

Minutes of a meeting of the Council



held on Wednesday 19 February 2014 at 7.00pm
at the Civic Hall, Portway, Wantage

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Mike Badcock (Chairman), Eric Batts (Vice-Chairman), John Amys, Marilyn Badcock, Matthew Barber, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Tony de Vere, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Jason Fiddaman, Debby Hallett, Jeanette Halliday, Jim Halliday, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Bob Johnston, Bill Jones, Angela Lawrence, Pat Lonergan, Sandy Lovatt, Ron Mansfield, Sue Marchant, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Elizabeth Miles, Mike Murray, Jerry Patterson, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Fiona Roper, Robert Sharp, Val Shaw, Janet Shelley, Andrew Skinner, Alison Thomson, Melinda Tilley, Margaret Turner, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware, Catherine Webber, Richard Webber and John Woodford

Officers: Steve Bishop, Steven Corrigan, Steve Culliford, David Buckle, Simon Hewings, William Jacobs, and Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: 8

Co.55 Apologies for absence

Councillors Julia Bricknell, Mohinder Kainth, Aidan Melville, and Gill Morgan had sent their apologies for absence.

Co.56 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 December 2013 and agree that the chairman signs them, subject to the following amendments:

- Under minute Co.50 B, add Councillor Jeanette Halliday's name to those voting against the motion
- Under minute Co.54(2), in the third paragraph amend to read '...Abbey Meadows Outdoor Pool...'

Co.57 Declarations of interest

None

Co.58 Chairman's announcements

The chairman advised councillors of a forthcoming charity sale, invited councillors to join him at the Abingdon-on-Thames Mayor's Ball, and reported that the Lord Lieutenant had presented him with the Commonwealth Flag to be flown on Commonwealth Day, 10 March.

The chairman also thanked everyone who had helped and continued to help during the flooding. He thanked the council's staff and contractors, Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council's outdoor staff, Oxfordshire County Council, the Environment Agency, and emergency services, including the Fire and Rescue Service, the eighty soldiers from 32 Brigade Support Squadron, 3 Close Support Regiment, the Royal Logistics Corps, based at Dalton Barracks for their work in South Hinksey, residents from various flood groups and all Vale residents affected for their fortitude. The chairman would write to thank them and would arrange a formal thank you after the floods had receded. He also thanked Councillor Matthew Barber for providing regular updates and for his attendance at floods all over the Vale.

Co.59 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the council

Two members of the public addressed the Council.

- (1) Cumnor Parish Councillor Harry Dickinson spoke against the council's proposals to change the parish boundary as part of the community governance review. He opposed the changes to the boundaries at Henwood and at Hurst Rise Road/Cumnor Rise Road. He believed that neither change would lead to improvements for residents.
- (2) St Helen Without Parish Council Chairman Geoff Fitzgerald spoke in favour of the proposed boundary change for Cothill but opposed the proposal to move the northern part of the parish into Wootton parish. He asked the Council to reject this proposal and retain the existing boundary.

Co.60 Urgent business

None

Co.61 Petitions under standing order 13

None

Co.62 Questions under standing order 12

Question from Councillor Richard Webber to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Matthew Barber under standing order 12:

'Is the Leader aware that there is a commonly held perception in the area that Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council are effectively merged?'

Councillor Barber reported that he was not aware that this was a commonly held perception and did not believe it was. He clarified that there were no plans to merge the council with South Oxfordshire District Council; such a merger would require primary legislation. However, the two councils shared resources, continuing the move by the previous administration of this council to share senior officers. The changes to office accommodation and moving shared staff to the Crowmarsh Gifford offices would save the council taxpayer £3.5 million over the ten-year agreement. He asked Councillor Webber where the commonly held perception had come from.

Councillor Webber was pleased to hear that this was not a commonly held perception but asked Councillor Barber a supplementary question: would he explain this to the Member of Parliament for Wantage?

Councillor Barber reported that Ed Vaizey MP was aware of the position but Councillor Barber agreed to reinforce this.

Co.63 Recommendations from Cabinet, individual Cabinet members, and committees

Council considered the following recommendations from Cabinet.

(1) Office accommodation

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 February 2014, to approve a revenue virement to cover the Abbey House refurbishment costs.

RESOLVED: to approve a revenue virement for £170,000 from identified underspending budgets in 2013/14 to cover the refurbishment costs of Abbey House, Abingdon.

(2) Treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2013/14

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 February 2014, on the treasury management mid-year monitoring report.

