

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 23 February 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Andrew Prosser, Mike Cahill, Merilyn Davies, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Andrew Beaney, Jill Bull, Andrew Coles, Owen Collins, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Richard Langridge, Liz Leffman, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Geoff Saul, Harry St John, Ben Woodruff, Mathew Parkinson, Colin Dingwall, Andy Goodwin, Mark Johnson, Lysette Nicholls, Rupert Dent, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

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

CL.24 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CL.25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock, Joy Aitman, Luci Ashbourne, Rosa Bolger, Laetisia Carter, Nathalie Chapple, Duncan Enright, Steve Good, Nick Leverton, and Carl Rylett.

CL.26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

CL.27 Receipt of Announcements

Evelyn Mary Coles

The Chairman advised the meeting of the sad passing of former District and Town Councillor Evelyn Mary Coles who passed away at the age of 81 at the end of January 2022.

Eve was first elected as a District Councillor representing the Chipping Norton Ward in 1994 and served up until 2015. She was also a Chipping Norton Town Councillor for 39 years. Eve was the sole Labour Councillor for many years at the Council until the arrival of Councillors Duncan Enright, Andrew Coles and the late Rob Evans, a fellow Chipping Norton Councillor and friend, in 2012.

During her time at the Council she was a member of a number of Committees, beginning on the Public Health and Recreation Committees before moving on to the Environment, Leisure and Tourism and Waste Management Committees. Eve was also a valued member of a number of working groups including the Refuse Collection / Recycling Best Value Service Review Group.

Aside her District and Town responsibilities, Mrs Coles was very active in supporting the Greenham Women in the peace movement, protested against the bombing of Libya and supported the South Wales miners during the Miners Strike of 1984-1985.

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Councillors Saul, Cahill and Harvey shared memories with the Committee and the Chair concluded with a moments silence.

Customer Services Move

The Leader Michele Mead announce that the Customer Service Team were now operating from the refurbished site at Welsh Way and were open to the public.

Welcome Back Fund

Councillor Coul announced that £200,000.00 had been allocated from the Welcome Back fund with various projects benefitting including Loyal Free as well as the ice skating facility in Witney and Carterton. The ice skating sessions had been fully booked, which was testament to the appreciation felt by residents and families during half term.

CL.28 Participation of the Public

Ashley Smith from the Windrush Wasp Group attended and addressed the Committee in relation to Agenda Item 8, the Thames Water Motion.

Following the conclusion of Mr Smith's address, the Chairman of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Al-Yousuf, thanked him and Professor Hammond for attending and welcomed the offer of collaborative working.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor MacRae, recognised the work of Mr Smith and Professor Hammond, along with the support from Philip Dunn MP. He expressed his gratitude for their expertise in analysing the data and thanked them for their input and attendance.

CL.29 Recommendations from the Executive

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

Councillor Mead introduced the report and requested that the recommendations relating to the budget for 2022/23 be considered after agenda item number 16 relating to the reports of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees. Therefore, Members noted that they were looking at the decision relating to the External Auditor contract.

The Leader therefore proposed that the two recommendations from the Audit & General Purposes Committee be approved as laid out and this was duly seconded by Councillor Coul.

Resolved that the following recommendations, as set out in Annex I to the report be agreed:

- a) the options for procuring the Council's external audit service for the period from 2023/24 are noted; and
- b) procurement through the National Procurement Framework using Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, is approved.

CL.30 Budget 2022/2023

The Council considered the recommendations made by Cabinet at its meeting held on 16 February 2022 relating to 2022/23 Budget.

The Leader, Councillor Mead introduced the report and outlined her proposals in the traditional budget speech. A copy of the speech is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

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Councillor Mead acknowledged the events, turmoil and impact of the last year. She advised on the number of support grants provided along with the processing of £49 million to a broad spectrum of businesses in West Oxfordshire. Councillor Mead went on to confirm sufficient funding to cover the Council's revenue expenditure and was pleased to be able to present a balanced budget despite the alterations to funding made by government just before Christmas.

The Council Adopted Recovery Investment Strategy and the difficulties encountered in finding suitable investments was referred to with reassurances that opportunities were always being investigated. Councillor Mead reminded the meeting that free parking was still committed to along with grants to the voluntary sector and community facilities grants. New ways of working were actively being explored with Ubico to find ways of reducing the cost of delivering the waste service and the Council Tax was still the second lowest shire district in England.

