

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 2.00 pm on
Wednesday, 28 July 2021

PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Jake Acock, Merilyn Davies, Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Andrew Beaney, Jill Bull, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Julian Cooper, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Jane Doughty, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, 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, Geoff Saul, Harry St John, Derek Cotterill, Rupert Dent, Colin Dingwall, Mark Johnson, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Jon Dearing (Group Manager - Resident Services), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development), Vanessa Scott (Climate Change Manager WODC) and Andrew Smith (Communications Officer), Claire Hughes (Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility), Keith Butler (Monitoring Officer) and Mark Joyce, Michelle Ouzman and Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officers).

CL.14 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Councillor Cooper proposed an amendment to Minute Number 10 to read as follows:

“Councillor Coles moved a motion of thanks to the election team for the smooth running of the most complicated election in recent history”. This was seconded by Councillor Doughty.

Approved

CL.15 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Luci Ashbourne, Rosa Bolger, Mike Cahill, Laetisia Carter, Owen Collins, Harry Eaglestone, Steve Good, Andy Goodwin, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett and Ben Woodruff.

Councillor Enright shared his concerns about face to face meetings and queried the possibility of online or hybrid meetings in the future. It was noted that the Government’s insistence on face to face meetings had forced some Councillors to be unable to attend because the Council Chamber would be at capacity, with little social distancing available.

CL.16 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harvey declared an interest in Agenda Item 18, Sealing of Documents, because he was a tenant of Newman Court.

Council

28/July2021

The Chief Executive, Giles Hughes declared an interest in Agenda Item 17, Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, as he was expected to be appointed to the posts. He advised that he would leave the room for the consideration of the item.

CL.17 Receipt of Announcements

The Chairman sent his condolences to Councillor Cahill and his family following the tragic loss of their son on the weekend and had written to him on behalf of the Council.

The Council wished Councillor Rylett a speedy recovery after a serious operation.

Retirement of the Monitoring Officer

Keith Butler, who was retiring shortly, was thanked by the Chairman for his work during his time with West Oxfordshire District Council. Councillor McBride stated that in the short time since becoming Chairman, Mr Butler had been the font of all knowledge. He asked everyone present to join him in wishing Mr Butler the best of health in his new role as a retiree.

Mr Butler thanked everyone for their best wishes.

Announcements from the Leader

Councillor Mead announced that hybrid meetings were being presented to Government for review and acknowledged the success of the Covid-19 vaccination drop in centre. She highlighted the location and times of the clinic and advised that 500 jabs had been completed in the last week. She asked all Members to encourage their residents to use the facility which was open until 7.30pm that day, with the following day from 9.30 to 7.30pm.

Councillor Mead stated there would be no Cabinet meeting during August, however, it would reconvene in September.

Flooding update and Expression of thanks to Ubico

Councillor MacRae raised concerns regarding flooding and made the following comments:

- He planned to write to the Leader of the County Council in relation to the Section 19 Flooding report. He noted that it was now eight months after the flooding event in Witney and he was still awaiting a response.
- At the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June, a resident had raised concerns regarding the Christmas flooding and asked for clarity on who did what and who was responsible for flooding issues. He stated that Lawrence King was working directly with residents and support groups regarding this.
- A flood fair including displays would be arranged in October or November in the Town Centre shop in Witney, to showcase who was responsible for different areas and types of flooding along with displays from companies offering prevention items.

Councillor MacRae expressed his thanks to the refuse collection teams in what had been difficult times with hot weather, lack of drivers, and the “pingdemic”. He went on to state that Ubico were a contractual service provider and should not be contacted directly by

Council

28/July2021

Members for assistance. Requests should be made through officers using the member's portal or reception. The Members Portal was stated as the preferred option as it provided an audit trail and Members were reminded not go to the depots as it was against Health and Safety policy.

Councillor Coles, following on from Councillor MacRae's flooding remarks, stated that Councillor Cotterill and other representatives were visiting Witney soon to walk through the most affected areas and had meetings planned with residents.

