

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council

held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 20 February 2013

at the Guildhall, Abingdon



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Alison Thomson (Chairman), Mike Badcock (Vice-Chairman), John Amys, Marilyn Badcock, Matthew Barber, Eric Batts, Julia Bricknell, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Andrew Crawford, Tony de Vere, Charlotte Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Jason Fiddaman, Debby Hallett, Jim Halliday, Jane Hanna, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Holly Holman, Simon Howell, Bob Johnston, Bill Jones, Mohinder Kainth, Angela Lawrence, Pat Lonergan, Sandy Lovatt, Sue Marchant, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Aidan Melville, Elizabeth Miles, John Morgan, Mike Murray, Jerry Patterson, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Fiona Roper, Robert Sharp, Val Shaw, Melinda Tilley, Margaret Turner, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware, Richard Webber, and John Woodford.

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed, and Anna Robinson.

Number of members of the public: 2

Co.61 Apologies for absence

Councillors Dudley Hoddinott, Peter Jones, Ron Mansfield, Gill Morgan, Kate Precious, and Janet Shelley had each sent their apologies for absence.

Co.62 Minutes

RESOLVED: To

- (a) adopt as a correct record the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 December 2012 and agree that the chairman signs them, subject to the following amendments:
- In minute Co.45 'Declarations of interests', amend the second paragraph to read '...Councillor Jim Halliday declared that he worked for a founder partner of Science Vale UK...'
 - In minute Co.51 'Councillor Peter Jones', record the voting on the resolution as: For 25, Against 6, Abstentions 12
 - In minute Co.60 'Notices of motions' motion 1, record the voting as: For 21, Against 19, Abstentions 2

- In minute Co.60 'Notices of motions' motion 2, amend the first sentence of the first paragraph to read '... and an individual maximum grant of £1,000 and that funding was restricted to festivals and events.'
- In minute Co.60 'Notices of motions' motion 4, record the voting as: For 19, Against 22, Abstentions 2

(b) record all votes in future Council, committee, and sub-committee minutes (by 27 votes to 5 with 11 abstentions).

Co.63 Declarations of interest

None

Co.64 Chairman's announcements

The chairman reported that she had sent a card of condolence on behalf of the council to Councillor Dudley Hoddinott following the death of his wife, Brenda.

Co.65 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting Council

Councillor David Hignell from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council asked the following question:

'Sutton Courtenay Parish Council has recently carried out a general land use survey of all the land within its administrative boundaries. It has broken down the general land use into four basic categories: (i) Housing and associated/incidental uses; (ii) Agriculture; (iii) Commercial/industrial; and (iv) Minerals/waste disposal.

The most surprising feature of this survey is how little land is comprised within the first two categories. Only 20 per cent of the land is given over to the village itself and associated uses and only 19 per cent of the land remains in agricultural use. This means that 61 per cent of the parish land mass is under the other two categories: 29 per cent for commercial/industrial and 32 per cent for minerals/waste disposal. Neither of these two uses provides any real benefit to the village or its residents.

The general feeling within the parish is that of being "squeezed" by uses that are harmful to both the health and well-being of the community and to the character and rural appearance of the village. Further, neither the district nor county councils appear to have any regard for the cumulative impact on the village and its infrastructure in so far as continuing blind acceptance of development proposals, whatever they may be. It appears to the parish, therefore, that neither council is very likely to be influenced by government guidance as set out in both the Localism Bill and the National Planning Policy Framework.

During your council's strategic housing land availability assessment last year, the council, through a written reply from Councillor Cox to a specific question on housing allocations to 2025, offered firm assurances that the village would not have to accept further land allocations for housing beyond existing commitments.

Bearing all of the foregoing in mind, will the council now provide a written response to the Parish Council acknowledging its duty of protection to Sutton Courtenay and confirming

that it will protect the village from any further development over and above existing commitments and sustainable infill?’

Councillor Cox responded by promising a written response. He also stated that he recognised the need to retain the identity and character of Sutton Courtenay village (and all of the Vale’s villages) from unacceptable and harmful development, an important role of planning. The council must balance the needs of our local communities for housing against social, economic, and environmental issues. The council considered each planning application on its own planning merits and in the context of local and national planning policy as well as local views. The council considered carefully the necessary infrastructure and the cumulative impacts of new development on our villages and settlements and recognised the value of proportionate growth of our settlements to ensure the council maintained sustainable communities for the future.

Co.66 Urgent business

The chairman reported that she had accepted one item as a matter of urgent business, that being a recommendation from the Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property to add to the capital programme to deliver the Heart of Abingdon Heritage Trail project. The reason for urgency was that the project funding was needed shortly to allow the project to proceed. The chairman agreed to take this recommendation under agenda item 9 ‘Recommendations from Cabinet and committees’.