Councillor Mead concluded by thanking the Cabinet Member for Finance, the scrutiny committees and the Chief Finance officer and her team for their huge efforts in bringing the budget together. She therefore proposed the recommendations as laid out. These were seconded by Councillor Coul who reserved her right to speak until after the debate.

Councillor Graham addressed the meeting and reiterated the compliments to all staff for keeping services running. He thanked officers for responding to his queries and felt that the budget contained some good proposals. He referred to the difficulties encountered in keeping the planning system on the road but was concerned at the number of staff that had left the authority for more competitive salaries. Councillor Graham did not feel that the Council had looked after its staff as well as it could have done and criticised the lack of planning that had gone into replacing the Monitoring Officer role. He concluded by referring to the £5 uplift to the Council Tax which he did not feel would help residents and advised that the Liberal Democrats were not satisfied there was a long term strategy in place. For that reason, he advised that the Liberal Democrat members would be abstaining from the vote.

Councillor Saul spoke and repeated the thanks to the finance team for their patience and understanding when explaining processes to Members. He reminded the meeting of the financial 'cliff edge' that had been lurking for some time and despite this the Council had retained its core services. Councillor Saul stated that this was a cautious budget but that the funding streams were problematic and would be difficult for any administration to deal with. However, he felt that central government needed to provide greater autonomy, and the resultant council tax rise was inevitable. He stated that the Labour Party believed this to be a regressive tax and for that reason would be abstaining from the vote.

Councillor Prosser echoed his thanks to the finance department and advised that he did not feel that Planning was keeping pace with the growing population. He felt that the Capital Programme should be scrutinised properly and he would not be able to vote until that happened.

A number of Members added their gratitude to the staff who had carried out a good job under difficult circumstances. Councillor Coles noted the helpful briefing that the Labour Group had received from the finance officers and requested more investment to deal with Air Quality issues and sewerage pollution.

Councillor Al-Yousuf reminded the meeting that despite the challenges faced the Council had kept the cost of services down and the operating expenditure was down on last year. He provided a breakdown of the Council Tax levels residents in his Ward were paying and highlighted the levels being paid to Thames Valley Police and the County Council. Councillor Al-Yousuf felt this was a prudent budget and should be approved.

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The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor Haine expressed disappointment in the comments being made about the Planning Service because there was a gross shortage of students in this field of work. He recognised that this was a nationwide issues and work had been completed to ensure that competitive salaries were being offered.

Councillor Cooper expressed his views on Council Tax which he reminded the meeting was unfair because it was not related to the ability to pay but related to the property lived in. He reiterated his frustrations at being unable to amend the funding for solar energy and solar panels and did not feel the Council was progressing in line with partner Councils. He concluded by referring to the funding for parish and town councils in relation to car parking.

Councillor Davies expressed her disappointment in the level of dissent in the chamber and had hoped the work completed over the past two years could be voted on together. She recognised that the focus should be on residents and stated that it was shame the Council was not united.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Coul echoed the comments made by Councillor Davies, and reminded the meeting that Cotswold District Council had no reserves left due to a lack of prudence. Having heard the comments made by the opposition groups, she was disappointed that no alternatives had been put forward. However, she noted that the lack of alternatives was due to the fact that there were none available.

Councillor Coul reminded the meeting that there were many Councils across the country who would be envious of the financial position West Oxfordshire found itself in. She assured the meeting that all savings, efficiencies and grants were continuously being investigated in full and checks and balances repeatedly carried out. She concluded by recommending the budget which was prudent and allowed the Council to continue to deliver for its residents.

As required by statute, voting on the proposition was recorded, and the voting was as follows:

For the proposition: Councillors Al-Yousuf, Beaney, Bull, Cotterill, Coul, Crossland, Davies, Dent, Dingwall, Doughty, Eaglestone, Fenton, Haine, Harvey, Hill, Johnson, Langridge, MacRae, McBride, Mead, Nicholls, Postan, St John, Temple, Wilson and Woodruff (26).

Abstentions: Councillors Cahill, Coles, Collins, Cooper, Goodwin, Graham, Jackson, Leffman, Levy, Parkinson, Poskitt, Prosser and Saul (13).

There being 26 votes in favour, none against and 13 abstentions, the proposition was **carried**.

