

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Cabinet**

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 16 March 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: David Harvey (Deputy Leader), Councillor Suzi Coul, Councillor Jane Doughty, Councillor Jeff Haine, Councillor David Harvey and Councillor Norman MacRae MBE.

Also present: Councillors Alaa Al-Yousuf, Julian Cooper, Duncan Enright, Andy Graham, Alex Postan, and Carl Rylett.

Officers: Janice Bamsey (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive, and Section 151 Officer), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Mark Joyce (Strategic Support Officer) and Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director – Publica).

86 Notice of Decisions

The notice of the decisions taken at the meeting held on 16 February 2022 were agreed.

87 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michele Mead and Marilyn Davies.

88 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

89 Participation of the Public

Eynsham Parish Council provided a written statement regarding the West Eynsham Masterplan which was read out by the Chief Executive, Giles Hughes. The statement requested that Cabinet reject the proposed Masterplan to give the community the opportunity to comment and a revised version to be brought forward.

Councillor Graham sought clarification that the issues raised in the Eynsham Parish Council statement would be considered as part of agenda item 11 and that recommendations contained in all Cabinet decisions at this meeting would be taken to the next Council meeting.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the first item raised in the statement would be considered as part of agenda item 11. However, the recommendation was for Cabinet to approve the West Eynsham Masterplan and this was not a Council decision.

90 Receipt of Announcements

Carterton Leisure Centre - Ukraine Collections

Councillor MacRae addressed the meeting and stated that he was humbled and astounded at the joint efforts of the Council, the RAF, GLL, and Ubico for the setting up and operation of the collection centre. He wanted to thank everyone involved, stating that up to 1000 boxes had been collected from private individuals and local businesses. He advised that the collection would end at lunch time on Friday 18 March 2022.

Covid-19 Walk In Centre

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Councillor MacRae announced that Covid-19 vaccinations would be available for 5 to 11 year olds at a Walk in Centre based at the Elmfield offices, without the need for an appointment.

Car Park extension – Country Park

Councillor MacRae stated that plans were in place to increase parking at the above site, from 15 to 16 cars to accommodate 40 to 50 cars. He advised that this was progressing slowly but would include disabled parking bays. There was also an ambition to upgrade the play park to include equipment suitable for children with disabilities and improve the paths for better wheelchair access.

Great British Clean-up Week

Councillor MacRae reminded Cabinet that next week was Great British Clean-up Week. A litter picking session had been planned for that afternoon but the weather would prevent it.

Electric vehicles update

Councillor MacRae announced the arrival of an electric pavement sweeper, originally ordered 15 months ago, stating that it would be out on the streets very soon.

In addition, an order for three electric vans had been cancelled by the supplier as Renault were no longer making the vehicles.

Local Government Awards

The Deputy Leader, Councillor David Harvey, announced that the Council had been shortlisted, with its partners, in the Climate Response Category for the Net-Zero Carbon Toolkit work produced in 2021. It was hoped this would help to communicate this work to the wider development sector and the result would be known in July 2022.

91 Oxfordshire Plan - Feedback from Consultation

Councillor Haine introduced the report and provided an update on the Oxfordshire Plan Statement of Community Involvement. He stated that the 2050 plan contained no specifications on housing numbers or locations which would come in regulation 19

Councillor Haine proposed that Cabinet approved adoption of the plan as per the recommendations and this was seconded by Councillor Coul.

Councillor Graham sought clarification regarding the mention of regulation 19 and questioned if Councillor Haine had meant regulation 18. In response, Councillor Haine confirmed that regulation 19 decided housing numbers and locations while regulation 18 was the lead up to that. This was also confirmed by the Chief Executive.

Councillor Graham commented that the document was trying to be everything to everyone but was concerned it might be difficult to follow through. He felt it did not show specific consultation methods that would be used for different aspects of the process and was very generic. He concluded that it would need to be monitored to ensure maximum engagement.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

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Resolved that

- a) the adoption of the revised Oxfordshire Plan Statement of Community Involvement, be approved; and
- b) noted that the statement would be kept under regular review as the project continued.