Co.67 Petitions under standing order No.13

None

Co.68 Questions under standing order 12

- (1) The chairman reported that question 1 submitted by Councillor Jenny Hannaby had been withdrawn.
- (2) Question from Councillor Jim Halliday to Councillor Matthew Barber:

‘On 5 October 2012 all Councillors were sent details of the Capital Grant bids submitted by local organisations. In December the four area committees considered the majority of the bids and decided what if any grant should be awarded. However, a number of applications were excluded from the area committee agendas as apparently they were considered to be Vale-wide - for example: Age UK Oxfordshire who bid for £2,714, Oxfordshire Association for the Blind who bid for £570, and the Oxfordshire Chinese Community Advice Centre who bid for £5,000.

Please could the Leader list all such Vale-wide applications and for each state whether a decision has been made whether to award a grant, who made the decision, and the amount awarded?’

Councillor Barber agreed to provide a written reply outside of the meeting.

- (3) Question from Councillor Tony de Vere to Councillor Matthew Barber.

‘How many festival grant applications were received in 2012/13 and what was the total sum requested?’

Councillor Barber agreed to provide a written reply outside of the meeting.

- (4) The chairman reported that question 4 submitted by Councillor Tony de Vere had been withdrawn.

- (5) The chairman reported that question 5 submitted by Councillor Ron Mansfield had been withdrawn.

- (6) Question from Councillor Jane Hanna to Councillor Matthew Barber.

‘Will you undertake to continue to make payments to parish and town councils in 2014/15 and beyond to offset the effects of the new Council tax reduction scheme?’

Councillor Barber reported that medium term financial plan (this formed part of the budget papers to be discussed later in the meeting) included £602,000 to offset the effects to parish and town councils over the next five years.

Councillor Hanna asked a supplementary question. Would this amount completely offset the effects of the council tax reduction scheme?

Councillor Barber replied that there were no guarantees as the level of funding depended on the council tax reduction scheme in place at the time. The government grant was unlikely to completely offset the cost of the change. The council had allocated £400,000 to offset the effects to parish and town councils.

- (7) Question from Councillor Tony de Vere to Councillor Reg Waite.

‘Would the Cabinet member care to comment on the poor condition of a number of Bring Sites around the Vale?’

Councillor Waite replied, stating that he had been concerned with the poor condition of many of the council’s ‘bring sites’, some of which he believed were dirty and out of character to what the council wanted. Various actions had been taken to improve the situation. Clearer signage informed users what the sites were for, and enforcement action had been taken against several people and businesses.

Bring sites were introduced over ten years ago but since the introduction of the council’s new recycling contract and wheeled bins for residential properties, use of the bring sites had changed. Many bins had been vandalised and there were many incidents of fly tipping, with 33 per cent of the fly tipping in the district occurring at bring sites. Consequently, a large proportion of material left at these sites was contaminated and could not be recycled. The material then went to landfill, resulting in an additional cost to the council.

He believed that bring sites had never portrayed a good picture. Even when the bins were full, people continued to dump rubbish around them. He wanted this to change. He reported that he wanted all recyclable material to be recycled and not

sent to landfill. The Vale was the top recycling council in the country and he wanted this to continue. To assist, he was currently carrying out a review of bring sites in the district.

Councillor de Vere asked a supplementary question. Did this mean that Councillor Waite intended to close the bring sites?

Councillor Waite replied that a review was taking place and a decision on the future of the Vale's bring sites would be made later. However, he reported that some other councils had closed some bring sites and there had been no complaints or additional fly tipping.

(8) Question from Councillor Jerry Patterson to Councillor Mike Murray.

'In what way is the list of strategic housing sites in paragraph 13 of agenda item 11 of 8 February Cabinet agenda, set out in italics below, different to that consulted on by the council over two years ago?

The allocation of the following strategic housing sites (which are in addition to those already identified in the current Local Plan, such as Grove Airfield) and details of the development they will accommodate, and infrastructure and services that will be sought

- *Valley Park, Harwell (2,150 homes)*
- *Crab Hill, north of Wantage and east of Grove (1,500 homes)*
- *Monk's Farm, north of Grove (750 homes)*
- *Land on the northern part of Harwell Oxford Campus (400 homes) and*
- *Land on the south side of Park Road, Faringdon (350 homes)'*

Councillor Mike Murray agreed to provide a written reply.

Co.69 Recommendations from the Cabinet and committees

Council considered the following recommendations from Cabinet, the Cabinet member for economy, leisure, and property, and the General Licensing Committee:

(1) **Treasury management mid-year monitoring 2012/13**

At its meeting on 8 February 2013, Cabinet had considered the treasury management mid-year monitoring report of the head of finance.

RESOLVED: to note that Cabinet is satisfied that the council's treasury activities are being carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

(2) **Treasury management and investment strategy 2013/14**

At its meeting on 8 February 2013, Cabinet had considered the report of the head of finance on the treasury management strategy, the annual investment strategy and the prudential indicators. The Audit and Governance Committee also considered this report in January and made recommendations, which Cabinet has supported. In addition, Cabinet also agreed to keep the strategy under review.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the treasury management strategy 2013/14 as set out in Appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013, subject to Cabinet keeping the strategy under review;
- (b) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2013/14 to 2015/16 as set out in table 2, appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013; and
- (c) approve the annual investment strategy 2013/14 set out in appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013 and the lending criteria detailed in table 5.

