

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the **Annual Council**

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 24 May 2023**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Julian Cooper (Chair for 2022/2023), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair for 2022/2023), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, David Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Colin Dingwall, Jane Doughty, Duncan Enright, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Jackson, Edward James, Mark Johnson, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Rosie Pearson, Rizvana Poole, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Harry St John, Tim Sumner, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Jan Britton (Managing Director), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Andrew Brown (Business Manager, Democratic Services and Interim Monitoring Officer, Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Barry Clack (Communications Officer) and Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Nil.

#### **CL.75 Election of Chair for 2023/24**

The outgoing Chair of the Council, Councillor Julian Cooper, welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting of Annual Council.

The Chair asked Council for nominations to the position of Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Councillor Andy Graham, proposed that Councillor Andrew Coles be appointed to the position of Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Mathew Parkinson and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Andrew Coles to the position of Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Following the appointment, Councillor Julian Cooper wished the new Chair of West Oxfordshire District Council, Councillor Andrew Coles, the very best of fortune for the forthcoming 12 months, and presented Councillor Coles with the Chair's Chain of Office.

Councillor Andrew Coles also signed an Acceptance of Office declaration form after taking his seat.

#### **CL.76 Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2023/24**

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, thanked the Council for his appointment to the position of Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024.

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The Chair thanked Council Officers, fellow Members and previous Chairs of the Council for their endeavours when previously holding the position of Chair. The Chair thanked all those for their support and guidance in the run up to the appointment, and reaffirmed his commitment to working with Council Members and Officers during his time in office.

The Chair also paid tribute to the support of his family, and also his husband, who observed proceedings in the public gallery of the Council Chamber.

The Chair asked Council for nominations to the position of Vice-Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Councillor Liz Leffman, proposed that Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt be appointed to the position of Vice-Chair of the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Michael Brooker and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt to the position of Vice-Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt also signed an Acceptance of Office declaration form after taking her seat.

#### **CL.77 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from the following Members:

L Arciszewska, A Smith, D Temple and D Levy.

#### **CL.78 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Members of the Council.

#### **CL.79 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting of Council, held on Wednesday 22 March 2023, were unanimously approved by Council, and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

#### **CL.80 Receipt of Announcements**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Andrew Coles, welcomed the 12 new Members of West Oxfordshire District Council to their seats, congratulated them on their recent election and stated that they were most welcome. The Chair read aloud the names of the 12 new Members, who rose to introduce themselves to the Council.

The Chair also paid tribute to the 12 Members who had left Council at the end of the last municipal year, and stated that both the previous Chair and the Chief Executive had written to the former members, thanking them for their service to West Oxfordshire District Council and wishing them well for the future.

The Chair also welcomed the Council's incoming Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, Andrea McCaskie, who attended proceedings. Mrs McCaskie would join the Council in June 2023. The Chair also paid tribute to the work of Andrew Brown, who had acted as Interim Monitoring Officer in conjunction with his work as Business Manager for Democratic Services.

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The Interim Monitoring Officer and Business Manager for Democratic Services, Andrew Brown, apologised for an error which had occurred prior to the previous meeting of Council in March 2023, where a Motion to Council had not been facilitated in the correct manner. The Interim Monitoring Officer and Business Manager for Democratic Services also personally apologised to Councillor Lysette Nicholls who had submitted the Motion to Council.

#### **CL.81 Vote of Thanks to the retiring Chair and Vice-Chair**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Andrew Coles, paid further tribute to the work and contribution to Council by the former Chair, Councillor Julian Cooper, and highlighted memories of Councillor Cooper's time in office, such as a visit to the Oxfordshire Transport Museum.

In return, Councillor Cooper thanked all Officers for their support to him during his time in office, and highlighted the support of the Council's Executive Management Team, Public Officers, and the work of contractual partners such as Ubico.

The Chair also took the opportunity to present Councillor Cooper with a medal in recognition of his service to the Council.

#### **CL.82 Election of the Leader of the Council**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Andrew Coles, asked Council for nominations to the position of Leader of the Council for a new four year term, which would extend to the Annual Council meeting in 2027.

Councillor Duncan Enright, proposed that Councillor Andy Graham be appointed to the position of Leader of the Council for a new four year term, extending to the end of the municipal year 2026/2027. This was seconded by Councillor Natalie King and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Appoint Councillor Andy Graham to the position of Leader of the Council for a new four year term, extending to the Annual Council meeting in 2027.

#### **CL.83 Report of the Leader**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, rose to thank the Council for his re-appointment to the position of Leader, and to thank the Executive and Officers for their support as the term of the Leader was renewed.

The Leader also offered to work constructively with the opposition to achieve the common goals that the Council had previously set, and said that by working together, the Council can achieve great things.