92 Response to Oxfordshire County Council's Draft Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

Councillor Haine introduced the report and felt it was a very good response. He brought one paragraph in particular to Member's attention on page 35 under road safety "*whilst we support the 20mph speed limit policies (Policies 21-24) in general, we feel that this should be applied to particular streets only according to a set of criteria such as outside schools or busy pedestrian streets in a town centre rather than being applied to a wider blanket area. By focussing these areas to small 'zones', they are more likely to be observed and these should be accompanied by other speed reduction measures that are appropriate and sympathetic to the character of the area. Excessive signage should be avoided, particularly in historic areas*". He hoped that County Council members took notice of this.

Councillor Haine proposed that the report be noted and the draft response be agreed as per the recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Doughty.

Councillor Enright thanked Councillor Haine and officers for a very full response. However, as a Councillor for Witney, he did not agree with the paragraph read by Councillor Haine except for the part about excessive signage being avoided. He felt that applying the 20mph limit to all residential streets was appropriate and was about changing attitudes and expectations of drivers.

Councillor Coul suggested that Councillor Enright's comments highlighted the disconnect that the response addressed between residential urban areas, and some of the very rural areas within the District. The rural aspect of West Oxfordshire needed to be taken into account by the County Council and she hoped they would take that from this response.

Councillor Graham suggested it would be better for road safety to define the difference between urban and rural areas that Councillor Coul had made reference to. Some villages were so small that it would not make sense to apply speed restriction to just school zones and should be applied to the whole village in some cases. He felt it was a shame the response did not elaborate more on this.

Councillor Postan spoke as a representative of a ward with a 20mph speed limit which has been agreed but yet to be implemented. Only one vehicle needed to obey the limit in rural areas with narrow roads to ensure all vehicles adhered to it. He was concerned that the document did not account for technology. The increasing cost of electricity meant that synthetic fuels would be more attractive. These were carbon neutral and re-use existing infrastructure for transport, delivery, and supply. Personal transport for rural communities was a lifeline and he felt that a strong comment on this should be made by the Council.

Councillor Al-Yousuf stated that the paragraph being discussed, as currently drafted, reflected the views of his ward and two Parish Councils. He endorsed the existing wording.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, it was

Resolved that

- a) The report be noted; and
- b) the draft response attached at Annex A be submitted as West Oxfordshire District Council's formal representation to the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

93 Covid 19: Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework

The Group Finance Director, Frank Wilson, stated that the work over the last 2 years between the Districts, the County, the health sector, and the third Sector had been exemplary in dealing with the pandemic. The report and the framework for recovery was discussed across all of the sectors in detail and was presented for approval.

The contents of the report did not conflict with any aspect of the Council plan or the Council's Recovery Plan. The three principle recovery themes set out in the appendix aligned perfectly with the Council's priorities.

Mr Wilson concluded that this was a framework to work within and did not infringe on the sovereignty of the Council but asked that decisions were made in light of the framework.

Councillor Harvey proposed that the framework be adopted and the final revisions be delegated to the Chief Executive as per the recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Doughty.

It was therefore,

Resolved that

- a) the Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework, as set out in Annex 1, be adopted, as the key partnership document guiding joint programme planning beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic period; and
- b) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make final revisions as partnership organisations complete their engagement and decision making processes.

94 Finance and Service Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter 3

Councillor Coul introduced the report and was pleased to present the new layout which was more visual and user friendly. The report identified issues that needed to be addressed rather than celebrating successes. The report identified that there were some issues but on the whole the Council was doing very well.

Therefore, Councillor Coul proposed that the report be noted and this was seconded by Councillor MacRae.

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Councillor Graham advised that he liked the document but was mystified by the profile budget when compared to actual expenditure to date. He felt there were some quite large variances.

Councillor Coul explained that a budget was a “best guess” and the actual was what happened when “real life” got in the way.