Salt Cross Update

Councillor Haine referenced a report from the Planning Inspectorate on the Salt Cross plan. He stated that the hearing regarding infrastructure had been temporarily suspended. He had asked the Council to look at the report again which was in progress and once completed, the Council would report back to the Planning Inspectorate and the hearing would continue.

Councillor Levy asked for the report to be forwarded.

Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

Councillor Harvey commented on a 90 page Net Zero document presented at Cabinet. He wanted all to be aware of it, commended it to the Council and recommended that all Members get a copy.

Expression of thanks to GLL Partnership Manager

Councillor Doughty thanked John Busby, Partnership Manager at Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for his commitment to GLL, prior to his departure at the end of the month. She stated that since March 2020 Mr Busby had worked tirelessly supporting the Council and food banks, whilst sustaining an active football refereeing role. Mr Busby was now a successful English Football League (EFL) professional referee for Sky Bet EFL league (formally English Championship) and would be leaving GLL shortly. She wished him well for the future.

Councillor Doughty went on to state that the Communications team had published a survey for GLL to build an indoor leisure facility. The purpose of the consultation was to find out who would use the facility, what barriers they may face, and what should be included to remove those barriers. She advised that the consultation was live on the website but needed promoting to encourage better responses. Members were requested to promote it with residents as it was vital for the District.

Loyal Free West Oxfordshire

Councillor Coul provided an update on the Loyal Free West Oxfordshire app stating that there had been 918 downloads, with 64 current deals, 162 businesses had promoted through event listings and trails, and 2966 trail interactions. Councillor Coul wished to record her thanks to Toby Morris in helping to ensure the Loyal Free app was up and running in West Oxfordshire.

Council

28/July2021

LGA Housing Award Shortlist

Councillor Davies was pleased to announce that the Council had been shortlisted for a Local Government Award. The award was for the rural housing broadband rollout, deemed an innovative project. She also announced that the Council had been long listed for an award with Blenheim for affordable housing provision. She had recently met with the housing officer and provision was deemed excellent regarding affordable and sustainable tenancies.

CL.18 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation.

CL.19 Petition: Witney North Local Plan Housing Allocation

Councillor Enright reported on the presentation of a petition calling for the reconsideration of the North Witney Local Plan Housing Allocation in the context of the information and comment contained in the report. He stated that this was a sincere effort by local residents to ask for reconsideration of the Witney North plan. He explained that the impetus for the petition had been the floods at Christmas 2020 which were in the exact area earmarked for development. Although some work was undertaken in 2007, the remedies did not work at the time. He stated that the flooding itself was a strong enough reason enough to ask the Council to consider this again. The 2007 flood was sighted as a 1 in 150 year event but recent issues proved that this was not the case. Councillor Enright concluded by advising that sewer capacity in the region was an issue and traffic concerns from that development were stated as quite grave.

Councillor Mead proposed that the petition be received and noted and be considered as part of the local plan review. Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

Councillor Davies felt this was a political petition and queried if Councillor Enright had used it for re-election purposes. She believed that residents had been misled and the development could not be disposed of. She also believed that residents may have been misled as to the result of this petition being upheld.

Councillor Langridge did not agree with Councillor Davies. He felt that Councillor Enright had done an excellent job and stated that, in his opinion, the development should never have been put in the local plan. He felt that the flooding situation had worsened since the development's inclusion, resulting in dangerous and raging torrents of water. He continued to state that the Council were planning to put 1000 homes in those areas, which would need the West End link road to work. He advised that there was no money for this but it would require a road across the floodplain, threatening floods for the whole of Oxford. He concluded by confirming that the Witney Flood Action Group felt that this development should not go ahead but Witney South or Carterton would be better locations.

Councillor Coles was saddened by Councillor Davies position. He felt that Members should respect the concerns of all residents of West Oxfordshire. He added that the petition had been started and encouraged by Councillor Enright but was supported by a large number of residents. He felt the situation had worsened and residents genuinely felt it would deteriorate further if the development went ahead.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Dingwall was pleased that the petition was going forward for consideration in the local plan. He stated that he was astonished that Councillor Enright had not learned from previous experience regarding the Coggs Link road. He went on to state that stopping that development had removed the only defence against speculative development; the result was an increase from 7600 houses to almost 16000 houses and money had to be given back to developers who had invested in the proposed development.

