

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in the Council Chambers at 2.00 pm on **Thursday, 15 July 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Councillor Joy Aitman, Councillor Julian Cooper, Councillor Harry Eaglestone, Councillor Ted Fenton, Councillor Andy Goodwin, Councillor Mark Johnson, Councillor Martin McBride, Councillor Alex Postan, Councillor Carl Rylett, Councillor Harry St John, Councillor Dean Temple and Councillor Ben Woodruff
Officers: Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Senior Strategic Support Officer)

10 Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Councillor Postan advised that under Minute Number 5 he had actually stated that there were three sources of flooding – run off, surge and risen water table. Furthermore, he felt that clearance upstream would increase the flow and mitigating this clearance downstream was essential to mitigate flooding.

Councillor Cooper requested that the following wording be added to the end of Minute Number 6 – Call-In of Cabinet Decision; Allocation of Parking Funds:

“Councillor Cooper made representations stating that the Environment Scrutiny Committee had agreed to something different than the April Cabinet.”

11 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Councillor Temple substituted for Councillor Al-Yousuf, Councillor Cooper substituted for Councillor Leffman, Councillor Aitman substituted for Councillor Collins, and Councillor Johnson substituted for Councillor Dent.

Apologies for absence were received from the Group Manager – Commercial Development who was unable to attend due to the need to self-isolate. The meeting were advised that any queries would be forwarded to him for a response.

12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

14 Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter Four

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which provided details of service performance during Quarter 4.

Councillor Coles introduced the report and stated that the report was a reflection on how well the Council and its officers had managed in extraordinary circumstances. He formally thanked all staff for their hard work.

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Councillor St John highlighted the point he had raised at the Finance & Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, stating that he felt the AONB and Oxfordshire 2050 Plan should be referenced in the 'What's on the Horizon' section of the report.

Councillor Postan advised that at a recent Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting there had been a strong recommendation that the 2050 Plan should contain a paragraph on Carbon Neutral Objectives.

Councillor McBride queried if the data relating to telephone calls response and abandonment could be broken down to show the variation of times throughout the day. He felt that this could be managed with adequate staffing levels at peak times. Councillor Coles reminded the meeting that this could be as result of lockdown resulting in an increase in the volume of calls with less staff available due to redeployment. He also reminded Members that there was a dedicated telephone number and email address for Councillor queries.

Having read the report and debated the performance, the Committee

Resolved that the report be noted.

15 Committee Work Programme 2020/2021

The Committee received a report which updated them on their Work Programme for 2021/22, attached at Annex I to the report.

Councillor Coles introduced the report and requested that an additional item relating to the Local Nature Partnership be added to the September programme prior to the project's 'go live' date.

Following the update at paragraph 2.4 of the report relating to the Review of OCC Section 19 report relating to the Christmas Floods 2020, the Chairman requested that officers contact Mr Cotton at OCC and remind him of the five commitments he agreed to at the previous meeting. The Cabinet Member, Councillor MacRae reported that he had written to colleagues at the County Council and requested updates accordingly.

Councillor Coles updated Members that an on-site meeting had been arranged with Councillor Sudbury, himself, Councillor Enright and other key individuals for 5 August 2021.

With regard to the Environment Agency, the Senior Strategic Support Officer advised that invitations had been extended but no response received as yet. Councillor Coles reported that he had met representatives from the Environment Agency on site at Emma's Dyke a fortnight ago, and had found the meeting constructive and informative. Officers agreed to follow up on the invitation for the September meeting.

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Councillor St John expressed his disappointment that little seemed to have happened since the flooding event in December 2020 and felt that someone needed to accept responsibility for the lack of warning to residents.

The Committee noted that a report on the public toilets at Chipping Norton was due at Cabinet in October and agreed that this be added to the programme for September.

It was therefore,

Resolved that the Committee Work Programme be agreed with the following additions:

- a) The Local Nature Partnership be added to September 2021; and
- b) Charging at New Street Toilets, Chipping Norton be added to September 2021.

16 Cabinet Work Programme

The Committee considered the Cabinet Work Programme attached at Annex I to the report.

Councillor Postan queried whether the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be submitting a formal response to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and was advised that this would be added to the September meeting.

Resolved that the report be noted.

17 Members' Questions

Councillor Postan had submitted the following question, prior to the meeting:

"In view of the Swaffham Bulbeck experiment, could I ask the committee to set up a T&FG to identify a location in West Oxfordshire that would be suitable for a community heat source scheme"

The Chairman, Councillor Al-Yousuf had responded and advised that Councillor Postan speak to the Cabinet Member, Councillor Harvey and the Climate Change Manger, Ness Scott in the first instance. Councillor Postan advised that he had done this and was awaiting a response.

Following questions from Councillors Fenton and Woodruff regarding Electric Vehicle Charging Points, officers advised that the locations were detailed on the Council's website and would be circulated to members. It was noted that there was no cost fixed as yet.

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Councillor Goodwin raised a number of concerns relating to Thames Water and sewerage following a meeting with the Sustainability Director, other officers and residents. He queried the reporting process and asked how much WODC had tried to put pressure on Thames Water previously. Councillor Coles gave a brief update on the work undertaken by the Council, including inviting Thames Water to attend meetings and the involvement of the local MP. He assured Councillor Goodwin that the Council had tried to use all options available to them to resolve problems, however, the best route was for Members to raise any issues with the Cabinet Member and officers as soon as possible. It was agreed that more support was needed from Central Government with regard to drainage standards.

The meeting closed at 2.46 pm

CHAIRMAN