

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive**

Held in the Upper Hall, Chipping Norton Town Hall, High Street, Chipping Norton,
Oxfordshire OX7 5NA at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 14 February 2024**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Lidia Arciszewska, Charlie Maynard, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director for Commercial Development), Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager), Rachel Crookes (Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer), Andrew Thomson (Lead Planning Policy & Implementation), Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Elise Chowdhury (Communications Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Michele Mead

139 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joy Aitman.

140 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, declared for transparency that he was an Associate of the Community Communications Partnership, and highlighted that related work took place outside of Oxfordshire. The Declaration was made in relation to Agenda Item 8 – West Oxfordshire Local Plan Update 2041.

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

141 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 17 January 2024, be agreed by the Executive as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Leader.

This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 17 January 2024, as a true and accurate record.

142 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed attendees to the meeting, and thanked members of the public for attending proceedings. The Leader gave the members of the public in attendance a brief overview of the way that the meeting would run.

The Leader advised that the meeting was the eighth in the Council's "Executive on Tour" series, with previous meetings being held around the West Oxfordshire District in Charlbury,

Executive

14/February2024

Woodstock, Carterton, Eynsham and Burford, along with a previous 'on tour' meeting held in Chipping Norton in Autumn 2022.

The Leader also advised that the next meeting of the Executive would take place on Wednesday 6 March 2024, at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber at Woodgreen, Witney.

The Leader further advised that the final Agenda Item contained commercially sensitive information, and if the Executive wished to discuss the information, the meeting would need to agree to enter private session. The Leader advised the attendees that this would be highlighted at the appropriate juncture.

143 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

144 Reports from Overview and Scrutiny

The Leader stated that the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be considered as part of the Nature Recovery Plan and Nature Recovery Officer item.

145 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

No matters had been raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

146 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 Update

Councillor Charlie Maynard, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, which provided an update on the progress of the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan (2041), including a revised timetable for taking the Local Plan through to formal adoption.

The Executive Member added that the consultation had received over 2000 responses, and the Executive thanked Members of the Public for their engagement.

Andrew Thomson, Lead Planning Policy Officer, was invited by the Executive Member to give an overview of the responses that had been received by the Council in relation to the Local Plan update project. Andrew Thomson made further reference to potential ecological, climate, environmental and sustainable development implications that had been raised in a recent public consultation.

In debate, Members made reference to Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) within the Chipping Norton area, highlighting that it was imperative to see it be considered as part of the Local Plan process, in conjunction with Historic England. The Executive referred to proposed SDAs within Chipping Norton, stating that identified sites were nominated by developers. The Executive also committed to working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, with the interests of residents at the centre of future discussions.

The Executive highlighted that businesses and employers located in the district would also play a vital part in discussions, to prevent West Oxfordshire becoming a 'dormitory' district, feeding employment in the Greater Oxford and London areas.

By invitation of the Leader, a non-Executive Member in attendance referred to the importance of engaging with Royal Air Force Station Brize Norton, located within the district, as a major employer and employment site. It was envisaged that the military's input into the Local Plan consultations would be of vital importance throughout the new Local Plan process.

Executive

14/February2024

Councillor Charlie Maynard proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the consultation summary report attached at Annex A, in particular the key themes arising which will be reflected in the next stage of Local Plan consultation;
2. Agree to approve the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex B.

147 Nature Recovery Plan and Nature Recovery Officer

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced the report, which presented the West Oxfordshire District Council Nature Recovery Plan. The report further set out the business case to appoint a new Nature Recovery Officer. The Nature Recovery Plan was proposed to be adopted and resourced by the Council from April 2024.

The Executive Member stated they would propose an additional recommendation, where delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainability, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Climate Change, to make any necessary minor amendments to the Nature Recovery Plan, following consideration by the Executive and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Executive Member referred to recommendations made to the Executive by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and circulated ahead of the Executive meeting.

The Executive Member for Climate Change stated that the Executive had accepted, in principle, the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations suggested more engagement with Town and Parish Councils, that the Council takes a network approach to the facilitation of grassroots projects and getting people involved in nature recovery activities, and that consideration is given to mitigating risks around the future funding for the new post and the reliance on external funding for projects.

The Executive further highlighted that the Rural England and UK Shared Prosperity Funds would also provide additional funding for nature recovery projects in rural areas that would struggle to provide match funding through WestHive.

Councillor Andrew Prosser proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report, with an additional recommendation as outlined in the presentation of the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the West Oxfordshire District Council Nature Recovery Plan and recommend to Council that it is adopted as part of the Council's compliance with the new biodiversity duty;
2. Agree to part-fund a Nature Recovery Officer at a cost to the Council of £39,039.00 over 24 months;
3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainability, in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change, to make any necessary

Executive

14/February2024

minor amendments to the Nature Recovery Plan following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive.