RESOLVED: to approve the head of finance's report.

(3) Treasury management and investment strategy 2014/15

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 February 2014, on the treasury management strategy, the annual investment strategy and the prudential indicators.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) approve the treasury management strategy 2014/15 as set out in Appendix A to the head of finance's report;
- (b) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2014/15 to 2016/17 as set out in table 2, appendix A to the report;

- (c) approve the annual investment strategy 2014/15 set out in appendix A to the report and the lending criteria detailed in table 5.

(4) Budget 2014/15

Council noted that Cabinet budget recommendations were set out in agenda item 10.

Co.64 Revenue budget 2014/15 and capital programme to 2018/19

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made on 7 February 2014, on the council's revenue budget 2014/15, the medium term financial plan and the capital programme to 2018/19. Cabinet's budget proposal was set out in the head of finance's report.

The chairman announced that new regulations would come into force on 25 February 2014 requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the budget, including amendments, and the council tax. Although the regulations were not in force, he would call for a named vote on each of these matters at this meeting.

The chairman reminded councillors that they were not entitled to vote on any issue affecting the level or administration of the council tax or other decisions which might affect the making of any such calculation such as the budget, if they were over two months in arrears with their council tax payments. Where such circumstances applied, councillors were under a statutory obligation to disclose the restriction placed on them and refrain from voting. No councillor made any such declaration.

Council considered the report from the chief finance officer on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves. The chief finance officer reported that Cabinet's budget proposal was robust and the level of reserves was adequate. Council noted the chief finance officer's report.

The chairman moved 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. Council agreed to this.

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 Matthew Barber moved Cabinet's budget proposal, seconded by Councillor Roger Cox.

Councillor Barber made his budget speech, and reported that on 5 February 2014, the government had announced the final 2014/15 local government settlement together with illustrative figures for 2015/16. The revised 2014/15 figure increased the funding due to the council by £618. As the change was insignificant, the provisional figures included in the proposed budget had not been changed. The amended figure could be managed within use of general fund balances so there would be no change to the council tax requirement for 2014/15. There was no change to the illustrative figures for 2015/16.

Councillor Barber believed that the local government settlement was a good place to start when looking at this year's budget. The direct support the council received through the revenue support grant had dropped by around £5 million in the last five years. Government had redirected some of this money back to the council in different forms, but what was also inescapable was that there was more pressure than ever on the local taxpayer. That was why Cabinet proposed freezing council tax for yet another year and would do so for at least a further year. Despite freezing the payments made by households to support council services, meaning that residents had seen a real-terms cut in their bills, Cabinet had protected council services. Instead, the council was able to plan and invest for the future, a future in which all would benefit.

Abingdon would see a boost to the economy, thanks to the increased number of workers in the town centre, following the sharing of office accommodation with Oxfordshire County Council. Not only would these changes protect front-line services, and make it easier for local residents to use county council services, but the changes would also save taxpayers across the district £3.5 million over the next decade. The market towns of Faringdon, Wantage and Abingdon would benefit from £61,000 of investment in schemes to boost the local economy. These towns were already benefiting from the two-hour free parking scheme, and the council was also investing in those parking facilities, increasing capacity in Abingdon, and improving security and lighting at other car parks across the district.

Cabinet was also taking up the reins on civil parking enforcement, having listened to local residents' concerns about the issue. Cabinet had identified a sum of money in this year's budget for preparatory work, expecting to be able to begin enforcement in 2015.

Leisure facilities would benefit from this budget. Cabinet was taking the first steps in developing a new leisure centre for Grove and Wantage. Cabinet was also recommending investing in existing facilities and would soon be embarking on a new leisure contract which would transform the use and finances of the council's facilities. As part of the forthcoming work on the local plan, Cabinet would be publishing an infrastructure and community benefits strategy, which would allow the council to identify needs and funding for further facilities around the district.

The council's support for community groups would continue with grants of over £200,000 available, but targeting those grants in a sustainable way, to avoid dependency on public funds, but rather to supplement and enhance the hard work by volunteers in our community.

Cabinet would be working closely with the Earth Trust to support its work at Thrupp Lake, and to find a long-term solution for the Abbey Fishponds Nature Reserve, an example of how partnership working could be more cost effective and utilise the expertise of others.

Cabinet had decided to freeze the cost of the brown bin scheme for another year, and the council could be proud of being one of the top recyclers in the country and would continue to help its residents to make the most of the facilities it offered by keeping the costs low.