Resolved that the following be approved:

- (i) The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy in Annex A
- (ii) General Fund revenue budgets as summarised in Annex B
- (iii) The Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2030/31 set out in Annex E
- (iv) Fees and Charges for 2022/23 as set out in Annex D
- (v) The Council's Pay Policy Statement as set out in Annex F
- (vi) The Council's Capital Strategy 2022/23 as set out in Annex G
- (vii) The Council's Investment Strategy 2022/23 as set out in Annex H
- (viii) The Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 as set out in Annex I

CL.31 Council Tax 2022/2023

Members received a report from the Chief Finance Officer which would enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2022/23, as set out at Annex A to the report.

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The Leader introduced the report and proposed the recommendations as written. These were seconded by Councillor Coul.

As per legislation, a recorded vote was taken and the result was as follows:

For the proposition: Councillors Al Yousuf, Beaney, Bull, Cahill, Coles, Collins, Cotterill, Coul, Crossland, Davies, Dent, Dingwall, Doughty, Eaglestone, Fenton, Haine, Harvey, Hill, Jackson, Johnson, Langridge, MacRae, McBride, Mead, Nicholls, Postan, Prosser, Saul, St John, Temple, Wilson and Woodruff (32).

Abstentions: Councillors Cooper, Goodwin, Graham, Leffman, Levy, Parkinson, Poskitt (7).

There being 32 votes in favour, none against and 7 abstentions, the proposition was **carried**.

Resolved that the following be approved:

1) *for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2022/23;*

2) *for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2022/23;*

it be noted that at its meeting held on 19 January 2022 the Cabinet acknowledged the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2022/23:

a) *for the whole Council area as 46,172.41 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and*

b) *for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as in the attached Schedule 1.*

3) *the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2022/23 (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) is £114.38;*

4) *the following amounts be calculated for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:*

a) *£50,442,736 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.*

b) *£40,736,882 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.*

c) *£9,705,854 being the amount by which the aggregate at 4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 4(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).*

d) *£210.21 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (2(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses);*

e) *£4,424,653 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per the attached Schedule 2;*

f) *£114.38 being the amount at 4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 4(e) above by Item T(2(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council*

Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates;

- g) the amounts shown in Schedule 2 being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 4(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Schedule 2 divided in each case by the amount at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;*
- h) the amounts shown in Schedule 3 being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 4(f) and 4(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;*
- 5) it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:*

<i>Valuation band</i>	<i>Oxfordshire County Council £</i>	<i>Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley £</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>£1,101.07</i>	<i>£160.85</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>£1,284.59</i>	<i>£187.66</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>£1,468.10</i>	<i>£214.47</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>£1,651.61</i>	<i>£241.28</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>£2,018.63</i>	<i>£294.90</i>
<i>F</i>	<i>£2,385.66</i>	<i>£348.52</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>£2,752.68</i>	<i>£402.13</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>£3,303.22</i>	<i>£482.56</i>

- 6) the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule 4 as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2022/23 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings;*
- 7) the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992; and*

8) the following Council/Public Officers: Chief Finance Officer, Group Manager – Resident Services, Legal Services Manager, Legal Executive, Business Manager – Operational Support, Revenues Manager, Revenues Lead and Court Officer be authorised to:

- a) collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, and*
- b) prosecute or defend on the Council's behalf or to appear on its behalf in proceedings before a magistrate's court in respect of unpaid National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.*

CL.32 Motion - Thames Water

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Graham and seconded by Councillor MacRae:

"This Council believes that historical underinvestment in the sewerage infrastructure in West Oxfordshire and further up the catchments of the rivers Windrush, Evenlode and other Thames tributaries in West Oxfordshire has led to a marked deterioration in water quality in these rivers and in the Thames due to excessive spills of untreated or partially treated sewage in both storm and normal conditions.

The Council would like to receive the following details :-

- Capital improvements by Sewage Treatment Works (STW) over the last ten years (description and cost) ;
- Operating capacity analysed by STW over each of the last ten years;
- Capital Plans by STW over the next five years (description and estimated cost);
- Number of spills by STW over each of the last ten years together with reason for spill;
- Details, including logs, of failures at pumping stations, and to include downtimes and the use of tankers;
- The level of any fines levied by the regulator or courts for spills over each of the last ten years."

Councillor Graham introduced the motion by thanking members of WASP and elected members from all political persuasions as this was an all party motion. He hoped that the motion demonstrated the seriousness of the Council in keeping this issue in their sights and that the answers to the questions above would help get to the truth of the matter. Councillor Graham concluded by reiterating that Climate Change was happening now and urgent action was needed from the Government to step up and change the laws.