148 Climate Change Officer

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced the report, which set out the business case to make the Council's Climate Change Officer post permanent.

In debate, the Executive thanked the ongoing work of the current postholder for their continued efforts within the climate change area, and the value of the work undertaken to date. It was also highlighted that the Climate Change Officer had also provided vital income to the Council, through their hard work on the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

By invitation of the Leader, a non-Executive Member in attendance questioned who the Climate Change Officer would be employed by. The Chief Executive stated that Publica would be the employer for the permanent Climate Change Officer as the other staff in the Climate Change team were currently employed by Publica. Future employment would be considered on a case-by-case basis, owing to an ongoing review into Publica.

Councillor Andrew Prosser proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendation as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to make the Climate Change Officer post permanent at a total cost of £50,155 per annum.

149 Improving Youth Participation and Development

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which set out the Council's approach to supporting young people and building on the results and findings of a recent Youth Needs Assessment.

The Leader paid tribute to the work of the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities and the Council's Community Wellbeing Manager, for their work in Youth Participation across West Oxfordshire, highlighting that work was of even greater significance owing to the rural nature of the West Oxfordshire District.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the significance of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), awarded to the Council by central government, and that younger people were perceived to have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to the recruitment of a dedicated Youth Development Officer on a full time, 2-year fixed term contract;
2. Note that £60,000 external funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) will be used to support the post;

14/February2024

3. Approve up to £28,000 from the Council Priority fund to meet the balance needed for the post;
4. Approve the use of the £20,000 COMF budget allocated to youth activities to enable test and learn opportunities as developed by the postholder, which tackle the barriers faced by young people, to access activities, services and opportunities.

150 Waste Fleet Purchase Strategy

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, introduced the report, which updated the Executive on progress on the review of the West Oxfordshire waste fleet.

The report also sought to seek approval to purchase 4 standard fuel general waste refuse collection vehicles, and when necessary, and sought further approval to hire 2 standard fuel general waste refuse collection vehicles, whilst research is undertaken into options to use more environmentally sustainable vehicles such as electric vehicles.

By invitation of the Leader, a non-Executive Member in attendance expressed disappointment that the report had not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as a consequence of less than 28 days' notice of the decision being given on the Executive Forward Plan). The non-Executive Member also questioned why the Council was proposing to purchase waste vehicles when the Council's waste partner, Ubico, was considering owning waste vehicles itself. The Assistant Director for Commercial Development advised that funding for replacement waste vehicles was available in the Council's capital programme and that Ubico's consideration of owning waste vehicles itself was at the very early stages and, if pursued, would take some years to implement.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to purchase 4 x 28 tonne standard fuel general waste refuse collection vehicles (RCV's) for use on frontline collections;
2. Agree to hire 2 x 28 tonne standard fuel general waste refuse collection vehicles when needed whilst research is undertaken during the next financial year into options to use more environmentally sustainable vehicles such as electric vehicles.

151 Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which provided a detailed update on the budget for 2024/25, following the government funding settlements of 18 December 2023 and 24 January 2024.

The report also provided updates to and considered the draft base budgets for 2024/25, the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2032/33, the level of Council Tax for 2024/25, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and the responses from the statutory budget consultation.

The Executive Member for Finance provided an overview of the budget pressures facing the Council, the assumptions that had been made, and the expected funding changes over the medium term. The budget was balanced but based on current projections of funding and expenditure the Council's reserves were expected to be significantly reduced over the medium term.

Executive

14/February2024

The Executive Member thanked the work of the Council's Finance Team, led by the Director of Finance, for their continued hard work throughout the wider budget setting process.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Parish Precepts and Tax Levels set out in Annex I;

And **Resolved** to Recommend to Council to:

2. Approve the General Fund revenue budgets as summarised in Annex B;
3. Approve the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy in Annex C;
4. Approve the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2032/33 as set out in Annex E;
5. Approve the Fees and charges for 2024/25, as detailed in Annex J and K;
6. Approve the Council's Pay Policy Statement as set out in Annex M;
7. Approve the level of District Council Tax for 2024/25 for a Band D property of £124.38 as shown in Annexes F-H.

152 Exclusion of Press and Public

The item was not considered at the meeting.

153 Exempt Annex K - Trade Waste Fees & Charges - Budget 2024/25

The exempt annex was considered as part of the public consideration of the Budget 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Meeting closed at 3.17 pm

CHAIR