Councillor Dingwall went on to state that speculative development over the last six or seven years had meant there were 500 houses in the Windrush Valley and hundreds of houses in other towns and villages around the District. He concluded by stating that the development of the Local Plan was the only defence against speculative development.

Councillor Haine directed a comment to Councillor Enright who he stated had been a member of the Development Control Committee for a long time. He reminded Councillor Enright that the Local Plan had taken a long time to get in place and Councillor Enright had made no reference to where the 1400 houses should be relocated. He felt that if this allocation was withdrawn, the Local Plan could be lost and there was a danger that land would be developed anyway without the checks and balances of the Council. A master plan of development was being drawn up with 560 affordable homes, along with a primary school and flood prevention measures and a new road would be constructed across the river, reducing traffic and helping air quality.

Councillor Acock reminded Councillor Enright that did not vote against this in 2018 when he had the chance. He echoed Councillor Davies' comments relating to political motivation and this being for the benefit of Councillor Enright's election to the Council.

Councillor Graham thought the points raised were interesting and reminded the meeting that flooding issues went back beyond the recent December flooding. He felt that unless infrastructure was put in place to start with, the plan was generally going nowhere. He concluded by stating that a failure to address the lack of sewers would continue to plague the area and the principle of the petition was about the people who reside in the area.

In summing up, Councillor Harvey stated that he felt Councillor Enright was wrong. He advised that it had never been assumed that the 2007 floods were a 1 in 150 year event. However, it was recorded as unprecedented for the last 150 years and it had not been suggested that it would be another 150 years before a repeat event. The Council had accepted that climate change was happening and flood alleviation measures were continually being considered. He concluded by reminding Members that the Council had also looked at what happened in the area during the extremely cold icy winters, because climate change was occurring 12 months of the year.

Councillor Cooper asked to respond to a point raised by Councillor Haine. He stated that he had proposed an amendment to remove houses out of Witney to an alternative location but

Council

28/July2021

this had been voted against. He believed scrutiny of the last Local Plan had not been good enough however he had confidence in the current Chairman of the scrutiny committee.

Having been considered and debated, the Council

RESOLVED

That that the petition be received and noted and would be considered as part of the Local Plan review.

CL.20 Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees or Sub-Committees

The recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting were received and considered. The Chairman reminded Members that a revised version of the report had been circulated and he confirmed that all members had received a copy.

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations be adopted and this was seconded by Councillor Harvey.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.

CL.21 Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

The reports of the following meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees were received and unless otherwise stated, copies were included:

(a) Cabinet	26 May 2021
(b) Licensing Committee	28 May 2021
(c) Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 June 2021
(d) Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 June 2021
(e) Cabinet	16 June 2021
(f) Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee	17 June 2021
(g) Audit and General Purposes Committee	24 June 2021
(h) Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 July 2021
(i) Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 July 2021
(k) Cabinet	21 July 2021
(l) Urgency Committee	23 July 2021

Councillor Cooper raised an issue regarding page 35, stating that this had never formally been reported back. He queried if the money had been subdivided among parishes but asked for clarification on the criteria for subdivision.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Al-Yousuf reminded Councillor Cooper that this had been raised at the time and an answer was presented at the committee meeting. He advised that allocation was based on available funds and assessed needs and further breakdown and rationale could be arranged if required.

Councillor Jackson, regarding Page 53, item 19, stated that it was good to see the current review with reference to planning department staffing issues. He assumed the review had started and asked for the expected timescale for the report and to whom would it be sent.

Councillor Beaney stated that two new staff had been employed and three more were on the way. Shared services included environmental services who were already going to site. The Planning service could use them to take pictures and avoid duplicating visits in some instances.

Councillor Graham, regarding Page 69 raised a question with reference to the resolution, stated that this was under private session and suggested an amendment.

