

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 20 July 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Julian Cooper (Chair), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Lidia Arciszewska, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Jill Bull, Mike Cahill, David Cooper, , Duncan Enright, Andy Goodwin, Mark Johnson, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Liz Leffman, Lysette Nicholls, Natalie King, Norman MacRae MBE, Martin McBride, Mathew Parkinson, Rosie Pearson, Rizvana Poole, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett,, Geoff Saul, Alex Wilson, Alaric Smith and Ruth Smith.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Susan Sale (Interim Monitoring Officer), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development), Zoe Campbell (Group Manager – Organisational Effectiveness), Andrew Brown (Business Manager Democratic Services) Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer) and Janet Eustace (Democratic Services Manager)

CL.13 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 May 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to item CL2 being amended to read that 'Councillor Coles wrote to the retiring Vice-Chairman Councillor Postan' and CL11 being amended to read that 'Counillor Beaney (not Cllr Parkinson) proposed the Non-grouped Independent' be added to Uplands Planning Sub Committee.

CL.14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Luci Ashbourne, Hugo Ashton, Owen Collins, Nathalie Chapple, Suzi Coul, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Richard Langridge, Nick Leverton, Michele Mead, Charlie Maynard and Dean Temple.

CL.15 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

CL.16 Receipt of Announcements

Chairman of the Council

The Chair introduced Zoe Campbell who had recently joined Publica as a Group Manager.

The Chair said that his Reception would be held at 6pm on 11 November at Blenheim Palace and expressed his thanks to the Duke of Marlborough. He announced that his Charity for the year would be the Royal British Legion.

The Chair would be hosting an event at Rousham Park on Sunday 7 May to mark the 50th anniversary of West Oxfordshire District Council and expressed his gratitude to Charles and Angela Cottrell-Dormer.

The Chair had invited Simon Hoare MP to give a lecture in March 2023 on the future of Northern Ireland. A reply was awaited.

The Chair announced it was with great sadness that he had to report the passing of Derek Millard. Derek served as a councillor from 1976 to 2008 and from 2012 until his retirement in 2014. Derek represented the ward of Combe and Stonesfield which changed to Stonesfield and Tackley in 2002. He served as Chair of the Housing and Planning Committees and was a Member of Planning and Uplands

(Sub) Committees. He also served as a Member on Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Derek was an active ward councillor and had a very effective working relationship with parish councils in his ward and with the very many residents he supported during his 34 years as a member of this council. The Chair said he had sent his sympathies to the family and that the funeral was to be held in August.

Cllr Woodruff announced the recent death of Brian Hicks, a former Officer of the Council. Mr Hicks had been a key figure in Ducklington serving as a Parish Councillor and on various other Committees. He would be much missed by his family and the wider community.

The Chair asked councillors and officers to observe a minute's silence in memory of Derek Millard and Brian Hicks.

The Leader of the Council

The Leader announced that the Toolkit produced by the Carbon Change Working Group had received national recognition and had been nominated for an award to be presented in London that evening. It was an excellent example of partnership working across Publica.

The first consultation event on the Council's Emerging Priorities would be held at Carterton on 5 September followed by a second event at Woodgreen on 15 September.

In a bid to become more accessible to residents, the Cabinet would be holding some of its future meetings in market towns throughout the district. More details would follow shortly.

Head of Paid Service announcements:

The Chief Executive noted the loss of water supply in the Burford area over the previous, very hot, weekend. He thanked Thames Water for their very prompt response and also officers of the Council who had provided support to the most vulnerable residents. Councillors were invited to attend an Emergency Planning briefing session to be held at 2 pm on 21 September which would explain the role of the Council in supporting the Emergency Services.

CL.17 Participation of the Public

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

CL.18 Members' Questions

The following questions were asked at the meeting, and below are the recorded answers:

Question 1 - for Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Cabinet Member for Environment, from Councillor Norman MacRae:

"The 'new' Council have made no secret of their aim to ensure the Water Companies (Thames Water) stop untreated sewage discharge to our rivers. As there is nothing in legislation that allows a District Council to 'enforce' against a water company, by what means will they ensure the manifest pledge is honoured; at what cost to this Council and in what timescale?"

Answer:

Whilst it is true that recent government legislation places no obligation or clear targets on water companies to reduce raw sewage discharges to watercourses, we as elected representatives of the West Oxfordshire residents need to set the goals and find the solutions to address this dire problem.