(3) **Budget 2013/14**

On 8 February 2013, Cabinet had made recommendations on the 2013/14 budget. The chairman agreed to consider these under agenda item 10 relating to the 2013/14 budget.

(4) **Skin piercing**

On 21 January 2013, the General Licensing Committee had considered a report on the adoption of a new single consolidated set of byelaws, produced by the department of health, to regulate acupuncture, tattooing, semi-permanent skin-colouring, cosmetic piercing and electrolysis. Council supported the committee's recommendation.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) make new model byelaws under Sections 14 and 15 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended by the Local Government Act 2003) for the regulation of acupuncture, tattooing, semi-permanent skin-colouring, cosmetic piercing and electrolysis (and revoke existing byelaws); and
- (b) authorise the head of legal and democratic services to take all steps necessary to obtain confirmation of the byelaws from the Secretary of State for Health.

(5) **Funding to deliver the Heart of Abingdon Heritage Trail project**

On 15 February 2013, the Cabinet member for economy, leisure, and property had made an individual Cabinet member decision to recommend Council to approve the addition of £14,200 to the capital programme, from externally received monies, to deliver the Heart of Abingdon Heritage Trail project. Council approved the recommendation.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet member for economy, leisure, and property, Councillor Elaine Ware, agreed to advise Councillor Patterson of the external funding sources outside the meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve the addition of £14,200 to the capital programme, from externally received monies, for delivery of the Heart of Abingdon Heritage Trail project.

Co.70 Budget 2013/14

Council considered Cabinet's budget proposals. These were contained in the head of finance's report that covered the revenue budget for 2013/14, the medium term financial plan and the capital programme.

Before considering the budget, the chairman reminded councillors that they were not entitled to vote on any issue affecting the level or administration of the council tax if they were over two months in arrears with their council tax payments.

Contained within the budget report at appendix H was a report from the chief finance officer on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves. Council noted this report.

The chairman sought Council's agreement to allow one councillor from each political group to make their budget speech for longer than the time limited by standing orders. Council noted that Councillor Matthew Barber would present the Cabinet's budget proposal and Councillor Richard Webber would speak on behalf of the opposition.

RESOLVED: to suspend Standing Order 31(4) to allow one councillor from each political group to speak for up to 10 minutes to make their budget statements.

Councillor Barber moved the Cabinet's budget proposals; this was seconded by Councillor Yvonne Constance.

Councillor Barber, Leader of the Council, then made his budget speech. He reported that last year the Conservative group had set about putting the council's finances in order. This year the group had built on its success and continued to deliver high quality public services in the areas that people cared about, whilst keeping taxes low and delivering value for money. For just £116.69 per year for the average household, the Conservative group was managing the council's finances prudently to improve public services at a time of decreasing government grant.

Building the local economy remained central to what the council did, and he reported that the budget established a significant fund to allow appropriate investment in infrastructure and services for the future. The announcement this week of Oxfordshire's success in the City Deal programme brought the council a step closer to the reality of genuinely devolved decision making on local infrastructure.

He continued to lobby government to simplify the business rates retention scheme to ensure a real financial incentive to grow the local economy. The council was also working increasingly closely with local businesses to ensure the economy of the Vale continued to thrive. From the shopkeeper to the scientist, the Vale was an excellent place to do business and he would ensure that the infrastructure was in place to help that continue.

Access to sports and leisure facilities would improve as a result of this budget. For example, the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre would see an extension to its car park, allowing more people from across the district to enjoy the facilities offered there. This ran alongside improvements that would be made as a result of the council's new leisure contract which would look at every leisure facility in the district.

In Wantage, the Civic Hall was set for major improvements. By harnessing funds from developers and through prudent financial management, there would be over £350,000 investment over the next five years in Wantage Civic Hall and other leisure facilities in the town for the benefit of the wider district.

The Conservative group had focussed on the things that were important to the public. It had listened to the public's concerns about the state of public toilets in the district. The public conveniences the council provided were important to residents and visitors to our towns and villages. Firstly, the expensive and unpopular automatic toilets at Hales Meadow in Abingdon and in Millbrook Square in Grove would be removed. Then the council would refurbish the most complained about public toilets in Faringdon and Abingdon and would set out a strategy to improve facilities across the district, where possible harnessing private investment to limit the cost to the taxpayer. These facilities would improve and remain free to use.

The council would support parish councils by offering grants to help them cope with the changes in tax base. There would also be a grant scheme to direct local resources to areas that had taken the most housing. And the council would continue its popular capital grants scheme which offered £100,000 a year to community groups and parish councils to support local communities.