In seconding the motion, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor MacRae added his thanks to WASP for their work and reiterated that this issue affected all rivers in the District.

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He reminded Members that the District Council had no powers over the water authorities but did have the ability to question and use its influence to bring about change.

Councillor Leffman added her support to the motion and described her own experiences of failed pumping stations emitting effluence into the streets. She agreed that the responsibility lay with government as the companies were not regulated effectively but were guided by shareholders. Councillor Leffman felt it was important to make it apparent to government that the Council would not tolerate the deterioration of services.

Councillor Coles agreed with the comments made and advised that having walked alongside the Windrush river recently, the levels of pollution were obvious due to the noticeable lack of wildfowl and insects.

Councillor St John raised the issue of wet wipes causing blockages in the sewage system, along with new developments placing more pressure on the system. He also felt that OffWat had an important part to play in monitoring these companies.

Councillor Levy added his experiences of visiting the Cassington Sewage Treatment Works and noted that there had been instances over the past six months when treatment works weren't working properly, resulting in tankers having to empty the effluence and remove it to Cassington.

Councillor Cotterill requested that pumping stations be included in the motion and described an instance whereby a water authority collected all of the wet wipes blocking their system and returned them to the manufacturer, with a bill for the works. Councillor MacRae agreed that this should be added to the motion.

Councillor Al-Yousuf also described his visit to the Cassington Treatment Works in October 2020 at the request of WASP. He felt that some of the problems had been in existence for some time, involving previous governments and referred to the chemicals and pharmaceuticals also entering the system.

Councillor Prosser supported the motion, praised the work of the Water Days, initiated by Councillor Harvey and recognised that more influence was needed via the planning system as infrastructure had not kept pace with development.

Councillor Postan noted the infrastructure comments made and felt that private investment in public initiatives should be explored.

Councillor Goodwin provided an example of a resident complaint he had assisted with in which he had found Thames Water to not be genuine or concerned. He reiterated that more control and better governance was required to focus on visibility and better information sharing.

Councillor Graham thanked his colleagues for their contributions and hoped that progress would be achieved with the growing community swell of opinion. Whilst he recognised there were big challenges ahead, he felt the motion was a small but meaningful step.

The motion was then put to the vote and was passed unanimously.

Approved

CL.33 Motion - Healthy Place Shaping

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Merilyn Davies and seconded by Councillor Lysette Nicholls:

This motion resolves that:

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“Each Member commits to being a champion for Healthy Place Shaping utilising the core principles of Healthy Place Shaping (& the tools available to them) to influence and underpin all aspects of their work. To recognise that within their role as Members, their commitment is crucial to the organisation wide adoption of Healthy Place Shaping. Actively encouraging/challenging one another, officers, Parish, and Town Councils to use Healthy Place Shaping approaches, to influence future decisions for council services, ensuring that they have the best possible outcomes for the health and wellbeing of all residents of West Oxfordshire.”

Councillor Davies introduced the motion and in recognising the work of the Healthy Place Shaping officer, hoped that Councillors would support embedding the theme in all Council work.

Councillor Levy thanked Councillors Davies and Nicholls for the motion and recognised there had been a lot of Healthy Place Shaping work undertaken in Eynsham with regards to the new settlement. He thanked officers and Councillors and hoped that the theme would be included in the Master Plan for Eynsham as he felt some developers but not all were committed to this.

Councillor Graham applauded the proposer for circulating the short, five minute video which had encapsulated the message well. He felt the motion was the first step in sending the message to developers.

Councillor Leffman referred to how this theme needed to be at the heart of decisions and should underpin every policy and action. She proposed that the Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee look into this further to see how it could be brought into every role. However, following further discussions with Councillors Davies and Coul it was agreed that it was important to embed the process in Council now. The amendment was therefore withdrawn.

The motion was therefore put to the vote and unanimously

Approved

The Chairman announced a short break at 3.35pm and the meeting resumed at 3.45pm.

CL.34 Motion - Climate Action Working Group

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Andy Goodwin and seconded by Councillor Cooper

Motion to continue the running of WODC Climate Action Working Group meetings “as is” with no pause and no disruption. To overturn the announcement made at the Climate Action Working Group meeting on Feb 3rd that was “with immediate effect, this is the last Climate Action Working Group meeting”.