This is a good opportunity to update you on the actions that we have asked Thames Water to implement, which are as follows:

1. Increasing sewage treatment capacity - by December 2025, to have increased the treatment capacities of each sewage treatment works ("STW"), which currently has insufficient treatment capacity, so that their capacity exceeds the forecast capacity requirements for December 2028. Clearly capacity should take account of future housing growth, rather than just increasing capacity to catch up.

In the cases of smaller sewage treatment works, Thames Water to review which of these should be closed with the effluent pumped to larger sewage treatment works. Additionally, Thames Water and the Environment Agency to commit to working together to assign treatment capacities to all STWs

above Port Meadow which currently have no specified capacities, completing this work by December 2022.

2. Quantifying and communicating the volume of sewage discharged – it is not sufficient only to know how long sewage is being released, we need to know how much sewage is discharged. By December 2022, Thames Water to have fitted volume flowmeters to all STWs with FFTs over 15 litres per second; and by December 2023 to have fitted volume flowmeters to all STWs above Port Meadow. These flowmeters should be linked to real-time open source monitoring which is accessible online, as well as via Twitter and Facebook.

We will work closely with Thames Water, the Environment Agency and other key local organisations such as Windrush Action Against Sewage Pollution and Evenlode Catchment Partnership to drive towards these goals.

In answer to the supplementary Question Councillor Arciszewska confirmed that interactive Water Days were planned and that these would include a wide range of stakeholders.

Question 2 - for Councillor Joy Aitman, Cabinet Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, from Councillor Norman MacRae:

"The Oxfordshire Playing Field Association have been instructed by this Council to consider what works are required to the play area at Kilkenny Lane Country Park to bring it to a safe and fully usable standard. What progress has there been on this plan; what are the anticipated costs and within what timespan?"

Answer:

The Council received the report from The Oxfordshire Playing Field Association on the 30th June. Officers are meeting in July to review the report and assess the recommendations, options and costings.

In answer to the supplementary question Councillor Aitman said she was not aware of a recent site meeting between Councillors and at the Monahan Way pitches but agreed to make enquiries and update Cllr MacRae.

Question 3 - for Councillor Carl Rylett, Cabinet Member Planning & Sustainable Development, from Councillor Jeff Haine:

"On housing targets and infrastructure, you have called for more realistic housing targets rather than the "sky-high" ones in the Local Plan and you have also called for infrastructure before development. How are you going to deliver on these?"

Answer:

The housing requirement set out in the currently adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 is based on the District's then identified housing need as set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. It also includes an agreed apportionment of unmet housing need from Oxford City.

The forthcoming review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider the most appropriate housing requirement through to 2041 taking account of the most up to date evidence on housing need but also taking into account all other relevant considerations in accordance with national policy.

With regards to the delivery of infrastructure, it is anticipated that the Local Plan review will be accompanied by a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) the contents of which will be reflected through an appropriate policy/policies within the new Local Plan itself thus helping to ensure timely delivery of supporting infrastructure in accordance with established place-making principles.

In answer to the supplementary question Councillor Rylett confirmed that land supply remains in excess of 5 years.

Question 4 - for Councillor Andrew Prosser, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, from Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf:

“Climate Change Working Group: Does the Cabinet member for Climate Change intend to bring back the Climate Change Working Group and chair it?”

Answer:

“Plans are being formulated to significantly increase the reach, scale and urgency of climate action through greater partnership working with other councils, and through engagement in the wider community, including businesses, parish and town councils, community action groups, schools, and residents directly. These plans are being developed with a focus on some of the largest impact areas of building retrofit and energy generation, food and land management, and travel. Particular attention will be given to where there are co-benefits of carbon emissions reduction, climate resilience/adaptation, and ecology enhancement (refer to Biannual Report).

What we want to harness in taking forward future plans is a robust consultation process and working group approach that goes beyond the role of Scrutiny, and actively engages and captures the ideas and energy from local Councillors as well as the wider community in shaping future projects and initiatives. The details for how that happens, and what that forum might look like, is being considered by Cabinet in discussions and planning towards a new Council Plan and list of priorities. It is therefore too early to give a full and comprehensive response to this question, as work is in progress to agree the best way forward. It can however be addressed more fully at the next Full Council meeting, which I propose we do.”

In answer to the supplementary question Councillor Prosser confirmed that a report would be sent to the 29 September meeting of the Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Question 5 - for Councillor Andrew Prosser, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, from Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf:

“How is our leisure centres operator, GLL, planning to deal with the energy crisis?”