The council would continue to roll out free wi-fi after a successful trial in Wantage and had used extra funding from government to help improve the shopping experience in our market towns.

The budget offered consistently good services, investment where it made a difference and provided stability for the future, all at no extra cost to the taxpayer. Councillor Barber commended the budget to the Council.

Councillor Yvonne Constance, the seconder, reserved the right to speak later in the budget debate. Councillor Richard Webber, leader of the opposition, asked to do likewise.

The chairman reported that there were six amendments to the Cabinet's budget proposals and agreed to consider them individually in the order they were received. A seventh amendment was withdrawn. The section 151 officer reported that the budget amendments were affordable.

Amendment 1

Councillor Jim Halliday proposed, and Councillor Tony de Vere seconded, the following amendment:

‘We wish to increase the revenue grants budget by £50,000 per annum.’

Councillor Halliday reminded the council of the history of its grants schemes and pointed out that there was no longer a revenue grants scheme. He believed a revenue scheme was important to support the many organisations in the district, in addition to separate schemes associated with new housing developments.

Councillor Halliday also asked the leader to identify where in the budget were the funds for the open air pool at the Abbey Meadows in Abingdon, as requested in the motion passed by Council at its last meeting.

Councillor Tony de Vere, in seconding the amendment, believed that the council had sufficient funds to support a revenue grants budget. The £100,000 offered in the new homes bonus grants scheme was insufficient.

Other councillors debated the amendment, some supporting it, others questioning where the budget would come from. Councillor Halliday in summing up the debate reminded Council that the new homes bonus grants scheme would not help those parishes without new housing. A separate revenue scheme was needed.

The chairman put amendment 1 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 1	Against amendment 1	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Alison Thomson
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	
Tony de Vere	Mike Badcock	
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jim Halliday	Eric Batts	
Jane Hanna	Yvonne Constance	
Jenny Hannaby	Roger Cox	
Bob Johnston	Charlotte Dickson	
Angela Lawrence	Gervase Duffield	
Pat Lonergan	Jason Fiddaman	
Sue Marchant	Anthony Hayward	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Holly Holman	
Aidan Melville	Simon Howell	
Elizabeth Miles	Bill Jones	
Jerry Patterson	Mohinder Kainth	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	John Morgan	
Val Shaw	Michael Murray	
Richard Webber	Fiona Roper	
John Woodford	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
20	24	1

Amendment 1 was declared not carried.

Amendment 2

Councillor Jenny Hannaby proposed, and Councillor Richard Webber seconded, the following amendment:

‘To reinforce and assist the excellent work being done by our Flood Officer, appoint a full-time assistant. Cost £40,000 per annum.’

Councillor Hannaby believed that the council’s flood officer need an assistant as there was a large volume of work due to the recent weather and the large number of planning applications received by the council.

Councillor Webber, in seconding the amendment, believed that not enough work was being done on flooding. The council’s officer had too much work for the time available and needed support.

Other councillors debated the amendment, some supporting it believing it was affordable, while others questioned why this was needed when many local residents and local flood groups undertook much work in their communities. Councillor Barber in his right of reply, reported that the council would have a student to assist it with this function for 15 months at no extra cost. If this proved successful, it could be repeated.

The chairman put amendment 2 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 2	Against amendment 2	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Mike Badcock
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	Angela Lawrence
Tony de Vere	Matthew Barber	Alison Thomson
Debby Hallett	Eric Batts	
Jim Halliday	Yvonne Constance	
Jane Hanna	Roger Cox	
Jenny Hannaby	Charlotte Dickson	
Bob Johnston	Gervase Duffield	
Pat Lonergan	Jason Fiddaman	
Sue Marchant	Anthony Hayward	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Holly Holman	
Aidan Melville	Simon Howell	
Elizabeth Miles	Bill Jones	
Jerry Patterson	Mohinder Kainth	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	John Morgan	
Val Shaw	Michael Murray	
Richard Webber	Fiona Roper	

John Woodford	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
19	23	3

Amendment 2 was declared not carried.

Amendment 3

Councillor Tony de Vere proposed, and Councillor Jenny Hannaby seconded, the following amendment:

‘In order to address the problem of the ‘scruffy Vale’, we should pay for an extra Environmental Warden to help with fly-tipping, dog fouling, etc. at a cost of £50,000 per annum.’

Councillor de Vere believed that it was important to keep the Vale clean. Although the waste contract monitoring report was good, the board report had shown there had been an increasing number of fly-tipping incidents. He believed that an additional warden would help reduce this recent trend and allow the ‘bring sites’ to be kept clean, and would help reduce dog fouling.

Councillor Hannaby, in seconding the amendment, wanted additional resource to clean up the towns.

Other councillors believed an additional warden was not necessary but rather, there should be more emphasis on education and enforcement action. In summing up the debate, Councillor de Vere urged the ruling group to retain the ‘bring sites’, empty them more often, and reduce fly-tipping.

