, it would be considered.

Councillor Cooper went on to highlight that “in November 2024 it is the 150th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill birth and in early 2025 ,sadly the 60th anniversary of his death”. He had previously raised with the Leader and Cabinet Member how these anniversaries could be used as a focus to draw in tourism but had received no response. The Chief Finance Officer suggested that he speak to the Tourism team to see how this could be brought forwards.

The Meeting closed at 3.38 pm

CHAIRMAN

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## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

### **Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Committee Room 1 at 2.00 pm on **Thursday, 2 December 2021**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Alaa Al-Yousuf (Chairman), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Mike Cahill, Rupert Dent, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton, Andy Goodwin, Liz Leffman, Martin McBride, Alex Postan, Carl Rylett, Harry St John and Ben Woodruff.

Officers: Laurence King (Shared Principal Engineer), Louise Oddy (Service Designer), Scott Williams (Business Manager - Commissioning Strategy), and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Services).

Councillor Norman MacRae MBE was also present.

#### **27 Minutes of Previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **28 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Owen Collins.

#### **29 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **30 Participation of the Public**

There was no Participation of the Public.

#### **31 Waste Bin Placement and Renewal Programme**

The Chairman introduced the Contracts Manager, Scott Williams, and Service Designer, Louise Oddy.

Mr Williams addressed the Committee and shared a presentation on the Waste Bin Placement and Renewal Programme.

The Chairman thanked Mr Williams and invited Councillors to comment or ask questions of Mr Williams or Louise Oddy, remembering to focus on the Policy and not local issues.

Councillor Fenton asked who paid for the bins to be emptied, WODC or the Town Council. Mr Williams clarified that WODC was responsible for the adopted highway but if the land was owned by the Parish, or was the responsibility of the Parish, it would fall to them to maintain. However, he noted that as part of this service moving forward, WODC would offer this service to the Parish Council.

Councillor Goodwin enquired how long the gap was between removal of the old bin and installation of a new bin. He also queried if, where sites were busy, was there a plan to issue more recycling bins. Louise Oddy explained that at the beginning of the programme there had been a resource issue where ten members of staff were off sick with Covid on the same day. However, the programme got back on track and the gap between removal and replacement was usually two days.. As for the recycle bins, these were not being issued anymore as they were not properly used, and were mixed contaminated.

Councillor StJohn asked if the timetables for collection had changed, as some bins seem to be full. Louise Oddy confirmed that this would be reviewed at a meeting in January where all

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collections were going to be looked at. The review would include seasonal timetables where bins were fuller in summer and less so in winter, different routes would be planned and highlighted that Parish councils could request more frequent pickups. Mr Williams also confirmed that there was no decrease in resource, therefore Ubico had capacity, if there was a need to target bins more frequently.

Councillor McBride enquired about the consultation process and asked if there was a reduction in the number of bins at the Country Park. Louise Oddy explained that she and Councillor MacRae had visited the Country Park several times, and there was no reduction of bins. However, the location of the new bins may have been moved to convenient spots, where they were most needed. Councillor McBride also asked about bad aromas at key locations, particularly bus stops and play areas. Louise Oddy confirmed that only litter bins would be located at these areas, and dog waste bins would be located at positions where they were needed. At the January review meeting these issues were to be looked at especially in the summer months where key locations would have more frequent pickups.

Councillor Rylett commented that there were still recycle bins in situ and queried if there were some locations where recycling works. Mr Williams confirmed that once the replacement programme had been completed, there would be no recycle bins only the new ones, due to the contamination issues. However, there was no reason why they couldn't come back to looking at recycling at a later stage in the process, after the replacement programme was completed. Another tool being considered was electronic chips inside the bins that would read how full it was, resulting in targeted pick-ups.

Councillor Eaglestone raised concerns about the policy of the numbers of bins installed on newest sites, and how this was being managed, particularly the Windrush new estate. Mr Williams and Louise Oddy confirmed that at the moment the developers had to come to WODC and say how many bins they would like to install at the site. They were aware of the play park bin on that site was deemed to be too small, and were looking to replace this with a larger bin. Discussions were in place to improve the process to ensure that bin numbers were agreed with developers at the planning stage, so that no extra bins are installed putting a burden on the Council for pickups once the estate was completed and in use. Need to be strict with the developers to only put the number of bins agreed, there is a mechanism for a recourse to charge back, but it is better to stop this before it gets to that stage.