The Leader informed the Council of the appointments to the Executive for the new municipal year, which were as follows:

- Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council;
- Councillor Duncan Enright – Deputy Leader of the Council, and Executive Member for Economic Development;
- Councillor Dan Levy – Executive Member for Finance;
- Councillor Carl Rylett – Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development;

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- Councillor Joy Aitman – Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities;
- Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare;
- Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for the Environment;
- Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change;
- Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.

The Leader explained that the new portfolio of the Executive, Leisure and Major Projects, would continue and complete the work of the Council's Agile Working Project, which would see a future refurbishment of the Council Chamber, and the installation of live-streaming & webcasting equipment, so that meetings of the Council are available to be watched over the Internet, adding openness and transparency to the Council's business. The Portfolio would also oversee enhancement to leisure provisions within the District, aiding diversity and improving the experiences of the service users.

The Leader also reaffirmed that the West Oxfordshire alliance would work hand in glove to put the residents of the District first, which would help to achieve social and climate justice, and help address a housing crisis, built up over recent years.

The Leader also confirmed the following joint Executive arrangements and appointments to external bodies:

- Councillor Andy Graham – Future Oxfordshire Partnership;
- Councillor Carl Rylett – Infrastructure Advisory Group;
- Councillor Geoff Saul – Housing Advisory Group;
- Councillor Andrew Prosser – Environment Advisory Group.

The Leader also drew the attention of the Council to the Executive Scheme of Delegations, covered in Part 4 of the Council's constitution.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council notes the Report of the Leader. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Coles, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Report of the Leader.

#### **CL.84 Return of the Returning Officer**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which detailed and summarised the results of the local elections, held on 4 May 2023.

The Leader stated that the report was a factual representation of the results of the elections to West Oxfordshire District Council, and paid tribute to the work of the Returning Officer, Electoral Services Team and officers & staff that assisted with the delivery of the local elections.

Councillor Andrew Beaney rose to thank the Returning Officer and staff for their work in delivering the local elections held on 4 May 2023, adding that West Oxfordshire is the "Gold Standard" for local elections. This was further echoed by the Chair of the Council.

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Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council note the Return of the Returning Officer. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Note to the Return of the Retuning Officer.

#### **CL.85 Appointment of Members to the Council's Committees, including Substitute Members.**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which established the Council Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2023/2024, established the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality, appointed members to Council Committees for the Civic Year 2023/2024, made appointments to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of Council Committees for the Civic Year 2023/2024, proposed that Committee meetings held in Committee Room I will be "livestreamed" using the Council's new webcasting system, agreed to a joint meeting of the Climate and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee being held on 8 June 2023 at 4.00pm to consider the West Eynsham Area Masterplan, and re-established the Constitution Working Group and sought a request that it considers options for the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Leader guided Council through the recommendations listed within the report, and paid particular attention to political proportionality to the Council's Committees, and updated Council that Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt was proposed to represent the Council on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (rather than Councillor Joy Aitman as stated in the paperwork), and that Councillor Liz Leffman would not be serving on the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee as stated in the paperwork. The Leader also highlighted a recommendation referring to the Constitution Working group, and the exploration of the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Leader confirmed that the outcome of this work would be reported to Council at a future meeting.

Councillor Andrew Beaney rose to query the frequency of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, restrictions on Committee Membership, and how the proposed Joint Scrutiny Committee of Climate and Environment and Economic & Social would be chaired.

The Business Manager for Democratic Services and Interim Monitoring Officer responded stating that a Chair for the extraordinary joint meeting would be appointed at the start of that meeting for that meeting only. The Interim Monitoring Officer further stated that the restrictions on membership of the Standards Sub-Committee were covered in a report to the next Audit and Governance Committee, and that the frequency of meetings of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees would be referred to the Council's Constitution Working Group for consideration.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed in the agenda report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

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1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2023/2024;
2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;
3. Appoint Councillors to serve on the Council's Committees and working groups as set out in Annex B for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council, with Councillor Leffman removed from the membership of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Poskitt replacing Councillor Aitman as the Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
4. Appoint Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the Council's Committees and working groups as shown in Annex B;
5. Note the arrangements for substitutions, as set out in part 4 of the agenda report;
6. Agree that meetings held in Committee Room 1 will be live streamed to the Council's website for public viewing;
7. Agree that a joint meeting of the Economic and Social, and Climate & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees will take place on Thursday 8 June 2023 at 4.00pm, to consider the West Eynsham Area Masterplan.
8. Request that the Constitution Working Group considers options for the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees and reports back to a future meeting of Council.

#### **CL.86** Scheme of Officer Delegations

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report that, as required by the Council's Constitution, adopted and agreed the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council adopt the Constitution, and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Adopt the Council's Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.

The Meeting closed at 2.27 pm

CHAIR