Answer:

GLL recognise the serious and significant impact of the current fluctuation in Utility Prices and as a National Leisure Group who operate 135 facilities with public pools and multiple Local Authority Partners – the impact of this National Crisis is being felt by GLL across their whole business.

Officers have arranged to start meetings, in addition to the regular monitoring/meeting programme, to specifically monitor the Energy Price Crisis. Any proposals and service changes that are identified to help with the Short Term saving of energy will be put forward to the appropriate channels for consideration and approval – and will be supported as far as possible with extra customer communications where the impacts are likely to be felt by them. It is vital that energy reduction doesn’t lead to a reduction in customer use, but there will likely be impacts in both service delivery and financial cost to customers. During this period of Recovery from the pandemic, the increased costs couldn’t have come at a worse time for the Leisure industry and may lead to increased customer/resident dissatisfaction.

In answer to the supplementary question Councillor Aitman confirmed that Finance and Management Overview Scrutiny Committee would receive a report on this issue.

CL.19 Recommendations from Cabinet and Council Committees

Council was asked to consider the recommendations made by Cabinet and the Council’s Committees since the last ordinary Council meeting on 27 April.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- 1) allocate £2.15m of funding from the Capital Programme “Investment Strategy for Recovery” line item to facilitate the changes and deliver up to £186,000 of net annual revenue benefits with a return on capital of up to 10% after capital financing costs;
- 2) approve the carry forward of Capital Budget of £14,399,348 as detailed in Annex B of the report;
- 3) approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.

Councillor Levy, the Cabinet member for Finance proposed to approve recommendations, this was seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Enright, this was duly put to the vote and agreed.

Resolved that Councillors agreed to all of the above recommendations.

CL.20 Report of the Leader

The Council's Interim Monitoring Officer, Susan Sale, introduced a report to show the Leader of the Council will advise Council in writing of his Cabinet Members, his executive delegations, and the exercise of any executive functions by way of joint arrangements.

The Leader confirmed that a number of Champions had still to be appointed. He agreed to provide details of how the additional costs resulting from the increased number of Cabinet positions were being met.

Councillors were recommended to note the contents of this report, and to delegate authority to the Interim Monitoring Officer to update the Council's Constitution to reflect the content of this report.

Resolved that report was noted and approved to delegate authority to the Interim Monitoring Officer to update the Council's Constitution.

CL.21 Honorary Titles

Council considered a scheme for conferring honorary titles on former councillors who have, in the opinion of Council, rendered eminent service to the Council.

Several Councillors expressed reservations about using a points system and it was agreed that this needed to be reconsidered.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Graham proposed to refer to the constitution Working Party, this was seconded by councillor Enright, was duly put to the vote and

Resolved that the Council refer to the Constitution working Party.

CL.22 Motion - Proposed by the Vice Chair of the Council, Councillor Andrew Coles

The following motion was submitted by Councillor Coles:

"In view of the extraordinary long-service of former members David Harvey and Derek Cotterill to this council and the contribution they made to West Oxfordshire, this council resolves to convene a special meeting of the council to confer the title of Honorary Aldermen on these two worthy recipients."

The Chair confirmed that Councillor Coles had withdrawn the motion in writing and it was not debated.

CL.23 Climate Action Biannual Report

Councillor Prosser, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change introduced the 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 2022.

Councillors welcomed the report and queried whether actions in West Oxfordshire might have a wider national or international implications. It was felt that partnership working had achieved a greater impact than would a council working on its own. The Council had made a good start with its vehicles and buildings but more needed to be done. Central Government should be lobbied to tighten requirements on developers to create carbon neutral housing. Councillor Prosser was disappointed that the Planning Inspector's examination of the Salt Cross Action Plan does not impose sustainable and energy efficient requirements but instead states only that they should be considered.

Councillor Prosser proposed that Councillors note the report, this was seconded by Councillor Arciszewska was duly put to the vote and noted by Councillors.

Resolved that the report be noted.

CL.24 Sealing of Documents

The Council received the schedule of documents sealed since the last meeting of the Council.

Councillor Fenton declared a non-registerable interest as a member of the congregation of St Mary's Church.

Resolved that the document be noted.

The Chair paid tribute to the Fire Brigade for its service over the last few days. Cllr Brooker confirmed that the Thames Valley Fire Service had received 700 calls the previous day and had been called to incidents throughout the Thames Valley.

The Meeting closed at 3.10 pm

CHAIR