The Monitoring Officer stated this should be raised at the next committee meeting regarding accuracy of the minutes.

Councillor Haine stated he had attended but was listed as apologies and requested this be updated.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 14:55 for a short comfort break.

The meeting reconvened at 15:12.

CL.22 Question on Notice

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Coles, to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mead:

“The Leader of the Council will be aware that the plastic waste West Oxfordshire residents put in their blue-lid bins for recycling currently gets sent to Turkey for processing. The Leader will also, I'm sure, be aware of the recent report highlighting that in many cases plastics don't in fact end up being recycled due to poor infrastructure in places like Turkey and the sheer volume of plastic waste coming from countries like the UK. What reassurances can the Leader give the residents of West Oxfordshire that their plastics are indeed recycled and are not just left dumped somewhere or piled into huge mountains, burned or left to spill into rivers and the sea. And if she is unable to reassure us, can I ask what steps the council is planning to take to address this?”

Councillor Mead stated that information including graphs and bar charts were available to everyone on the Council website and she would be happy to circulate a link. She went on to advise that:

Council

28/July2021

“While there is a limited infrastructure available in the UK, there will always be the need to send some materials to other countries for them to be recycled, but the commodity recycling market is a global and well established one. However, as part of the Councils reporting responsibility through a website called Wastedataflow, which is facilitated by Defra, the end destinations for all materials are checked and have to be reported quarterly. This provides the necessary assurance that the materials are being recycled and not transported to a foreign country and disposed of.”

CL.23 Climate Action Biannual Report

Councillor Harvey introduced the report and proposed that the recommendations be adopted. He stated that he was proud to present the report and thanked officers for its production. He went on to give a summary of (i) a biannual report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: February-July 2021; (ii) the Council’s Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023; and (iii) a proposal to continue the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022.

Councillor Harvey highlighted a number of key issues including the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit; the in house Electric Vehicle charging contracts; the Climate Action day and Climate Art competition; the Energy and Sustainability modelling for Woodgreen and Elmfield offices including decarbonisation and solar viability at leisure buildings.

In relation to the Better Housing Better Health service, Councillor Poskitt stated that houses were designed for cold climates and UK houses were not good in hot weather.

Referring to the appointment of the new Sustainable Planning Specialist, Councillor Jackson asked if the authority had had discussions regarding the need to get more solar panels on houses. He also asked if the Council could ask developers to include solar panels unless there was a good reason not to, and felt that conditions should be added to ensure it happened. Councillor Jackson noted that this could not be done quickly but felt it should be looked at by Planning.

Councillor Davies countered that solar panels were not the answer; what was being built in the first place was the issue and more emphasis should be placed on reducing energy and introducing heat saving measures.

Councillor Harvey referred to the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, suggesting Members read it as there were ample examples of temperature controlled buildings, solar panels, and rooftops.

Councillor Chapple, regarding the Climate Action Day, asked if there were plans for more of those and suggested it would be good to make them regular events. Councillor Harvey advised that he was happy to do that if the demand was there.

Councillor Coul seconded the proposals.

Council

28/July2021

Resolved that

- (a) the contents of the biannual report on climate action for West Oxfordshire, and of the WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023 is noted; and
- (b) the continuation of the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022 be approved.

CL.24 Appointment of Temporary Parish Councillors

Councillor Mead introduced the report and proposed that the recommendations be adopted. This included approving the appointment of temporary members of Bladon Parish Council and considering the future arrangements for temporary appointments to parish councils in the District.

Councillor Mead highlighted that without this, the Parish council would not have enough members to be quorate.

Councillor Enright seconded the proposal.

Resolved that

- (a) approval is given for the making of an Order under section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 appointing District Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt as temporary members of the Bladon Parish Council;
- (b) the appointments shall be effective until the Bladon Parish Council is quorate (i.e. it has three members of the Council in place, excepting the temporary appointees);
- (c) in the event of either of the temporary appointees specified above subsequently being unable or not willing to fulfil the role of temporary parish councillor, the Monitoring Officer shall be authorised to appoint such other person(s) as deemed appropriate; and
- (d) should any other Parish Council in the District require the District Council to appoint one or more temporary councillors in order for it to be able to function, the Monitoring Officer shall be authorised to make such appointments if they need to be made more promptly than the date of the next meeting of either the Audit and General Purposes Committee or the Council.