The Chief Finance Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, Elizabeth Griffiths, stated that the profile budget was set at the start of the year based on the budget agreed by Council. The profiling was about the pattern of expenditure expected. The budget was set for the year but expenditure was rarely in equal quarters. She highlighted that Annex B on page 81 provided a detailed breakdown of all of the variances against the profile budget and explanations for any significant variances. She clarified that a profile budget was not a forecast.

Councillor Graham questioned the shortfall variance of approximately £94k in parking charge revenue between budget and actual.

The Chief Finance Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, explained that the budget was set last year and the pandemic had a longer lasting impact than was expected at the time. She reminded Members that the number in question was for car parking enforcement fees which had drastically reduced over historical figures.

Councillor Postan thanked Mrs Griffiths for the continuance of the work started by the Group Finance Director in communication to the Audit and General Purposes Committee. This allowed them to reach some interesting views on the performance of the Auditor, Grant Thornton, who were nearly nine months late completing the Audit budget report. He encouraged Cabinet to be firm in a comment to Grant Thornton stating that this should not happen again.

Having considered the report, it was

Resolved that the 2021/22 Q3 finance and service performance report be noted.

95 Glover Review of Protected Landscapes - Consultation response to Government Report

Councillor Haine introduced the report and proposed an alteration to the last paragraph on page 104 of the pack, to firm up the Council’s stance. The suggested new wording for this paragraph was as follows:

“A key issue for the Cotswolds has been the suggestion in the Glover Review and previously that the Cotswolds could become a National Park. The Cotswolds is very much opposed to being part of a National Park and wishes to remain an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Government’s support of the Cotswolds remaining an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would be very much more appreciated”

Therefore, Councillor Haine proposed that the recommendations be supported as per the report, subject to the amended paragraph detailed above. This was seconded by Councillor Harvey.

Councillor Graham questioned why in item 19 on page 102 the suggestion that Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) teams should be made statutory consultees for development management, was being answered “NO”.

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The question was referred to the Principal Planning Policy Officer, Janice Bamsey, who stated that the opinion of the Business Manager - Development Management, Phil Shaw, had been that AONB should not be statutory consultees. Being statutory consultees would require consultation on all proposals within the AONB. Not being a statutory consultee would allow the AONB Board/team to only make representation on the developments that it chose to.

The Chief Executive stated that this was about the role that AONB teams played. Being a statutory consultee would put more pressure and work on the AONB planning team. Answering "NO" to item 19 allowed the AONB planning team to decide which planning applications they consulted on and allowed them to better manage their time and resources.

Councillor Graham believed it should be looked at from the Council's perspective not the AONB team's perspective and that this should be given more thought. The AONB were stating they had spare capacity which did not align with the reasoning presented by the Chief Executive.

Councillor Haine agreed that this needed further investigation and that could be done under recommendation b) with further discussion between himself and the Chief Executive.

Councillor Coul suggested that AONB teams already gave representations when needed. Changing this answer to a "YES" could make it a bureaucratic process for the sake of it. If it worked currently then why change it. However, if the AONB team felt they were not currently sufficiently consulted then it needed to be reviewed.

Councillor Postan stated that based on his experience of Snowdonia National Park, if the AONB team was a statutory consultee they would be required to make representation on everything including factories, roads, and sewage pits for example.

Councillor Cooper asked what criteria was used to get consultation responses from the Council.

The Chief Executive advised that judgement was made based on what was most important to the Council. Also things were responded to in different ways. Officers could respond directly to low key straightforward items, relevant Cabinet members could respond on other matters, and higher profile items may need to be brought to Cabinet or Full Council.

Councillor Enright suggested that if Councillors noticed a consultation they believed the Council should respond to, they should inform the Chief Executive. He went on to state that a comment in the Response to Oxfordshire County Council's Draft Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) should also be included in this response. This highlighted the importance of mentioning heritage alongside the natural environment. He felt that the Cotswolds were known as an AONB not just because of the natural environment but also because of the built environment and the nature of settlements within it, which give it an almost unrivalled character.