The chairman put amendment 3 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 3	Against amendment 3	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Alison Thomson
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	
Tony de Vere	Mike Badcock	
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jim Halliday	Eric Batts	
Jane Hanna	Yvonne Constance	
Jenny Hannaby	Roger Cox	
Bob Johnston	Charlotte Dickson	
Angela Lawrence	Gervase Duffield	
Pat Lonergan	Jason Fiddaman	

Sue Marchant	Anthony Hayward	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Holly Holman	
Aidan Melville	Simon Howell	
Elizabeth Miles	Bill Jones	
Jerry Patterson	Mohinder Kainth	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	John Morgan	
Val Shaw	Michael Murray	
Richard Webber	Fiona Roper	
John Woodford	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
20	24	1

Amendment 3 was declared not carried.

Amendment 4

Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer proposed, and Councillor Jim Halliday seconded, the following amendment:

‘Delete the proposed 2013/14 reduction of funding to the Abingdon Partnership, and give the Partnership notice that it is planned to reduce the funding by £5,000 in 2014/15.’

Councillor Mayhew-Archer asked Council adopt this modest amendment that would allow the Choose Abingdon Partnership more time to plan and seek funding from other sources. She considered the partnership to be valuable and good value for money.

Councillor Halliday, in seconding the amendment, believed every organisation needed time to plan and budget its resources. Any funding cut from the district or the county council would fall on the town council to make up. He believed a planned, gradual shift in funding patterns would be a better solution.

Some councillors believed that economic development was an important district council function and that the partnership was good value for money in supporting the local economy, and thereby they supported the amendment. Other councillors pointed to partnership agreement whereby this council matched funds given by the county council and believed that the town council was happy with the funding proposals.

The chairman put amendment 4 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 4	Against amendment 4	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Sandy Lovatt
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	Aidan Melville
Tony de Vere	Mike Badcock	Alison Thomson
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jim Halliday	Eric Batts	
Jane Hanna	Yvonne Constance	
Jenny Hannaby	Roger Cox	
Bob Johnston	Charlotte Dickson	
Angela Lawrence	Gervase Duffield	
Pat Lonergan	Jason Fiddaman	
Sue Marchant	Anthony Hayward	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Holly Holman	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Mohinder Kainth	
Judy Roberts	John Morgan	
Val Shaw	Michael Murray	
Richard Webber	Fiona Roper	
John Woodford	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
19	23	3

Amendment 4 was declared not carried.

Amendment 5

Councillor Judy Roberts proposed, and Councillor Debby Hallett seconded, the following amendment:

‘We wish to allocate a one-off sum for the year 2013/14 of £50,000 for a needs assessment for recreational facilities in north-east Vale.’

Councillor Roberts believed that as there had been additional housing in the north-eastern Vale, there should be an up-to-date leisure needs survey for that part of the district. The area had missed out on developer funding for leisure facilities.

Councillor Hallett, in seconding the amendment, believed an evidence base was needed to show leisure need in this area as it was lagging behind other parts of the Vale. This evidence would help bring in developer contributions to leisure facilities.

Some councillors supported the amendment believing there were fewer facilities in the north-eastern Vale compared to other parts of the district. Other councillors disagreed, nor did they not consider that the north-east part of the Vale was an area of deprivation.

There were many leisure facilities in the area and nearby in Oxford that local residents used.

In summing up the debate, Councillor Roberts urged Council to support the amendment, thereby spending to gain money from developers.

The chairman put amendment 5 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 5	Against amendment 5	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Alison Thomson
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	
Tony de Vere	Mike Badcock	
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jim Halliday	Eric Batts	
Jane Hanna	Yvonne Constance	
Jenny Hannaby	Roger Cox	
Bob Johnston	Charlotte Dickson	
Angela Lawrence	Gervase Duffield	
Pat Lonergan	Jason Fiddaman	
Sue Marchant	Anthony Hayward	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Holly Holman	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Mohinder Kainth	
Judy Roberts	Sandy Lovatt	
Val Shaw	Aidan Melville	
Richard Webber	John Morgan	
John Woodford	Michael Murray	
	Fiona Roper	
	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
19	25	1

Amendment 5 was declared not carried.

Amendment 6

Councillor Julia Bricknell proposed, and Councillor Judy Roberts seconded, the following amendment:

‘Allocate a revenue sum of £100,000 one-off for the year 2013/14 to support and set up youth clubs throughout the Vale.’

Councillor Bricknell believed that the young people of the district needed better facilities. Allocating this sum would help support youth clubs and allow new ones to be set up, bringing many benefits to the younger population.

Councillor Roberts, in seconding the amendment, believed this funding would support new play equipment, help secondary school aged children, and provide places for them to go after school.

Some councillors supported the amendment as they believed not enough was spent in support of young people. Other councillors disagreed, pointing out that this was a county council function and gave examples of good county-run facilities in the Vale. Some councillors asked how would this money help or set up and sustain youth clubs, believing the amendment lacked detail.