In response, the Chairman of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee proposed an alternative motion which read:

“This Council notes the important work of the Climate Action Working Group in progressing our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and embedding this in every aspect of Council workings. The Group’s work has now reached a point where a wider involvement from Councillors would be appropriate, as well as allowing greater public engagement with our climate objectives; to that end, it is proposed that the work of the Climate Action Working Group be incorporated into the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and that this committee then be renamed, the Climate and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In this way, the Group’s work can be continued and strengthened along with increasing transparency and accountability.”

Councillor Goodwin introduced the original motion and reiterated his reasons for wanting the working group to remain in its current form. He felt the officers and Chair had done a fantastic job and were making good progress. However, he had concerns that combining the

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working group with the existing scrutiny committee would have an impact on the length of the meeting and could dilute the work of the group.

The Chairman of Environment Overview & Scrutiny, Councillor Al-Yousuf, supported the amended motion from Councillor Harvey and felt the working group had served its purpose. He did not feel there would be any conflict in combining the two workstreams and would result in a more inclusive, open and accessible meeting, allowing public participation.

Viewpoints across the Chamber varied with some Members feeling that there could be a reduction in focus on climate change and the decision could be taken once the scrutiny committee review had been undertaken. However, it was noted that should the work of the amended scrutiny committee become too immense, working groups could be set up to look at specific issues.

Councillor Langridge felt that the most important issue was that the work continued and it could result in having more teeth at scrutiny level.

The Vice-Chair of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Coles seconded the amended motion and felt it would be sensible to embed the Climate Action work into the work of the committee. He agreed that this would result in a more inclusive meeting, allowing the public to attend, which they were unable to do with the working group at present.

Councillor MacRae agreed with these comments and noted there would be greater transparency of minutes and agendas, enabling public participation. He reminded the meeting that the working group had been established following a motion at Council and he applauded the work of the Climate Change Manager in that time.

To sum up, Councillor Al-Yousuf noted the concerns raised and felt that the logistics of the meetings could be managed by arranging additional dates or dedicating agendas to specific themes.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, the amendment was voted on and was carried.

Councillor Goodwin did not feel that the working group had served its purpose and reiterated his concerns regarding a separation of focus. Councillor Cooper commented that he felt scrutiny committees should be developing policy and telling Cabinet to carry it out.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and was carried. It was therefore

Resolved that this Council notes the important work of the Climate Action Working Group in progressing our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and embedding this in every aspect of Council workings. The Group's work has now reached a point where a wider involvement from Councillors would be appropriate, as well as allowing greater public engagement with our climate objectives; to that end, it is proposed that the work of the Climate Action Working Group be incorporated into the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and that this committee then be renamed, the Climate and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In this way, the Group's work can be continued and strengthened along with increasing transparency and accountability.

CL.35 Political Composition of the Council and formation of Political Groups

Members received a report which advised them of the notifications received under Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 giving the composition of political groups and asked them to note the impact on the proportionality of allocated seats to Committees.

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The Leader congratulated Councillor Langridge on the newly formed Independent Group and welcomed him as a new Group Leader. With regards to the allocation of seats, it was proposed that Group Leaders meet to look at the memberships.

Councillor Mead highlighted that due to the proximity of the May elections, a revised proportionality calculation would be carried out following the election.

It was therefore

Resolved that the report be noted.

CL.36 Designation of Monitoring Officer

Members received a report which asked them to approve the designation of the Council's Monitoring Officer.

The report noted that the existing arrangements for the interim designation of Monitoring Officer would come to an end on 28 February 2022 when the current Monitoring Officer, Angela Claridge, took up her full time substantive role as Monitoring Officer at Cotswold District Council.

The report proposed that Susan Sale be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer on an interim 12 month basis with effect from 1st March 2022. Susan Sale was currently employed on a full time permanent basis as the Head of Law and Governance at Oxford City Council and was designated as the Monitoring Officer for that authority. It was anticipated that the Monitoring Officer would remain an employee of Oxford City Council whilst being seconded to West Oxfordshire District Council for the interim period, and would dedicate two days a week to the role.

In addition, the report highlighted that it was the intention of the Monitoring Officer to designate Susan Gargett and Amy Bridgewater-Carnall as Deputy Monitoring Officers on an interim 12 month basis with effect from 1st March 2022.

The Leader introduced the report and provided some background information explaining the staff changes over the past year. She proposed the recommendations as laid out and these were seconded by Councillor Davies.