Councillor Postan also wanted to know about communication and information to the Parish Councils and the public, especially about one particular issue, the Country Parks. Louise Oddy confirmed the name of the Parish Council contact, and confirmed she met on site and walked the village only last week where there were these issues, and agreed quite swiftly where bins would be located. Ubico were starting the replacements today, and would complete tomorrow. Louise to share the emails with Councillor Postan.

Councillor Dent enquired if all bin locations were known. Officers confirmed that Ubico had a device that took a picture of which automatically populated their maps with the location.

Councillor Coles commented on the overflowing of bins near bus stops which he felt should be a priority and asked that his thanks be passed to the team because whenever he had reported an issue, this had been swiftly picked up and cleared.

Councillor Fenton wanted assurances about location of bins near to cafés and benches when, in the summer months, bad aromas and flies were a problem, perhaps accelerating the emptying of the bins, even if they were not full. Miss Oddy confirmed that bins would be strategically placed, for example not next to benches where people may want to sit and eat. She advised that consultation helped when making decisions on where bins were located.



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Councillor StJohn asked about the planning of two new housing estates where there were no plans for siting bins. Louise Oddy confirmed that this was not unusual, a bin would be placed at the playground but that typically, bins were not put on housing estates. Mr Williams referred to the Cabinet report which included details of a study by Herefordshire County Council where bins were taken away from housing estates, resulting in no increase in litter.

Mr Williams also stated that the kerbside recycling units within the District were working well and being used regularly.

Councillor Postan enquired if all Parish Councils were paying for their bin collections. Mr Williams confirmed there were two sets of figures that they had, and that at January's review they would be looking at these figures closely.

The Chairman thanked Miss Oddy and Mr Williams for attending and answering Members questions.

**Resolved** the presentation be noted.

## **32 Committee Work Programme 2020/2021**

The Chairman addressed the meeting and provided an update on the Committee Work Programme as follows:

### Review of the Section 19 Report and the Riparian Work – Item 1 & 2

The Chairman introduced Laurence King the Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer who addressed the Committee and gave a verbal update.

Mr King clarified that legally Section 19 report could not be delegated, and that an agreement between the Council and Oxford County Council (OCC) was unsigned. Frustration had grown locally regarding the floods, and the lack of a Section 19 report, however, WODC had decided to take the lead and put funding in place to commission the work. The report was due to be shared with Mr King, week commencing 13 December for final tweaking. It would then be submitted to Frank Wilson and Councillor MacRae for review. Following the review, the report would go to Scrutiny and finally formal Cabinet. To set expectations, the report was likely to be submitted to Cabinet in January 2022 at the earliest.

Councillor Coles commented that he had spoken with Mr Cotton and the County Council were keen that this report would be circulated as soon as possible.

Councillor Fenton asked for clarity as to whether producing Section 19 Reports was a County or District responsibility. In response, Mr King stated that OCC felt they had delegated the report responsibility to WODC, however, the legal agreement had not been signed.

Councillor Leffman noted there had been a lack of communication between OCC and WODC which had delayed action and this needed to be looked at further by the Committee to understand the process.

The Chairman agreed that the responsibility and processes between WODC and OCC regarding this issue needed to be added to the work programme.

Mr King was able to inform the Committee that OCC did used to have a team since the 2007 floods, which used to work closely with WODC, with regular meetings. The team leader had retired and OCC resources had been depleted hence why the agreement was never concluded and signed.

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The Chairman thanked Mr King and concluded that at the next meeting 3 February 2022 the report would have been issued and at that point the Committee could reflect on that and the process between WODC and OCC.

Councillor StJohn wanted to know why the Section 19 report had taken so long, and noted that no answer from Mr Cotton, even though he had been chased on several occasions.

Mr King reflected on the length of time the 2007 Section 19 report took to produce, it was over one year with the report not published until 2008. He believed the initial hold up was due to the unsigned agreement but he highlighted that the report was not an in depth technical report but a summary and did not unlock funding.

Councillor Postan reminded Members that it was not only Witney that flooding occurred in but also in Windrush and Shilton, affecting a great number of dwellings. If clearing the river upstream at these two points went ahead, the outcome could make it worse at Witney as more water flows down river.