In summing up the debate, Councillor Bricknell believed the amendment would provide additional funds to support the county council's work.

The chairman put amendment 6 to the vote. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For amendment 6	Against amendment 6	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
Julia Bricknell	John Amys	Angela Lawrence
Andrew Crawford	Marilyn Badcock	Alison Thomson
Tony de Vere	Mike Badcock	
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jim Halliday	Eric Batts	
Jane Hanna	Yvonne Constance	
Jenny Hannaby	Roger Cox	
Bob Johnston	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Loneragan	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	
Aidan Melville	Holly Holman	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Mohinder Kainth	
Judy Roberts	Sandy Lovatt	
Val Shaw	John Morgan	
Richard Webber	Michael Murray	
John Woodford	Fiona Roper	
	Robert Sharp	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
19	24	2

Amendment 6 was declared not carried.

Motion

With all six amendments lost, the chairman asked Council to debate the original motion.

Councillor Yvonne Constance, seconder of the motion, believed the budget brought many reasons for celebration. To start with there was likely to be an underspend in the current year's revenue budget through careful budget management. This helped the proposed budget also. There was no need to cut services this year and money could be returned to balances, prudent saving for a rainy day. She believed the council should not spend its reserves on every worthy cause. Instead, grants had been spread evenly across the Vale; partnership funding had been spread evenly too. The council should also celebrate the successful way it managed multiple flooding events during the winter and she thanked the officers for their efforts.

Councillor Richard Webber made his budget speech as leader of the opposition. He criticised the Conservative group for the lack of clarity during the budget preparation. For example, the reasons for funding levels for the advice centres were not clear and there had been last minute changes to the Abingdon Partnership funding without explanation. The draft budget for consultation gave no indication of which growth bids would be taken; and the draft budget only had partial information on new homes bonus. It was impossible for the public to get a clear view of the council's true financial position.

He criticised the Cabinet member for finance for suggesting that the draft budget consultation idea to close public toilets was an 'officer's budget proposal', when the Cabinet member had asked officers to produce a list of possible savings. If the Cabinet had no intention of accepting them, why had they publicised them? This led to confusion, diverting the public's attention from the real possible cuts under consideration. Councillor Webber believed that what went into the public domain for consultation should genuinely be for consultation. He urged the Cabinet member to reconsider his approach to budget setting in future.

Councillor Webber reported that due to the Liberal Democrat administration's handling of limited resources in years of difficult circumstances, this Council's finances were handed over to the new Conservative administration in 2011 in a robust condition. Hard decisions were taken to achieve this. However, the new homes bonus had completely changed the picture. It was largely a misnomer, turning out to be a revenue grant subsidy. The only new homes bonus to be banked so far was gained through development undertaken whilst the Liberal Democrats were in power. The budget predicted new homes bonus over the five years of the medium term financial plan of more than £11m – dwarfing any future cuts in future grant funding.

Councillor Webber asked the council to consider the not so lucky councils in other parts of the country. The Vale remained a place where people wished to live and buy the homes we are building, therefore this council gained the new homes bonus to support its budget. Others were not so fortunate, where the expected decrease in government subsidy was likely to far exceed any expected new homes bonus. The current financial position of the council owed everything to the windfall of the new homes bonus. Without it, things would

look different. Even assuming the average former annual increase in government grant, with no new homes bonus, the council could be in the region of £6-8 million in the red by the end of the five-year medium term financial plan. Councillor Webber believed that Councillor Barber's budget was far from a budget the result of prudent financial management. It was the new homes bonus budget, gained at the expense of others. He believed the coalition government had got many things right, but not this.

Given this council's good fortune, it had an obligation to use that wisely and attempt to limit some of the pain being felt. He believed Councillor Barber's budget had taken few of the savings offered and taken almost all the growth bids requested. With only very minor tinkering, the rest of the budget was devoid of any initiatives. The policy seemed to be to sit on all the riches, use them to maintain the status quo, build up the reserves for a rainy day. However, Councillor Webber reported that there were plenty of people suffering, even in this area. The budget could have helped the elderly, young people, people struggling to find homes, and still substantially increased the council's reserves. The Liberal Democrats' amendments were an attempt to address some of these issues.

These amendments to the revenue budget had an estimated total revenue impact of £800,000 over the life of the five-year medium term financial plan and allowed for a healthy increase in reserves. They had been scrutinised by the section 151 officer and had been pronounced affordable.

In addition, Councillor Webber suggested a more imaginative capital budget, such as stimulating usage of the Wantage Leisure Centre by setting aside some capital for the development of a Wantage learner pool. The budget could have addressed some of the housing problems and home affordability issues we face by researching into, and committing some capital towards affordable council mortgages.

To make all this even more affordable, Councillor Webber urged the ruling group to solve the issue of shared office accommodation. Under Liberal Democrat control, as a result of shared services, our officer corps was reduced by 50 per cent. More than three years later, the council's offices were still underused, and every year the council missed the opportunity to save up to £0.5 million.

