

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 27 April 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Andrew Prosser, Marilyn Davies, Joy Aitman, Luci Ashbourne, Andrew Beaney, Rosa Bolger, Jill Bull, Laetisia Carter, Andrew Coles, Owen Collins, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Richard Langridge, Nick Leverton, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Mathew Parkinson, Andy Goodwin, Mark Johnson, Lysette Nicholls, Rupert Dent and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica) and Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Senior Strategic Support Officer)

CL.42 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the addition of Councillor Ashbourne to the list of apologies.

CL.43 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Mike Cahill, Colin Dingwall, Liz Leffman, Harry St John, Dean Temple and Ben Woodruff.

CL.44 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

CL.45 Receipt of Announcements

Expression of gratitude from the Chairman

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all of the Members for their support over the past year and for helping him as he settled in to the role of Chairman. He stated that this support had come from cross party Members. He acknowledged the assistance received from officers and, in particular, the Chairman's PA, Mandy Smith, who had been an invaluable asset during his term of office.

Members not standing for re-election

The Chair addressed the meeting and paid tribute to the six Members of the Council not standing for re-election in May 2022. They were:

Jake Acock

Rosa Bolger

Laetisia Carter

Derek Cotterill

Maxine Crossland

Steve Good

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Councillor McBride highlighted that Councillor Crossland had been his mentor since he first joined, helped him settle in and had provided him with valued support.

Councillor Enright thanked Councillors Bolger and Carter for their contribution to the Council over their terms. He stated that as Deputy Leader, Councillor Carter had always spoken with passion and authority, had been thought provoking and had brought fresh ideas to the Council. He felt there had been a change in the group dynamic and across the Chamber, thanked all those not standing for re-election and highlighted how they had all contributed in different and valuable ways.

Passing of John Grantham

The Chairman announced the recent passing of former Councillor John Grantham, aged 84 years. Members were advised that there had been a service of thanksgiving in March and Mr Grantham had been a hardworking Labour Councillor for the Chipping Norton Ward.

Councillor Saul addressed Council and stated that it would be difficult to image Chipping Norton without Mr Grantham as he had been involved in a wide range of activities including being a trustee of the Chipping Norton Voluntary Fire Brigade Charity as well as an author of local book 'Chipping Norton Town Hall Past and Present'. He concluded by stating that Mr Grantham would be hugely missed.

Announcement from the Leader

Councillor Mead addressed Council and thanked all Members and officers for their hard work, support and dedication over the past year. In particular she expressed her thanks to Giles Hughes, Frank Wilson, Elizabeth Griffiths and the Cabinet Members. She reflected on a difficult year impacted by the continuing Covid pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine. Councillor Mead added her thanks to Councillor Crossland who had also been her mentor when she first joined the Council.

Address from Councillor Cotterill

Councillor Cotterill offered encouragement to the remaining members of the Council and explained how different the Council's finances had looked when he first joined the Council. He felt that things had improved considerably since that time but did not feel that a four year term was long enough to bring about change. He reflected on the successful projects he had been involved in and gave Councillors an idea of the issues he would be continuing to raise. Councillor Cotterill concluded by expressing his hope that the authority would continue to retain its identity as West Oxfordshire District Council.

In response, Councillor Coles took the opportunity to thank Councillor Cotterill, who had been Chairman when Councillor Coles was first elected. He praised Councillor Cotterill for his polite, courteous and fair approach.

CL.46 Participation of the Public

There was none.

CL.47 Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees or Sub- Committees

Council were asked to consider the recommendations made by Cabinet and the Council's Committee since its last meeting. A list of the recommendations was attached at Annex I to the report.

Councillor Mead introduced the report and proposed that the two recommendations from the Standards Sub-Committee on 23 March 2022 be approved as laid out and this was duly

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seconded. **Resolved** that the following recommendations, as set out in Annex I to the report be agreed:

- a) that the Council formally adopt the Code of Conduct for Members effective from 18 May 2022;
- b) that Council include the Code of Conduct for Members within their Constitution effective from 18 May 2022; and
- c) that the Local Hearing Panel Procedure Rules be included in the revised Constitution effective from 18 May 2022.