Mr King agreed that clearing at these two points would just increase flood rise elsewhere, but also made it very clear that works should not be done on its own. All works should be properly managed following the recommendations in the report, surveys initially, before works, all of which would require funding.

Councillor Dent stated that there was a lack of clarity on responsibility, and felt this definitely needed reviewing.

The Chairman agreed that this would be on the Work Programme for the next Committee meeting 3 February 2022.

Mr King commented that there were still some negotiations to conclude on the OCC and WODC agreement, and it was not just a case of signing. The legal acts were there and were clear, but delegating authorities through such agency agreements was not so easy.

The Chairman noted that there were still clarifications to be made, and it was hoped that by the next meeting the Committee would be better informed.

Mrs Emberson-Wines from the Environment Agency (EA), had attended September's meeting, where a number of questions were raised. The answers to these questions were available for the 2 December meeting and the Chairman asked if there were any questions from the Committee Members.

In relation to Question 2, Councillor St John asked why the de-silting could not be done at the Witney bridge location. He advised that there were two channels that flowed under the bridge and the nearest to the south bank was where he thought the main issues were.

Mr King said he had visited this location with the EA's Operations Manager, and understood there was not the support or funding. The EA thought spot de-silting did not reap long term benefits and were not in favour, even as a repeated action.

Councillor Postan stated that he thought some locals were willing to fund private de-silting and Mr King informed the Committee that any work on the river must have formal consent from the EA.

Ubico – The Chairman confirmed that Ubico would be in attendance at the next meeting to give a presentation to the Committee, on future business plans.

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Air Quality – Councillor MacRae confirmed that there was a link now on the WODC Website. Councillor Leffman requested if the Committee could be updated on the latest information and the Chairman suggested that the relevant officers be invited to the 3 February meeting for an update.

The Chairman commented on the Climate Action Working Group who had met earlier that day and advised that the presentations would be circulated.

The Local Nature Partnership – The Chairman announced that this was already on the Climate Action Working Group's radar as it came under Bio-Diversity and Land Management. Therefore, to avoid duplication, this item would be removed from the work programme. In addition, the Committee should have received an invitation from Eventbrite portal to a webinar on Tuesday 7 December 2021, with Wild Oxfordshire to talk about their work, with WODC on nature recovery. The Chairman urged Councillors to check their emails for the invite.

Councillor Coles stated he was disappointed with the answers he received, now we are in a second year of delay. He was going to take it up with Environment Agency again, but wanted it noted.

### **33 Cabinet Work Programme**

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

### **34 Members' Questions**

Councillor Fenton raised the issue of late bin collections in Church Street, Bampton with seven out of twelve collections being late. He asked if communication, such as a leaflet drop, could be passed to residents to advise them of the situation and the reasons for lateness.

In response, Councillor MacRae updated the Committee advising that this was a result of faulty vehicles. This had been further compounded by a delay in sourcing spare parts, a situation which was affecting the whole country. He assured Members that the website was being updated daily regarding any collection issues.

Councillor Postan advised that having heard from Parish Council, the Councils Information Service was working really well.

Councillor McBride advised that where he lived neighbours shared information and bins so that all rubbish was collected - , one neighbour may have less collection one week so offered the space in the bin to other neighbours, which worked well.

The Meeting closed at 3.12 pm

CHAIRMAN

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

**Cabinet**

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 15 December 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Michele Mead (Leader, David Harvey (Deputy Leader), Suzi Coul, Marilyn Davies, Jane Doughty, Jeff Haine and Norman MacRae MBE.

Also present: Councillors Cooper, Enright, Fenton, Graham and Postan.

Officers: Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Democratic Services Manager), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Operations Support and Enabling), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive) and Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica).

**57 Notice of Decisions**

The notice of decisions taken at the meeting on 10 November 2021 were noted.

**58 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**59 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**60 Participation of the Public**

There was none.

**61 Receipt of Announcements**

Budget Consultation

Councillor Coul reminded the meeting that the Council's Budget Consultation 2022 to 2023 was now live and she asked Members to encourage residents to participate.

Find Al the Elf

Councillor Coul hoped that all Members had seen the competition, launched in conjunction with Love West Oxfordshire, asking children to help 'Find Al', one of Santa's elves. There were ten pictures of Al displayed in each of the towns and two children would win a prize if they could spot where he had been. It was hoped that the competition would encourage visitors and residents to shop locally and support local businesses. Over 350 competition entries had been received so far.