Having considered the report and having heard from Members and officers present, it was

Resolved that, subject to the amended paragraph detailed above:

- a) annex A be approved for submission to Government as the Council's response to the consultation on the Government response to the Glover Review; and

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b) authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to make minor alterations to the responses in Annex A, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning prior to submission.

96

West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan

Councillor Haine introduced the report and thanked the Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the very detailed discussions on this topic on Monday. He felt that the concerns raised in the Eynsham Parish Council statement echoed the points brought up at that meeting. Councillor Haine stated that the main point to communicate was that this was a Masterplan and individual planning applications would take account of most of those concerns.

Councillor Haine went on to advise that one exception was regarding Sustainable Movement and Connections on pages 202 and 203 of the report. The Sustainable Charter and Sustainable Homes could not be agreed upon as the Parish Council wanted Net-Zero to be achieved now rather than in 2025. This was not possible as developers were required to build to current Government regulations. If this was imposed by the Council, developers could win at appeal. Due to the build schedule, approximately 25% of the development would be built to current standards with the remaining 75% being built to 2025 standards.

Councillor Haine therefore proposed that the recommendations be supported as per the report.

Councillor Rylett commented that the document looked like an extended brochure and put forward standards which were mandatory anyway. Unfortunately, it was not specified when the Masterplan was approved that it would be Council led. It was now developer led which has resulted in this situation. The Parish Council did not want to stop the development but wanted to improve it, however, their views were not reflected in this document. He wanted to know if the comments from Scrutiny Committee had been noted by Cabinet.

Councillor Haines confirmed that Cabinet had received and considered the comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Rylett did not think Cabinet had been given sufficient time to absorb those comments and no changes were being asked for regarding this document.

Councillor Haines stated that many of the points made would be borne in mind when looking at the revision of the Local Plan. The local plan was where a lot of those points would come in. However, the current laws would mean that Council could not enforce many of things at present, such as triple glazed windows for example, until the law required it.

Councillor Rylett said he understood but was concerned that this only required the mandatory and could have gone further. He was also concerned with the level of thought given to the school layout and that the Local Centre was on the outskirts of Eynsham rather than in the centre. If only one change was made it should be to ensure construction traffic was not allowed through the Thornbury Estate as recommended by the County Council. There was little in the document about phasing and the interaction between West Eynsham and the Garden Village and there were many questions around that requiring clarity. Regarding S106 contributions, there was nothing in the draft which the Parish Council saw and had only had sight of it a few days prior to the meeting. He requested the Parish Council engagement was sought in S106 negotiations not only for this development but in general. In

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addition, there was a group of residents interested in self build, however, this appeared to miss the opportunity to provide an appropriate area.

Councillor Coul asked the Planning Policy Manager, Chris Hargraves, if this was a policy or just a framework. He confirmed it was the latter. She went on to say that as this was a framework, the issues raised could all be addressed in the Local Plan and the individual planning applications. She thoroughly supported the recommendations.

Councillor Poston suggested that developers were not stupid and neither were the buying public. If it was known that in two years' time the standards would change, they would not buy a house at the same price as if those new standards were included. He supported Councillor Haine's recommendations.

Councillor Haine responded to Councillor Rylett pointing out that most of it was a repeat of the issues raised at Monday's meeting which he believed had been answered at that time. The school layout was down to the County Council. The location of the community centre was based on developer reasons. The issue of construction traffic would be covered under construction management as part of the planning application as would the phasing. Eynsham Parish Council could put in Section 106 requests which would be given due consideration. Self-build space did not need to be specified as developers were well aware of the requirement to allow 5% for self-build.

Councillor Cooper said that he understood the developer was now responsible for this plan due to a legal opinion in Chipping Norton. If this was the case, the Council should apply to Government in advance of planning Bill in the autumn requesting that this be moved back to the District Council. He felt that the public wanted a source independent from the developer looking at it.

Councillor Harvey addressed the meeting and seconded Councillor Haine's proposal. He stated that it had been a source of considerable irritation to everyone that successive Governments had not moved more quickly to close the gap between "building homes" and "building homes for the future".