CL.25 Updates to the Constitution and Establishment of a Constitution Working Group

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations outlined in the report be adopted to seek Council approval for the establishment of a Constitution Working Group to conduct a full review of the Constitution.

Councillor Mead stated that the Constitution was extremely old and needed updating fully, with reference to the recommendations. She requested that Group Leaders provide details to officers with their nominations for the Working Group.

Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Graham agreed that the constitution should be updated and suggested that the public should be consulted on the draft. He felt that it was the people who put Members on the Council and they should therefore be allowed to endorse or at least make comment on it.

Resolved that

- (a) Parts 7 & 8 of the Constitution be deleted;
- (b) a Constitution Working Group be established, in accordance with the terms of reference set out at Annex A; and
- (c) the proposed work plan for the Constitution Working Group at Annex B be noted.

CL.26 Appointment of Monitoring Officer

Members were updated on the forthcoming arrangements to cover the Monitoring Officer role.

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations be adopted as outlined in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Graham.

Resolved that the Chief Executive be authorised to appoint an interim Monitoring Officer for the Council for a period of up to six months, following liaison with the Group Leaders.

CL.27 Notice of Motion - Climate and Ecological Emergency

The following Motion was provided to Council in the names of Councillor Liz Leffman and Councillor Mathew Parkinson, namely:-

“On 20 September 2020, an Early Day Motion entitled the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill was tabled in the House of Commons. A second reading is to be held shortly. While the Government’s recent Ten Point Plan is an important step towards Page 4 tackling the UK’s carbon emissions, this Bill recognises that our carbon footprint extends beyond the UK’s borders. The Bill calls for:

- the UK to make and enact a serious plan to combat climate change. This means dealing with our real fair share of emissions so that we don’t go over critical global rises in temperature*
- our entire carbon footprint be taken into account (in the UK and overseas)*
- the protection and conservation of nature here and overseas along supply chains, recognising the damage we cause through the goods we consume*
- those in power not to depend on technology to save the day, which is used as an excuse to carry on polluting as usual*
- people to have a real say on the way forward in a citizens’ assembly with bite*

Many residents have made it clear through social media and by forming campaign groups that they want to see this Bill succeed, and Oxfordshire County Council has already given the Bill its support. This Council agrees with the principles of this Bill and supports residents in their efforts to see it come into law. We ask the Leader of this Council to write to our MP, asking him to support this Bill and its principles when it returns to the House of Commons”.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Leffman proposed that the Leader of the Council write to the local MP, asking him to support the Bill and its principles when it returned to the House of Commons.

She thanked Councillor Harvey for the report from the Climate Action Working group, stated that climate change was also at the heart of the County Council's agenda and that today she was talking about the national issue. She stated that the aim of the Bill was to broaden what government proposed as part of the 10 point plan and how more could be done to tackle our carbon footprint. There were a number of issues she hoped the Government could provide support for. One issue for housing was that there was no legislation to support building to net zero so developers could refuse to do it. Councillor Leffman queried the Government's stance on building standards in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and was advised that it was hoped there would be a 70% reduction in carbon against what was currently being built. Councillor Leffman felt this was not good enough and stated it must be legislated. If larger house builders could build to a lower standard, then smaller builders would find themselves outpriced.

Councillor Parkinson seconded the proposal.

Councillor Mead stated that as the Bill had come through parliament in June, she had taken the liberty of writing to Robert Courts MP outlining the motion. A response had been received, which Councillor Mead read for the benefit of the Members:

"I am encouraged that the UK remains committed to environmentally sustainable development as set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable Development Goals. In September 2019 the Prime Minister committed to doubling the UK's International Climate Finance over the next five years which I hope will enable the UK to play an active part in protecting the environment and reversing biodiversity loss.