Christmas Tree Recycling Service

Councillor MacRae advised that any real Christmas trees presented at the kerbside between Monday 10<sup>th</sup> and Monday 31 January 2022 inclusive, would be collected for all households, regardless of whether they had a current garden waste licence.

He stressed that trees would need to be presented on the scheduled garden waste collection day and small trees should be placed in the garden waste bin, where possible. Larger trees could be left next to the bin but must be reduced to 2 to 3 foot sections in order for crews to collect.

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### Covid-19 Update

The Leader thanked Members and officers for adhering to the policy of wearing masks whilst walking around the building and reiterated the importance of staying safe. She advised that discussion were ongoing with the Local Government Association about the reintroduction of on-line meetings moving into the New Year and assured Members she would keep them up to date. Councillor Mead also congratulated everyone involved in helping to run the pop up vaccination centre in Witney, which had delivered over four thousand injections. She also advised that the smaller venues were working well and there was a possibility of these returning in the District. Again, the Leader reiterated that she would update Members when she knew more.

Finally, Councillor Mead took the opportunity to wish that everyone had the best Christmas they could have and hoped that the New Year would bring better times.

## **62 Finance Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter Two**

Members received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, which provided details of the Council's financial performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter Two.

The report outlined significant variances in the finances and a full list of these, by cost centre, were included in Annex A. Those variances felt to be of note were explored in the report with further explanation and detail provided in paragraphs 1.6 to 1.12. It was noted that the results for quarter two were in line with those reported in quarter one, with no significant budget pressures reported.

In addition, Covid specific grants which had created surpluses in quarter one were being spent consistently and were on track to be exhausted by year end. The underspend in quarter two was a little less than twice the reported underspend in Q1 reinforcing the consistency between the two sets of results. One of the issues exacerbated by Covid was the Council's level of aged debt but the Council had successfully engaged a credit controller on a fixed term contract and this was being addressed. The report summarised that overall Q2 remained encouragingly on track.

There were no alternative options available because the report was for noting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul introduced the report and reiterated that the Council's finances were in an encouraging position. She proposed the report as written. This was seconded by Councillor Mead.

Councillor Graham raised a number of queries relating to the fall in revenue for car park enforcement on page 21 of the report. The Chief Finance Officer advised that this was due to a fall in the number of people using the car parks due to lockdown, which in turn, impacted on the level of enforcement measures being taken. Councillor Graham asked what the expected shortfall may be for the next quarter and was reminded that income from car parking penalty charge notices was not a revenue generating area of the budget. It was noted that the fall could also be due to car park users adhering to the conditions of parking.

Having considered the report, Cabinet

**Resolved** that the report is noted.

**63 Approval of Extension to Agreement for Support Services with Publica**

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which asked them to consider an extension of the Publica service agreement for Support Services.

The Publica Support Service Agreement ("the Agreement") expires on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. Shareholder Councils are required to give 12 months' notice of their intention to grant an extension and consequently a decision is required now. Publica was set up in early 2017 and its contracts to supply services to the Councils commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017.

As part of the arrangements the Councils entered into agreements with Publica to deliver the joint services from Autumn 2017 and it was agreed by the Councils that the duration for the Support Service Provision would be five years, plus opportunity to extend for two further periods each of four years. This resulted in the next expiry being 31 October 2022.

There were a number of alternative options available to members detailed in full at section 8 of the report and these included not extending the agreement, outsourcing the service or bringing the service back in house.

This report was considered by the Council's Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 1 December 2021. The Committee resolved to support the extension of the agreement for another four years, and commented that before the next renewal decision, a review of options should take place to inform that future decision.

The Leader introduced the report and reminded Members that this report had been discussed thoroughly at the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Meeting and the Member briefing provided. Councillor Mead proposed that the report be approved as written and this was seconded by Councillor Coul.

Councillor Graham queried the length of the extension to 2026. The Chief Executive explained that the report was before Members now because the current agreement was due for renewal in October 2022. He advised that the timeframes had been agreed at the start of the contract and were felt to be reasonable to deliver long term continuity. In addition, they reflected the complexity of the areas covered and the amount of work required, should the Council decide to take a different approach to delivering these services.