Abingdon was suffering and the budget did little to address this issue. The budget had diverted grants funding away from the Vale's major market town to the western Vale. He believed that stimulating Abingdon's economy by allowing an extra 200 people to occupy spare office capacity would at least be one way of apologising for penalising Abingdon in favour of the west.

Councillor Webber reported that he would oppose the budget because it was unimaginative and represented a rare opportunity missed.

It was moved by Councillor Melinda Tilley and seconded by Councillor Sandy Lovatt 'that the question (the budget motion) be put to the vote immediately', a closure motion under standing order 26.

The chairman considered that the budget motion had been sufficiently discussed and called for a vote on the closure motion. However, before doing so, she called on Councillor Barber to sum up the debate.

Councillor Barber believed that the opposition had failed to come up with a coherent alternative to the Cabinet's budget proposals. Instead, they had misunderstood the facts on a range of subjects from recycling to finance. The first job of last year's budget had been to undo the financial position his party had inherited from the Liberal Democrat group. He did not intend to go back.

The opposition had proposed further expenditure to make headlines but he believed their proposals had no substance, no idea of how to pay the bills – just raided the piggy bank. Their proposals would result in cuts and tax rises. They have been vocal in their opposition to the extremely popular and successful two-hour free parking. He believed the opposition were lacking credibility. After years in control with declining finances, they were unable to explain adequately how they would pay for their plans for the future.

Councillor Barber believed there was a better way, as outlined in the Cabinet's budget proposals. A vote in support of which was a vote for high quality, value for money services, low taxes and stability for the future. He commended the budget to the Council.

In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the closure motion were recorded as follows:

For the closure motion	Against the closure motion	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
John Amys	Julia Bricknell	Alison Thomson
Marilyn Badcock	Andrew Crawford	
Mike Badcock	Tony de Vere	
Matthew Barber	Debby Hallett	
Eric Batts	Jim Halliday	
Yvonne Constance	Jane Hanna	
Roger Cox	Jenny Hannaby	
Charlotte Dickson	Bob Johnston	
Gervase Duffield	Angela Lawrence	
Jason Fiddaman	Pat Lonergan	
Anthony Hayward	Sue Marchant	
Holly Holman	Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Simon Howell	Aidan Melville	
Bill Jones	Elizabeth Miles	
Mohinder Kainth	Jerry Patterson	
Sandy Lovatt	Helen Pighills	
John Morgan	Judy Roberts	
Michael Murray	Val Shaw	
Fiona Roper	Richard Webber	
Robert Sharp	John Woodford	
Melinda Tilley		
Margaret Turner		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Totals:		
24	20	1

The closure motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED: that the question be put to the vote immediately.

The chairman put the budget motion to the Council. In accordance with standing order 29(3), at the request of more than a fifth of councillors present, the chairman asked for a recorded vote. Votes on the motion were recorded as follows:

For the motion	Against the motion	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
John Amys	Julia Bricknell	Angela Lawrence
Marilyn Badcock	Andrew Crawford	Alison Thomson
Mike Badcock	Tony de Vere	
Matthew Barber	Debby Hallett	
Eric Batts	Jim Halliday	
Yvonne Constance	Jane Hanna	
Roger Cox	Jenny Hannaby	
Charlotte Dickson	Bob Johnston	
Gervase Duffield	Pat Lonergan	
Jason Fiddaman	Sue Marchant	
Anthony Hayward	Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Holly Holman	Aidan Melville	
Simon Howell	Elizabeth Miles	
Bill Jones	Jerry Patterson	
Mohinder Kainth	Helen Pighills	
Sandy Lovatt	Judy Roberts	
John Morgan	Val Shaw	
Michael Murray	Richard Webber	
Fiona Roper	John Woodford	
Robert Sharp		
Melinda Tilley		
Margaret Turner		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Totals:		
24	19	2

The motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) set the revenue budget for 2013/14 as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan shown at appendix G of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013;
- (b) approve the capital programme for 2013/14 to 2017/18 as set out in appendix C to the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D of the report ;

- (c) set the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix F of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013; and
- (d) approve the medium term financial plan to 2017/18 as set out in appendix G of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 8 February 2013.

Co.71 Council tax 2013/14

Council considered the head of finance's report on setting the council tax for the 2013/14 financial year.

The chairman reminded councillors that they were not entitled to vote on any issue affecting the level or administration of the council tax if they were over two months in arrears with their council tax payments.

RESOLVED:

1. to **note** that at its meeting on 12 December 2012 the council calculated the council tax base 2013/14:
 - (a) for the whole council area as **45,964.9** [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in column 1 of appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Council on 20 February 2013;
2. that the council tax requirement for the council's own purposes for 2013/14 (excluding parish precepts) is £5,363,644;
3. that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2013/14 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £51,356,947 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils.
 - (b) £43,175,634 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £8,181,313 being the amount by which the aggregate at (3)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (3)(b) above, calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B) of the Act).
 - (d) £177.99 being the amount at (3)(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31(B) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts).