I know that a Climate Assembly UK was formed as a result of work conducted by Parliamentary Select Committees. I welcome that many of their recommendations, which were published in their report, are already either in place or in the pipeline as a result of the Government working towards net zero. Achieving net zero will affect everyone and it is important that we work together to achieve it.

Therefore, I do not believe that the Bill is required as work is already underway to achieve our net zero target and protect our environment."

Councillor Mead stated that she could not support the motion based on the response from the MP.

Councillor Harvey was disappointed to see this motion to Council as the authority had already played a large role in tackling Climate Change and there was no mention of the progress made over the past two years. He felt it was more important for the Council to reduce its own CO2 emissions rather than get involved in gesture politics. He went on to say that the

Council

28/July2021

Council was making great progress in Climate Change and biodiversity and gave some examples.

Councillor Harvey stated he had been actively involved in the Oxfordshire tree mapping project which had made a real and tangible difference for the businesses and residents in the area. These were all reasons he could not support the motion and felt Council should focus on what could be done locally.

Councillor Davies stated that from a Planning aspect, although the carbon toolkit was available, it meant nothing without the powers to enforce it. She agreed that Government support was key to make that happen.

Councillor Dingwall was concerned for new homebuyers. He felt that these measures would make homes more expensive than they already were. He believed that rather than looking at national policies the Council should look locally for things that could help. He advised that solar panels were very expensive to install on a house but solar farms were more affordable and community solar areas should be looked at within developments. He stated that flooding was also an issue due to the water table being very high. He stated that the whole of California runs on geo thermal energy and asked if that could be used here with the cost shared by everyone rather than using individual air source heat pumps.

Councillor Postan said he was an advocate for solar panels and the savings they made and that maintenance was little or nothing in his experience. He felt that the Bill recognised that the Council's carbon footprint extended beyond its border.

Councillor Levy was surprised by the defensiveness of the comments made by Members of the Conservative group. He noted that the Council was taking a lead on climate change, but a lot more could be done and writing to the MP was one of them. He stated that Government involvement was needed to change standards for housing to get things done locally. He also suggested that the County Council needed to encourage cycling and the use of public transport.

Councillor Coles stated there was nothing critical in the motion about the good work the Council had achieved in the last few years and was surprised by the negative attitudes of some of the Members.

Councillor Al-Yousuf commended the spirit of the motion and advised that there was nothing he disagreed with. Referring to the urgency from Councillor Leffman, he stated that she wanted no more and no less than for the Council to write to the MP. As it appeared that this had already been done by Councillor Mead and there was a reply he felt that further discussions were fruitless and the meeting should move on.

Councillor Chapple agreed that a letter had been sent, but questioned if the content of that was reflective of that which was requested.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Coul stated that all of these things were being looked at and acted on by Government already. She felt this was being used as a political tool by Councillors. She reminded Members that the MP was clear on his views and writing to him again was a waste of time. It would be better for the Leader of the Council to make representations to other organisations that could bear fruit.

Councillor Haine, in response to Councillor Dingwall claiming home improvements would be expensive, stated that this should not be the case as land was made cheaper as a result of these improvements.

Councillor Acock stated he did not see the point of the motion. He suggested that the Council could be writing and pre-empting the outcome as the Bill may or may not return for a second reading. He felt the motion should be withdrawn as the letter had already sent and the MP had replied.

Councillor Parkinson stated that the Council should be pushing for this and doing everything possible.

Councillor Leffman, in summing up, stated she was very disappointed with the attitude of Members. She very much welcomed the work of the Council and it was going in the right direction. A lot had been done but more was still needed, which would require the Government to step up and mandate the things the Council wanted to see in new developments. Legislation for net zero development needed to be in place to allow the Council to do that. The MP response did not mean he was right and did not stop the Council from writing again to reiterate their point, stating they do not agree. She concluded by advising that other Districts and the County Council had endorsed this and she would not withdraw the motion.

The motion was then put to the vote and defeated.

Defeated

CL.28 Notice of Motion - Planning Applications

The following Motion was received in the names of Councillors Enright and Fenton, namely:-

“This Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to shape individual planning applications.”