In response to a further query from Councillor Graham, officers confirmed that the Flood consent and enforcement area of work related to the Council's Shared Principal Engineer, Laurence King's role.

Having considered the report and having heard from the officers present, Cabinet

**Resolved** that the Support Services Agreement with Publica Group (Support) Limited be extended for a further four year term until 31 October 2026.

**64 Infrastructure Funding Statement**

Members received a report from the Planning Policy Manager which asked them to consider and approve the West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for 2020/21.

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Following changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations in 2019, local authorities were required to report on the receipt and use of developer contributions through the publication of an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). The IFS must be published by 31 December each year and cover the previous financial year (1 April - 31 March). Its main purpose was to set out future infrastructure requirements and expected costs, contributions received during the previous financial year, anticipated funding from developer contributions (e.g. Section 106 and CIL) and the Council's future spending priorities.

The IFS must be updated annually and was intended to feed back into Local Plan reviews and effectively replaced previous local authority CIL regulation 123 lists.

The report provided an overview of the different sections of the IFS along with the headline figures relating to S106 contributions, what they would be used for and those amounts to be transferred to Oxfordshire County Council and Parish and Town Councils.

There was no alternative option listed because the publication of the IFS was a legislative requirement and its content was dictated by the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019.

The Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Councillor Haine introduced the report and explained the reasons for reporting due to changes in regulations. He congratulated the officers for a very thorough and well written report, which reflected exactly what Members had asked for. Councillor Haine proposed the recommendation as laid out.

This was seconded by Councillor Davies who echoed the comments made and passed her compliments to the officers involved.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Fenton, it was confirmed that the report related to S106 contributions that had been spent by the District Council.

Councillor Cooper addressed the meeting and highlighted the key local priority relating to Marlborough School, detailed on page 55 of the document pack. He suggested that officers may wish to check this priority as historically the church had blocked improvements to the school. It was felt this was because they were one of the few Church of England schools in the area and they did not want their facilities to be used on a Sunday.

Councillor Haine noted the comment and advised that the priority had been created following information received through the consultation process. He agreed to look into the matter and respond to Councillor Cooper.

Councillor Graham raised a number of issues relating to Section 106 funds secured at The Driving Centre, Enstone Airfield, the reference to 'Education – Primary' on page 59, and asked for an update on how officers were planning to proceed with the CIL Charging Schedule.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the extensive Section 106 database would be able to confirm if the funds relating to Enstone Airfield had been secured and collected. She agreed to check and respond to Councillor Graham.

Councillor Haine agreed to find out about the 'Education – Primary' reference and respond in due course. With regard to the update on the CIL Charging Schedule, Councillor Haine



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advised that there had been several major projects being dealt with by the Planning team which had taken time. However, he had requested that officers focus on CIL, whilst awaiting further information from the Government. He estimated that this work could take in the region of six months and Members would be updated as and when there was more to report.

Councillor Fenton advised that having looked up the planning reference next to 'Education – Primary', this related to the Batt School in Witney.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the Cabinet

**Resolved** that the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), attached at Annex A to the report, be approved and published on the Council's website by 31 December 2021 in accordance with legislative requirements.

## **65 Annual Monitoring Report**

Members received a report from the Planning Policy Manager which asked them to consider the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for 2020-2021, attached at Annex A to the report.

Publication of a Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report was a requirement under current legislation and provided an update on the progress of the local plan and any other related documents against agreed timetables; implementation of Local Plan policies; Neighbourhood Planning; Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where this had been introduced; and how the Council had fulfilled its obligations under the Duty to Co-Operate.

The report explained that the AMR was structured in line with the six main themes of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan (2020 – 2024) and provided a brief overview for each theme. The themes included Climate Action, Healthy Town and Villages, a Vibrant District Economy, Strong Local Communities, Meet the Housing Needs of our Changing Population and Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance.

There were no alternative options listed because preparation of an Annual Monitoring Report was a legal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor Haine introduced the report and highlighted the legislative requirements for producing the document. He proposed the recommendations as laid out and this was seconded by Councillor Harvey. In seconding, Councillor Harvey thanked the officers for a lucid and well written report.

Councillor Enright addressed the meeting and highlighted the reference to air quality under the Climate Action theme. Whilst he noted that the report referred to a decrease in carbon emissions he felt that this was mainly due to the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns. Councillor Enright also drew Members attention to the ongoing work with the County Council to establish a new website addressing this important issue.