Cabinet's top priority was to adopt a local plan and regain control of the council's planning process. Later this week Cabinet would publish the next round of consultation, and there will be much time to debate the contents in the coming weeks. However, in this budget proposal, Cabinet could ensure that there was adequate resource for our planning service to carry out the work needed. There was an investment of over £2.3 million in plan making, development control, and enforcement as part of this budget.

The budget proposal continued support for the economy, and through Vale4Business, the council would be launching a business award that would offer practical help to the Vale's many entrepreneurs. To support that aim, Cabinet was also working for the roll out of superfast broadband. The budget proposal identified at least £500,000 that could be used to support broadband in those areas where BT would not provide it. Cabinet was currently examining options, including alternatives to BT, and would be discussing them with partners in the private sector and parishes. The Vale had a growing economy and Cabinet was determined to put in place the infrastructure to support it.

In support of this infrastructure, and as a result of significant house building over recent years, the budget included a service and infrastructure reserve to help resource some of these projects. Already, levels of council tax were falling in real-terms as a result, and front-line services were protected. However, Cabinet was able to go further. Over the length of the medium term financial plan, Cabinet had forecast building a reserve of £12.3 million. This was not being kept for a rainy day, but rather, being invested carefully for future projects in accordance with the council's financial procedure rules.

The council's reserves would allow it to fund flood protection works, schemes that had been worked through with parishes over a number of years. The council would be able to help fund major infrastructure work; Cabinet hoped to do this by borrowing against future business rates growth, rather than by offering to put Vale taxpayers' money into projects that the private sector should be funding.

The council would soon be bearing the costs of civil parking enforcement, something that Vale residents wanted the council to do, but the council could achieve at no direct cost to the taxpayer by budgeting prudently. Reserves would support new leisure facilities in Grove and Wantage, and the future of our superfast broadband project will depend on these reserves.

Cabinet was proposing a balanced budget, that protected services, continued to drive savings and efficiencies, whilst freezing the costs to the public. The future of funding from central government remained uncertain, but the council's ambitions for the future were clear and substantial. Those who wanted to spend taxpayers' money now to buy headlines would find their buying power greatly diminished when it came to major projects that the public wanted the council to support.

The long list of budget amendments presented by the Liberal Democrat opposition demonstrated several things. The opposition had lots of good intentions, but had no idea how to manage the process to achieve their aims. Their budget setting process was clear, throwing money at headline issues. Instead, Cabinet's budget proposal set a clear course of identifying the council's priorities and ensuring the council had the resources in place to be able to achieve its ends. He noted that the opposition had not taken the opportunity to contribute to the budget setting process, despite having the chance to question councillors and officers at last week's Scrutiny Committee meeting. He believed that either the opposition group had so little regard for transparency and public debate that they had decided to keep these proposals close to their chest until seven hours before the meeting, or the opposition had only just come up with them. Whichever was the case, Councillor Barber believed that this was no way to manage taxpayers' money responsibly. Instead, Cabinet had put forward proposals for a sustainable budget, with low council tax and the investment that the Vale needed.

Councillor Roger Cox, as seconder of the motion, reserved his right to speak later in the budget debate.

Councillor Richard Webber, also reserved his right to speak later in the budget debate, to make the opposition's response to Cabinet's proposals.

The chairman drew council's attention to the seven budget amendments set out on the procedural notes.

Amendment 1

Amendment 1 was proposed by Councillor Dudley Hoddinott and seconded by Councillor Jim Halliday:

'Set up an integrated, open and transparent grants scheme for the fair distribution of both revenue and capital funding to organisations across the Vale, and increase the funding by £110,000 per year'.

Councillor Hoddinott, speaking to his amendment, believed that the present grants scheme was a muddle, and was confusing and unfair. The new homes bonus scheme was over-subscribed, because there were fewer restrictions placed on the applications. However, the new homes bonus had only been funded for one year. Whereas the Liberal Democrat proposal was to add £100,000 to the 2014/15 budget and continue to make this available thereafter. There would also be a doubling of the grants available for festivals and grants by adding £10,000 to top the fund up every year. There would be an integrated grants scheme that was open and transparent, readily available on the council's website, with a simplified decision-making process.