CL.48 Constitution of the Council

Members received a report from the Business Manager for Corporate Responsibility which provided them with a summary of the work undertaken by the Constitution Working Group and asked Council to approve the amended Constitution with effect from Annual Council Meeting on 18 May 2022.

A Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures followed to ensure that decisions are efficient, transparent and accountable. The Council had a duty to publish an up to date Constitution which should be reviewed annually by the Monitoring Officer, with any necessary changes being considered by Council.

A Constitution Working Group (CWG) had been set up in July 2021 to conduct a full review of the Constitution. This group comprised: Councillors Coul (Chair), Acock, Cooper, Aitman, Temple, Fenton and Graham. The report summarised the work of the CWG and listed the proposed revisions to be made. The members of the working group were thanked for their excellent work.

Resolved that the revised Constitution be approved, with effect from Annual Council Meeting in May 2022.

CL.49 Motion - Water and Sewage Infrastructure Funding

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Langridge with a seconder to be sought at the meeting:

“This Council invites the Government to change the appropriate legislation relating to the funding of water and sewage infrastructure with the direct objective of speeding up the upgrading of our water and sewage infrastructure that has fallen way below the standards required today and resulted in serious deterioration of the quality of water in our rivers Windrush and Evenlode.

The motion requests that the law be changed so that developers/landowners have to meet, via a S106 agreement or CIL, the cost of any new or enlarged water main, sewer pipe or surface water pipes and STW (Sewage Treatment Works) upgrade that their development requires to ensure that the additional dwellings effluent can be dealt with without flooding/surcharges, storm event overflows etc from the relevant sewers or STWs.

We ask the Leader of the Council to write to the appropriate Government Minister on behalf of the Council to request this action be taken.

The current state of affairs is generally accepted as a national disgrace even on the admission of the water companies.”

Councillor Langridge had submitted the motion at the request of his fellow Independent Group member, Councillor St John who was unable to attend the Council meeting.

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The motion was seconded by Councillor Coles. Councillors agreed that this motion built on earlier motions and received the wholehearted support of Council.

Resolved that the Leader should write as set out in the motion.

CL.50 Emergency / Urgency Delegated Decisions

A report outlining the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020 was received.

The report advised that the Chief Executive had used his delegated powers to approve the following changes to the Council's Section 13A Policy. That the:

- a) £150 Council Tax Rebate be fully disregarded from the assessment of Council Tax Support;
- b) monthly allowance for Hosting Ukrainian Refugees be fully disregarded; and
- c) The 2022/2023 Council Tax Support scheme be amended to reflect this additional disregard

The Government's Council Tax Rebate scheme allows those households in council tax bands A to D to receive a payment of up to £150.00 per household. The Government has also agreed to give a monthly allowance of £350.00 to households who host a Ukrainian refugee for at least 6 months rent free.

The Council's Council Tax Support scheme is based on income bands with certain disregards on some income, such as child maintenance payments and disability payments. This means that these payments are totally disregarded when assessing a household's income. Other income not already allocated within the 'disregarded group' in the CTS scheme would qualify as 'income' and be considered when calculating a person's income assessment.

Use of urgency powers enabled these decisions to be made ahead of the 2022/23 financial year and ensure that West Oxfordshire residents are not disadvantaged.

The Leader outlined the report and asked members to note the report

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Resolved that the report is noted.

CL.51 Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held since 23 February 2022 were received.

Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27 January 2022
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	3 February 2022
Finance & Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	9 February 2022
Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10 February 2022
Cabinet	16 February 2022
Audit & General Purposes	17 February 2022
Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee	31 March 2022

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Joint Climate & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7 April 2022
Finance & Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	13 April 2022
Cabinet	20 April 2022
Audit & General Purposes	20 April 2022

CL.52 Sealing of Documents

The Council received the schedule of documents sealed out of meeting by the Chairman and the Head of Democratic Services, since the last meeting of the Council

Resolved that the document be noted.

The meeting closed at 15.02pm

CHAIRMAN