Councillor Graham raised a concern about the discrepancy in information relating to 'Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population'. He felt that the number and type of properties being delivered was disproportionate to the need of residents. Councillor Haine noted his concerns and agreed to look into the issue.

Councillor Davies reminded Members that developers did not always want to build one or two bedroom properties and a balance needed to be met. However, this issue was continually being addressed, as evidenced by her recent meeting that week with developers. She assured Councillor Graham that she was using her position as Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing to address these issues.

Councillor Postan suggested that a central list or forum could be established to identify the changes required to the Local Plan. In response, the Leader explained that this work was already underway with a variety of bodies looking at this as part of the imminent review.

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

**Resolved** that the content of the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report be noted.

## **66 Performance Monitoring Report Q2 - 2021/22**

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which provided details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter Two (Q2).

The Council monitored service performance each quarter and a report on progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan was produced at the end of Q2 and Q4. A review of performance indicators was underway, and Portfolio Holders were having discussions with relevant managers about priority areas and finding metrics that would be most representative and provide assurance as to how the Council is performing.

The report drew attention to a number of issues that had contributed to a reduced level of operational service in some areas and the actions being taken to improve performance.

There were no alternative options because the report was for noting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul introduced the report and reminded Members that work was ongoing to formulate a new reporting process and it was hoped that the next quarter's report would reflect this. Councillor Coul highlighted some of the key indicators that had come out of this report including abandoned phone call rates, the Council Tax support system and issues relating to planning applications and resourcing.

She advised that investigations were underway to understand when individuals were abandoning calls to the Councils as it was thought this could coincide with the automated message advising people to access the website. It was acknowledged that the introduction of the new Council Tax support IT system had caused problems and delays but these had been addressed. With regard to the difficulties being experienced in the Planning department, an improvement plan was now in place but it was noted that this would take time.

Councillor Coul then took the opportunity to highlight the challenges that the Council's staff and Members had experienced over the past two years. She praised the work and dedication of officers and acknowledged the huge support of Members during this time. Councillor Coul concluded by noting that whilst the report may appear quite 'black and white' it did not reflect the huge amount of work undertaken by officers to continue to deliver services, for which she thanked them. She therefore, proposed that the report be noted.

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This was seconded by Councillor MacRae who echoed Councillor Coul's gratitude to officers. He requested that the staff at Ubico also be included in this as they should be recognised for their continued work and support.

Councillor Graham agreed with the comments and added his whole hearted support to officers for their continued dedication.

Having considered the report, Cabinet

**Resolved** that the 2021/22 Q2 service performance be noted.

## **67 Exclusion of Public and Press**

**Resolved** that, in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business.

## **68 Consideration to write off debt**

Members received a confidential report from the Group Manager for Resident Services which sought approval for the writing off of Council Tax debts in excess of £5,000.

The report provided details about the individual circumstances of the resident, along with the background and support that had been provided over a number of years. The report explained that at present the Council's Financial Rules state that any amounts in excess of £5,000 requested for write off must be approved by Cabinet.

Following discussions with Cabinet Members and officers it was felt that the threshold for approving write offs was low and due to the sensitive nature of these issues, it would be more appropriate for the Section 151 Officer to have delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance. Therefore, recommendation b) proposed that the Financial Rules and the Constitution be updated to reflect this.

Alternative options were that the Cabinet could choose to write off a proportion or none of the debt.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul introduced the report and proposed the recommendations as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor Mead.

In response to a query from Councillor Cooper relating to Parish Precepts, the Council's Chief Accountant outlined the processes involved in dealing with 'bad debt' and the implications on the District and Parish Councils.

Councillor Graham queried the rationale for amending the figure in the Scheme of Delegation and officers confirmed that this was a legacy amount, brought in a number of years ago. Cabinet members had also been keen to respect the dignity of any person facing such financial difficulty and reiterated the support and advice that was provided by officers.

Having considered the report, Cabinet

**Resolved** that

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- a) the write off as detailed within the report, is approved; and
- b) the Scheme of Delegation and Council's Financial Rules be amended to state that:
  - i. any amount in excess of £5,000 that is requested for write off must be approved by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance; and
  - ii. any amount in excess of £10,000 that is requested for write off must be approved by Cabinet.

The Meeting closed at 2.38 pm

CHAIRMAN