Councillor Halliday welcomed the introduction of the current capital grants scheme but believed it was difficult for established clubs and societies to obtain revenue grants. The new homes bonus scheme had helped a little but at the recent round, most area committees had requests in excess of the grant budget available. There was also a need for a Vale-wide scheme to cover applications for organisations serving the whole district. The Abingdon Area Committee was the only one of the four area committees to consider an application from an organisation that, although based in Abingdon, provided a Vale-wide service. He also pointed out that the government and local authorities were increasingly looking to the voluntary sector to carry out work previously carried out by the public sector. The voluntary sector was rising to this challenge but needed revenue grant support.

Councillor Barber was sympathetic with the aims of the amendment but was confused about the proposal for an integrated and transparent scheme while the amendment proposed adding funds to existing schemes. He believed this was not a proper proposal.

Councillor Hoddinott urged Council to support the amendment.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Angela Lawrence	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Lonergan	St John Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	Mike Murray	
Val Shaw	Fiona Roper	
Andrew Skinner	Robert Sharp	
Catherine Webber	Janet Shelley	
Richard Webber	Alison Thomson	
John Woodford	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals: 21	24	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 2

Amendment 2 was proposed by Councillor Richard Webber and seconded by Councillor Pat Lonergan:

‘Transfer £2 million to an earmarked reserve fund for release as seed funding for Lodge Hill junction improvements.’

Councillor Webber, speaking to his amendment believed that this would help overcome obstacles to provide a full diamond junction at Lodge Hill, and would have a positive effect in easing the traffic congestion in Abingdon. The new homes bonus gave the council the opportunity to discuss this scheme with the Highways Agency, and would show serious intent on the council’s part to find a solution.

Councillor Lonergan believed that this was necessary given the traffic bottlenecks at some junctions in the town. This was much more likely to succeed if the council gave financial support.

Other councillors believed that this was not the council's responsibility and it should not be using taxpayers' money for this scheme. Instead, such funds should be spent on supporting the council's services.

In response to the amendment, Councillor Barber believed this amendment was premature. Cabinet would be developing an infrastructure and community benefit strategy to drive projects without putting taxpayers' money at risk.

Councillor Webber, in summing up the amendment debate, believed that opening up the Lodge Hill junction was important, not just to ease Abingdon's traffic but it would benefit the whole district.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Pat Lonergan	Charlotte Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	St John Dickson	
Sue Marchant	Gervase Duffield	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Jason Fiddaman	
Elizabeth Miles	Anthony Hayward	
Jerry Patterson	Simon Howell	
Helen Pighills	Bill Jones	
Judy Roberts	Angela Lawrence	
Val Shaw	Sandy Lovatt	
Andrew Skinner	Mike Murray	
Catherine Webber	Fiona Roper	
Richard Webber	Robert Sharp	
John Woodford	Janet Shelley	
	Alison Thomson	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
20	25	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 3

Amendment 3 was proposed by Councillor Debby Hallett and seconded by Councillor Catherine Webber:

‘Reverse the cuts to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that targeted the poorest and most vulnerable residents in the Vale. This will cost £16,000 per year from 2015/16.’

Councillor Hallett, speaking to her amendment believed that this amendment was a year ahead of time to allow a new scheme to be prepared for 2015/16 as the 2014/15 scheme had been established. The present scheme meant the poorest had to pay, yet benefit would continue to be available for those who had found work; she believed this was unfair.

Councillor Webber believed the existing scheme did not help the needy and the most vulnerable back to work and could be rectified with merely £16,000.

In response, Councillor Barber believed this amendment was premature, it would not amend the policy, and he had no plans to amend the policy within six months of setting the previous policy. He believed the existing scheme encouraged people into work and continued support for the first 13 weeks once in employment to make an easier transition. However, the amendment would cut support to just four weeks.

Councillor Hallett urged Council to support her amendment.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Angela Lawrence	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Lonergan	St John Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	Mike Murray	
Val Shaw	Fiona Roper	
Andrew Skinner	Robert Sharp	
Catherine Webber	Janet Shelley	
Richard Webber	Alison Thomson	
John Woodford	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
21	24	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 4

Amendment 4 was proposed by Councillor Jenny Hannaby and seconded by Councillor Bob Johnston:

‘Allocate land for self-build houses across the Vale, and encourage people to build their own houses. The one-off revenue cost of £25,000 is for a part-time officer to carry out a feasibility study.’

Councillor Hannaby believed that such a scheme would make it easier for people to get on to the property ladder. The council could take a proactive stance in encouraging people to build their own homes or together in a group. It would also allow people to learn new skills and encourage a career in the building trade. This amendment would allow the council to research the idea.