Councillor Graham suggested that Eynsham Parish Council should have been more involved, the Council was there to represent sustainable building and not developers and he was concerned that the Masterplan would have material weight in current and future applications.

Councillor Enright thanked the Planning Policy Manager and his team for a substantial achievement. The development could have been piecemeal but by completing a Masterplan negotiation with developers the Council had gained far more leverage and coherence, far better infrastructure, and a better approach altogether.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, it was

Resolved that

- a) the content of the report be noted; and
- b) the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan, attached at Annex A, be approved as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

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97 Electric Vehicle Charging Point Infrastructure and Fee Setting

Councillor Harvey introduced the report and stated that it spoke for itself, however, there were a number of uncertainties that would come back in future papers. This included a grant application that the Council had submitted and were expected to qualify for.

Councillor Harvey proposed the recommendations and this was seconded by Councillor MacRae.

Councillor Graham asked if recommendation 'c' could be quantified and queried if the income generated was included in the budget for next year.

Councillor Harvey stated this was the median of other charges and was subject to review. It would fluctuate with energy prices.

The Chief Finance Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, stated that it was the base electricity price plus a few pence to cover the installation and running costs. She advised that this would require regular review and would change constantly. It was not in next year's budget as it had not been approved when the budget was set. Any income would be negligible as it was an investment that covered its costs in order to provide a service not to make income.

Councillor Graham stated that it should be in future budgets. In response, the Chief Finance Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, stated that it would be included in future budgets, however, it was likely to be just a few hundred pounds.

It was therefore,

Resolved that

- a) subject to receipt of appropriate grant funding, the first phase of EVCPs, as detailed in this report, be approved, with costs of approximately £42,404;
- b) a further report will be brought to Cabinet to agree final estimated costs, once grant funding has been obtained and prior to work commencing;
- c) a standard fee per kWh is introduced based on the formula within the report, comprising revenue costs + £0.04. Based on current electricity price forecasts of £0.24per kwh, the fee to the customer would be £0.37 per kwh;
- d) authority is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members for Finance and Climate Change, to review and set fees between the annual renewal process, to mitigate the risk of financial losses to the Council, as costs fluctuate;
- e) amendments are made to the Parking Order, restricting vehicles from parking in charging bays unless they are charging a vehicle; and
- f) authority is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to review and make a final decision following consultation feedback on the amendments to the Parking Order.

98 Community Revenue Grant applications 2022/23

Councillor Doughty introduced the report and provided a summary of the grant applications detailed within the report.

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Councillor Doughty proposed that the recommendations within the report be supported. In seconding the proposal, Councillor Coul thanked all Members for a budget that allowed almost £188k to be shared amongst 13 organisations within the District.

Councillor Graham congratulated Councillor Doughty but was saddened that the 'Dot Collective' had not been mentioned. He advised that this was a young dementia charity bridging the gap between young and old. The Arts Council were supporting them and he thought this was an opportunity to look at partnership funding for which he had some ideas.

Councillor Doughty asked Councillor Graham to email information and she would look at but could not make any promises.

Councillor MacRae, MBE was very pleased to hear that the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) were included as he thought they were a very important charity for many disadvantaged people across the county.

Councillor Cooper was also pleased about the CAB and stated that sometimes they were there to just get a little order back into people lives. He suggested that some of the organisations being funded could be awarded a multi-year settlement to provide stability and reduce administration costs. He asked if this could be looked at over the coming year.

Councillor Coul announced that a three year funding deal for these organisations was already being looked at and thanked Councillor Cooper for his support.

Having considered the report, it was

Resolved that

- a) the recommended Community Revenue Grant awards for 2022/23, as detailed in Annex 1 to the report, be approved; and
- b) officers be requested to review the Community Revenue Grant programme as part of a fundamental review of all of the Council's Community Grant schemes in time for 2023/2024 in order to address the long term security of funding for key organisations, meet the current needs of residents and encourage innovative proposals.

The Meeting closed at 15.34

CHAIRMAN