Concerns were raised about the financial implications for the Council and whether the role could be carried out in two days a week.

Members noted the difficulties experienced in recruiting to the role and agreed that it was an area of work of the utmost importance.

Councillor St John queried the lack of information relating to the financial implications in the budget considered by scrutiny in February and suggested that this was a role that could be shared across Publica. In response, the Chief Executive advised that a shared role had been discussed with Publica partners, but had not been considered suitable.

In response to the reference to the budget, Councillor Coul advised that some of these costs were in the budget as staffing expenses but reminded them that at that stage, the budget was still fluid.

Councillor Cooper felt that Members had been presented with this at the last minutes and expressed the view that the Audit and General Purposes Committee should have looked at this as the 'personnel committee'.

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The Chief Executive reiterated that a number of other Oxfordshire Councils had been approached, advised that the appointment was of a very experienced and capable Monitoring Officer but this was not a role that was felt could be shared three ways.

It was noted that the finances referred to in the report also covered the staffing costs of the interim officers back office team.

Having considered the report, it was

Resolved that

- a) Susan Sale be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer on an interim 12 month basis with effect from 1st March 2022; and
- b) the intention of the Monitoring Officer to designate Susan Gargett and Amy Bridgewater-Carnall as Deputy Monitoring Officers on an interim 12 month basis with effect from 1st March 2022, is noted.

CL.37 Change of name for South Leigh Parish Council

Members received a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer which asked them to consider a change of name request from South Leigh Parish Council to South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council.

The report advised that Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1972 allowed principle councils, at the request of a parish within the area, to change the name of the parish council.

At their meeting on 15 November 2021, the Parish Council of South Leigh resolved to make an application, pursuant to section 75 of the local Government Act 1972, to change their name to "the Parish Council of South Leigh and High Cogges". It was felt that the change would mean greater inclusivity and ensure that organisations recognised that the Parish Council represented High Cogges as well as South Leigh.

The proposed changes was communicated to the MP, the relevant District and County Councillors and to the community of South Leigh and High Cogges using various methods. Following the deadline of 31 December 2021, it was noted that no objections had been received.

The Leader introduced the report and highlighted that the 'Wards Affected' on the front sheet of the report should read Eynsham. Councillor Mead proposed the recommendation as laid out and this was seconded by Councillor Nicholls.

Having considered the report, Council

Resolved that the name of South Leigh Parish Council be changed to South Leigh & High Cogges Parish Council.

CL.38 Climate Action Bi-Annual Report

Members received the bi-annual report from the Climate Change Manager which outlined the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: July 2021-January 2022.

Attached to the report were the Results of the Land Management Plan community engagement exercise carried out, Winter 2021, attached at Annex 1, a Hedgehog Highway poster at Annex 2 and the Carbon Account for WODC 2020/21 at Annex 3.

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The report described the progress and activities for climate action, which were reported under two headings: Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire, 2021-2025 (published Feb, 2021); and Carbon Action Plan (published Oct, 2020).

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Councillor Harvey, introduced the report and assured the meeting that as Portfolio Holder he was ensuring the Council did not take their foot off the pedal. He expressed his gratitude to all Members of the Climate Action Working Group who had produced some sterling work to date and confirmed that all Climate Action work would continue to be reported through the newly entitled Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Harvey felt that a lot of work had been achieved over the past six months, work that he was proud of and was pleased to be presenting to Members.

He advised that over 350 residents now received the newsletter and he highlighted the future work being planned for the decarbonisation of the Carterton Leisure Centre. Councillor Harvey therefore proposed the report as laid out.

Having considered the report, Council

Resolved that the contents of the biannual report on climate action for West Oxfordshire be noted for information.

CL.39 Emergency / Urgency Delegations and Decisions

A report outlining the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020 was received.

The report advised that the Chief Executive had used his delegated powers to approve the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) policy in December 2021 and this was reported to Council on 26 January 2022 (see minute number CL.19). Since that time, it had become apparent that the policy needed amending to ensure the date a business must be trading from is included. This amendment had now been included within paragraph 202 of the policy.

The Leader outlined the report and advised that this was a minor amendment to the policy and asked Members to note the report.

Council, therefore

Resolved that the report is noted.

CL.40 Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

Due to the omission of a number of sets of minutes, the Chairman advised that this item would be carried forward to the next meeting.

CL.41 Sealing of Documents

Resolved that the document be noted.

The Meeting closed at 4.40 pm

CHAIR