- (e) £2,817,669 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act, as set out in column 2 of appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Council on 20 February 2013.
- (f) £116.69 being the amount at (3)(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (3)(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates.

4. to **note** that for the year 2013/14 Oxfordshire County Council has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£789.89
Band B	£921.53
Band C	£1,053.18
Band D	£1,184.83
Band E	£1,448.13
Band F	£1,711.42
Band G	£1,974.72
Band H	£2,369.66

5. to **note** that for the year 2013/14 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£104.92
Band B	£122.41
Band C	£139.89
Band D	£157.38
Band E	£192.35
Band F	£227.33
Band G	£262.30
Band H	£314.76

6. in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, to set the aggregate amounts shown in appendix 3 of the report of the head of finance to Council on 20 February 2013 as the amounts of council tax for 2013/14 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown in appendix 3 of the report.
7. to note the allocation of the town and parish element of the council tax reduction scheme grant payable to each parish shown in appendix 4 of the report of the head of finance to Council on 20 February 2013.
8. to determine that the council's basic amount of council tax for 2013/14 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Co.72 Designating the council's section 151 chief financial officer

Appended to the agenda was the report of the strategic director regarding the section 151 officer. Council agreed to defer consideration of this report until the annual Council meeting in May to allow further work on consequential changes and implications to the constitution and to align the decision with councillor appointments traditionally made at the May meetings.

RESOLVED: to defer consideration of the report of the strategic director regarding the section 151 officer.

Co.73 Pay policy statement 2013/14

Council considered the report of the head of HR, IT and customer services on the adoption of a pay policy statement to meet the requirements of the Localism Act.

RESOLVED: to approve the statement of pay policy for 2013/14.

Co.74 Report of the leader of the council

(1) Urgent Cabinet decisions

There were no urgent Cabinet decisions to report.

(2) Delegation of Cabinet functions

There were no changes to the scheme of delegation to Cabinet members to report.

(3) Matters affecting the authority arising from meetings of joint committees, partnerships and other meetings

The leader reported on two matters. The first was the announcement by Government that Oxfordshire had been awarded 'City Deal' status. The deal would mean greater spending powers at a local level and increased funding for the local economy. The government had backed Oxfordshire because of the huge potential of the local knowledge-based economy and contribution to the national economy, especially in the Science Vale area. The council would work with other Oxfordshire councils to develop the proposal to explore precisely how to achieve economic potential and address the transport bottlenecks across the county, such as the A34, which were barriers to growth.

The second matter was the publication next week of the council's consultation on the draft of the Local Plan Part 1. There would be a ten-week consultation to allow local residents to consider the proposals and respond. This would include public exhibitions and stakeholder meetings.

At this stage, the version of the local plan being consulted on was based on housing need evidence that supported the South East Plan. The housing requirement figures in the final local plan were likely to be different. The council was working closely with neighbouring councils to produce robust figures of local housing need. The final version of the local plan, based on the latest local housing need evidence available, would follow in December this year, and would be preceded by another consultation. This was a step towards providing a five-year housing land supply. He encouraged the public and councillors to

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take part in the consultation, as it was an opportunity to engage with the plan-making process to deliver the best possible future for the Vale.

Co.75 Notices of motion under standing order 11

Council received one motion under standing order 11.

Motion proposed by Councillor Jenny Hannaby, and seconded by Councillor Richard Webber:

‘This Council congratulates officers and contractors responsible for waste and ground maintenance for their excellent efforts in keeping our paths and car parks as safe as possible throughout the recent bad weather.

This Council also congratulates all officers responsible for alleviating the threat of flooding to vulnerable homes by delivering sand bags and other flood protection equipment.

This Council acknowledges the efforts made by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to keep main roads open during the January snow fall.

However, this council regrets that OCC did not carry out their full statutory duties and keep all roads treated with the resulting impact on the Vale’s waste collection service, which were severely disrupted. Council requests the leader to write to the OCC Cabinet member responsible for Highways requesting a review on road clearing policies before the next bout of bad weather.’

Councillor Hannaby praised the actions of the county council in keeping the main roads open during the worst of the winter weather and praised the council’s contractor for its efforts in collecting as much recycling and waste as possible during the same period. However, the county council was only required to keep the main roads open and this meant that the majority of residential roads were not cleared; consequently, the waste collections were unable to take place in some instances. She urged Council to support the motion to ask the county council to review its current practice.

Councillor Matthew Barber, in his right of reply, also congratulated the council’s staff and the contractor for their work during the winter snows. However, he believed that this motion was not necessary as he, in his capacity as leader, had already written to the county council leader and raised issues about road gritting in rural areas.

The chairman put the motion to the vote. By 14 votes in favour, 24 votes against and with 4 abstentions, the motion was declared not carried.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting closed at 10.00pm