Councillor Enright introduced the motion and advised that he felt the Government should protect the rights of communities to shape individual planning applications. He reminded Members that the Council was Member of the Local Government Association (LGA) with many other groups, often with differing views. However, all groups were aligned on the issue regarding Government planning reforms; the LGA believed the measures would take away

Council

28/July2021

local determination and they believed in the right for local communities to have a say in the way their area was developed. He advised that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was coming forward for people to comment on and was an example of joint working and the faith in strategic planning. He reiterated his belief that local communities should have a say on local developments.

Councillor Fenton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Acock stated that he supported the motion but suggested that it would have been nice for the Labour group to outline the actions required. He requested that in future, all motions should include actions.

Councillor Levy proposed an amendment to the motion stating that it gave undue relevance to the role of developers in the planning process. The wording of the amendment was designed to show that locals should take the lead on local planning and affordable housing, making West Oxfordshire more attractive to outsiders. He concluded that he would prefer his wording to that proposed in the substantive motion.

Councillor Graham seconded the amendment stating that it was a dangerous issue as the planning authority could be lost from the process and residents would speak directly to Secretary of State if the Local Plan was lost.

Councillor Davies did not see the point of the amendment, suggested it was rewording for the sake of it and it needed to be a balance of what both developers and residents wanted.

Councillor Leffman reiterated Councillor Davies' comments stating that the Council were making a statement to show Government they did not agree with this and that local people wanted to have a say in their communities. She felt that the Council must say this to Government and not allow them to remove more local authority power to Central Government.

Councillor Coul stated that she believed good development was achieved by everyone working together; developers, residents, and the local authority. The amendment would do a disservice to that collaboration.

Councillor Graham stated that the amendment was there to make an important point about infrastructure. This should include infrastructure as part of the whole package and was not happening as part of current planning. The proposed change may seem small but he felt it was vitally important. The Planning Bill would massively affect what happened locally if Council got this wrong.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Enright, in summing up and closing the debate on the amendment, stated he did not accept the amendment and felt it said the same thing in different words. He agreed that everyone needed to work together to get the best outcome.

The amended motion was put to the vote and was defeated.

Councillor Haine suggested the substantive motion was premature and advised that there would be another White Paper release in the Autumn. He felt that Council should wait for the paper to be released for consultation.

Councillor Cooper stated that the protection of the planning system was worthy of the Council's time. He was proud that the planning committee did not have block votes and allowed different groups to work together. He agreed that it was important for local communities to have their say.

Councillor Coul agreed with the ethos of the motion but suggested that the timing was in question. Council had already stated that the original white paper was not acceptable and that paper was withdrawn. She stated that Council should wait for the new paper then there may not be an issue or if there was then a response could be addressed at that time.

Councillor Fenton stated that it was a difficult job to look at all the planning applications. The overall workload and long list of applications that were dealt with by officers showed how important planning was to the authority. He was delighted that Government withdrew the original White Paper which would have removed one of the purposes of District Councils. Progress was inevitable but local people should be allowed to have input in that. He also felt it might be premature but it had cross party support as it currently stood, before the next White Paper came forward. He hoped that when this happened it would leave the Council with some measure of control.

Councillor Enright, in summing up, thanked Councillor Fenton for his support stating that he had addressed the timing and was satisfied the time was right.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

Carried

CL.29 Emergency and Urgency Delegations

Members received a report asking them to note the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.

Resolved that the report is noted.

CL.30 Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

The Chief Executive left the room for this item.

Council

28/July2021

Councillor Mead introduced the report which proposed the appointment of the Chief Executive, Mr Hughes to the role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, stating that the Council was one of only a few authorities in the land where the Chief Executive was not the Returning Officer.

Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

Having read the report and heard from the Members present, it was

Resolved that the Chief Executive be appointed and designated as the Council's Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, with immediate effect.

CL.31 Sealing of Documents

Members received a report asking them to note the documents sealed since the last report.

Resolved that the report be noted.

The Meeting closed at 4.25 pm

CHAIRMAN