

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive**

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on

**Wednesday, 19 April 2023**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Mathew Parkinson, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett and Geoff Saul.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Executive Finance Director - Publica), Beth Boughton (Managing Director, Ubico), Chris Urwin (Finance Director, Ubico), Mandy Fathers, (Business Manager, Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Services), Philip Measures (Service Leader, Environmental Health), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Officer), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer), Barry Clack (Communications Officer), and Richard Jones (ICT Infrastructure Engineer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Councillor Michele Mead and Councillor Norman MacRae MBE.

#### **28 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received by Members of the Executive.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members of the Executive.

#### **30 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Councillor Norman MacRae MBE rose on a point of order (15.14, Questions Previously Asked) to state that he had not received a response in order to a point made at the previous meeting regarding waste collections vehicles and inclement weather. Councillor Arciszewska further committed to instructing the appropriate officer to write to Councillor MacRae regarding the matter.

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 8 March 2023, were unanimously approved by the Executive, and signed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, as a true and accurate record.

#### **31 Receipt of Announcements**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, reminded those in attendance that the meeting was the last meeting of the Executive in the municipal year. Councillor Graham gave thanks to Executive Members and all Council Officers for all their hard work over the course of the municipal year, and that the Executive appreciated all efforts to support them during their time in office.

The Leader also paid tribute to Councillor Norman MacRae MBE, who was scheduled to stand down at the next round of local elections. Councillor Graham thanked Councillor MacRae for his stellar 16-years of service to West Oxfordshire District Council, and for his valued contribution during his time in office.

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The Leader also paid tribute to the work of the Council's Democratic Services Team during the Executive's time in office, and for all their continuing hard work in support of both the Executive and the Council. Councillor Graham thanked the team for regularly going above and beyond the call of duty, to ensure that meetings were facilitated in the best fashion, and that the previous 12 months had been a real challenge at times, noting further the efforts the team had gone to, to come out the other side in the highest regard.

## **32 Participation of the Public**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, stated that the Executive had received 4 public questions, submitted to them through Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

The Executive provided the following answers to the following questions:

**Q1** Asked by Mr. Rupert Boulting:

What course of action is the Council going to take, in order to prevent the continual dumping of raw sewage into the River Isis?

**A1** Answered by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment:

Whilst we recognise that at present there are legislation constraints, it does not follow that significant steps through deeper and more expansive partnership actions cannot make a difference. Indeed levers of influence play a part in achieving many of our goals.

We have been actively working with Thames Water over a number of months to not only gain a greater insight into how they run their Sewage Treatment Works, but also to identify areas where capacity isn't meeting current / future levels of demand, and pushing for investment in these as well as improvements in the overall network in both the short and long term.

We have also been lobbying the Government, writing to the Secretary of State pushing for changes in legislation and legal sanctions on water companies that pollute our rivers and water courses along with asking that the Environment Agency is properly resourced so that they can proactively protect our rivers.

**Q2** Asked by Councillor Norman MacRae MBE:

There has been much talk with regard to the state of the maintenance of the play area at the Kilkenny Lane Country Park, and that much of the equipment is unavailable for use. When is the projected date for the play area to be restored to 100% availability?

**A2** Answered by Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities:

We are currently working with the Oxfordshire Playing Field Association (OPFA), following a site meeting with local Councillors. The OPFA met with a contractor/supplier on site in the last few days and we are due to receive a costed proposal for the repair works as agreed.

Once we have obtained the costs and ascertained the timeline we will be able to be more specific, however, at this moment in time, we are projecting that the unavailable equipment will be open and ready for use in early Summer.

We will keep local Councillors abreast of any further developments related to Kilkenny Lane Country Park Play Area as and when we know more details for certain.

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**Q3** Asked by Councillor Norman MacRae MBE:

There appears to be an ever increasing use of the grass verges and land that the Council owns in the housing estates (e.g. Madley Park and Shilton Park) – The result of this being that many of the verges have been turned into very unsightly 'mud baths' when we are spending significant sums on enhancing these verges with the excellent 'wild flowering' initiative. What plans, if any, are in place to ensure that our verges are protected and that the wild flowering scheme can thrive?

**A3** Answered by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment:

The wildflower verges are generally set back from the road due to visibility constraints. We put stakes along some of the verges in Shilton Park last year to stop parking on the wildflower areas. This could be repeated elsewhere where we become aware of issues.

**Q4** Asked by Councillor Norman MacRae MBE:

Our In-Cab technology has many built in systems to support and develop our waste collection service. Visiting any part of the District on 'bin day', it is clear to see that many of the bins continue to 'suffer' from lid failures. Is there a facility within the In-Cab system that would enable crews to report the fault online and thus, potentially, enhance the streamline the program for the benefit of our residents; It may be the case that the facility is installed but is not being used; or it may be that we have not purchased this option (obviously should it be available). What exactly is the answer to these points please?

**A4** Answered by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment:

There is not a facility for recording of lid failures or damaged containers on the In-Cab system. Replacement lids for recycling bins, or replacement food waste caddies can be ordered through the Council website, or reported via Customer Services. As Councillor MacRae knows, the Council is currently undertaking a waste service review, and this will include ensuring residents' needs are at the heart of the review.

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### **Ubico Business Plan 2023/2024**

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, introduced the report, which considered the Ubico Business Plan for 2023-24, and any comments made by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and also the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft Business Plan. The report further recommended that the Leader of the Council (as Shareholder Representative) approved the plan, subject to any comments the Executive wished to make and those made by other Shareholder Councils.

The Executive was joined at the meeting by Beth Boughton, Managing Director of Ubico, and Chris Urwin, Finance Director of Ubico, who had helped present the plan to the Executive for approval. Councillor Arciszewska highlighted the effectiveness of Ubico's Business Plan, and the strengths of it that relate to the West Oxfordshire District ahead of the new municipal year. The plan focussed on continuous development, service improvements and provisions for staff and stakeholders of Ubico.

In debate, the Executive paid tribute to Ubico's workforce who had gone above and beyond their duties during the Covid-19 pandemic, and at times of a shortfall in staffing levels at times of general illness. Appreciation was also given to the work of Council and Ubico officers when dealing with the initial backlog of suspended waste collections, during the first Covid-19 lockdown period, and the rectification work undertaken to catch up. The idea of an updated

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livery of the waste vehicles was also discussed and the enhancement of 'In-Cab' technology for waste bins and containers that become unserviceable during routine collections over time. It was also noted that there were many benefits of being structured as a "Teckal" company owned by a number of partner authorities. This helped to alleviate 'cross-border' issues with other local authorities in Gloucestershire, who are also using Ubico services for waste collection.

Councillor Arciszewska proposed that the Ubico Business Plan be adopted by the Leader of the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Recommend that, subject to any comments made, the Ubico Business Plan 2023-24 be approved by the Leader, as the Council's Shareholder Representative of Ubico Limited, subject to any minor amendments that might arise from the final stages of consultation with the other Shareholder Councils and/or general editing.

#### **34 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041**

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, which summarised the outcome of the 'Your Voice Counts' Council Plan/Local Plan public consultation, which ran from 24 August – 5 October 2022 and proposed to agree a new timetable for taking the Local Plan through to submission and adoption.

In debate, it was noted that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) highlighted that work on the Salt Cross Area Action Plan was unlikely to happen in July 2023. The Executive also paid tribute to the responses and consultation work that had been undertaken as part of the consultation, and face-to-face engagement during the process despite a perceived low take up in comparison to the total number of residents in the District. Bar charts which were contained within the report to the Executive were intended to show the scale of response connected to the consultations that had been carried out.

Councillor Rylett proposed that the Executive note the report, and agree to approve the updated LDS. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Agree to approve the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS).

#### **35 Discretionary Council Tax Support Fund**

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which recommended adoption of the Discretionary Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/2024.

In debate, it was noted that the Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Services had produced an excellent report for consideration by the Executive, and that Members were grateful for her work in bringing the report forward for consideration at the meeting. It was highlighted that any excess funds from the Support Fund, would be returned to central Government. Members were keen to ensure that the allocation received by the Council was spent accordingly and appropriately.

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Councillor Levy proposed that the Executive approve the recommendation in the report, which included a delegation as well as adoption. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve a payment of £55 as detailed in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the Executive report;
2. Delegate the distribution of surplus funds to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.

### **36 Integrated Care Strategy for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB ICS)**

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, introduced the report, which presented the new Integrated Care Strategy for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) and resolved to seek endorsement by the Executive.

In debate, it was highlighted that the report on the strategy did not include any provision for the mental health and well-being of those who are serving, and had served in His Majesty's Armed Forces. Attention was drawn to the provision that service personnel receive whilst they are serving in the military, and that the 'blanket of care' is taken away when leaving HM Armed Forces. This was of particular importance as the Council had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

It was further noted that the strategy also did not take Prostate Cancer into account, and that this is a well-known, often overlooked killer of men within society. Reassurance was given that this was noted generally, as a result of an extensive list of illnesses not being included.

Councillor Aitman proposed endorsement of the new Integrated Care Strategy for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB ICS). This was seconded by Councillor Mathew Parkinson, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Endorse the Integrated Care Strategy for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB ICS).

### **37 Contracted Environmental Health Out of Hours Service**

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, introduced the report, which proposed to end the contract for the Out of Hours Environmental Health Service.

Councillor Andrew Prosser confirmed that he was happy to second the proposal, and thanked the officers who had worked to support the Out of Hours service ahead of its proposed termination.

Councillor Arciszewska proposed that the contract for the Out of Hours Environmental Health Service be terminated. This was seconded by Councillor Prosser, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. End the current contracted out of hour's service.

### **38 Consideration of Local Authority Housing Fund Application**

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Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which confirmed the preferred method of delivery, of up to sixteen new affordable homes, utilising the Local Authority Housing Fund Allocation, previously approved by the Executive on 8 February 2023.

Councillor Saul proposed that the Executive approve the recommendations in the report, which included confirming the preferred method of affordable housing delivery. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Accept the proposal from Cottsway Housing to fulfil the requirements of the Local Authority Housing Fund on behalf of the Council in respect of the delivery of 16 additional affordable homes;
2. Passport the funding received by the Council to Cottsway Housing underpinned by a funding agreement setting out the relevant grant terms;
3. Request the Chief Executive to establish a regular strategic forum to allow the Executive Member for Housing to improve the strategic engagement with our largest Registered Social Landlord in the district. Requests officers to update the Executive on a regular basis on progress against delivery of these homes and subsequent use for other housing purposes.

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### **Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Executive Member for Customer Delivery, introduced the agenda item to consider recommendations from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Parkinson proposed that the Executive accept the recommendations made by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, to further thank the Committees for their recommendations, and instruct Officers to take these recommendations into account, when drafting the relevant future reports. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Rylett, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Accept the Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
  - a) That officers include within the current review of the Local Plan specific policies in respect of Public Houses – Future after Closure taking account of specific conditions pertaining at the time a Public House closes such as a sequential test or alternate community use.
  - b) That the title of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy is amended to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.
2. Thank the Committees for their recommendations, and instruct Officers to take these recommendations into account when drafting the relevant future reports.

The Meeting closed at 2.40 pm

CHAIR