Councillor Johnston believed that this was overdue and it would help first time buyers, low income families, and help meet housing.

Councillor Barber believed that this was premature as this would be considered under part two of the local plan; the council was working on part one and had invested £2.3 million into supporting the planning service.

Councillor Hannaby urged Council to support the amendment as this would allow a feasibility study to assess whether the council should proceed with this project.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Angela Lawrence	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Lonergan	St John Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	Mike Murray	
Val Shaw	Fiona Roper	
Andrew Skinner	Robert Sharp	
Catherine Webber	Janet Shelley	
Richard Webber	Alison Thomson	

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John Woodford	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals: 21	24	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 5

Amendment 5 was proposed by Councillor Judy Roberts and seconded by Councillor Debby Hallett:

‘Carry out a feasibility study into providing more leisure facilities in the North Hinksey/ Cumnor area. This will give a one-off revenue cost of £15,000.’

Councillor Roberts, in speaking to her amendment, reported that Sport England had identified need for more leisure facilities in the north-east of the Vale. However, this had been contradicted by the council’s survey. The amendment would allow a feasibility study through a one-off spend.

Councillor Debby Hallett reported that last spring, the council had conducted a consultation but had omitted to ask the public about the need for leisure facilities in the north-east of the district. Since then, two major housing developments had been approved at Lime Road and Tilbury Lane. The community would expand yet there were no public leisure facilities in this part of the district.

Another councillor reported that as part of the local plan, the council would develop an infrastructure and community benefit strategy, which would consider leisure provision in the district. Therefore, there was no need to spend £15,000 on a feasibility study.

Councillor Roberts, in summing up, believed that the north-east part of the district was a forgotten area and had no voice.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Angela Lawrence	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Lonergan	St John Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	

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Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	Mike Murray	
Val Shaw	Fiona Roper	
Andrew Skinner	Robert Sharp	
Catherine Webber	Janet Shelley	
Richard Webber	Alison Thomson	
John Woodford	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals: 21	24	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 6

Amendment 6 was proposed by Councillor Bob Johnston and seconded by Councillor Jeanette Halliday:

‘Allocate £100,000 of capital for flood alleviation schemes which are not fully funded, in partnership with the Environment Agency and other bodies.’

Councillor Johnston believed that the council should support the Environment Agency as it was short of funds. This budget would help achieve local flood alleviation schemes quicker.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Jeanette Halliday believed that this would help protect residents and support the Environment Agency.

Councillor Barber reported that a flood forum and a flood summit had been organised to understand the scale of the task. The amendment proposed a budget of £100,000; this was too small to be effective. Instead the council was building up reserves to help with defined flood relief schemes.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Pat Lonergan	Charlotte Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	St John Dickson	

Sue Marchant	Gervase Duffield	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Jason Fiddaman	
Elizabeth Miles	Anthony Hayward	
Jerry Patterson	Simon Howell	
Helen Pighills	Bill Jones	
Judy Roberts	Angela Lawrence	
Val Shaw	Sandy Lovatt	
Andrew Skinner	Mike Murray	
Catherine Webber	Fiona Roper	
Richard Webber	Robert Sharp	
John Woodford	Janet Shelley	
	Alison Thomson	
	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
20	25	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

Amendment 7

Amendment 7 proposed by Councillor Jenny Hannaby and seconded by Councillor Andrew Skinner:

‘Allocate £2 million of capital to ensure strategic transport infrastructure schemes in the Wantage/Grove area are implemented.’

Councillor Hannaby believed that the eastern relief road was needed but there was no guarantee of funding from other sources. The amendment would show the council was serious about the need for this road and would help to provide it.

Councillor Barber, as mover of the original motion, had a right of reply. The council would consider borrowing funds to bring forward the Wantage eastern relief road and claw back funding from developers. If the council approved the amendment it would effectively be giving the developers £2 million of taxpayers’ money—he could not support this at this stage.

Councillor Hannaby had the final right of reply, and agreed that the developer should pay for the new road but she believed the council was forced into contributing towards it to avoid even more traffic in the town. She believed that Wantage was being overlooked.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
Tony de Vere	John Amys	
Debby Hallett	Marilyn Badcock	
Jeanette Halliday	Mike Badcock	
Jim Halliday	Matthew Barber	

Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Yvonne Constance	
Bob Johnston	Roger Cox	
Angela Lawrence	Charlotte Dickson	
Pat Lonergan	St John Dickson	
Ron Mansfield	Gervase Duffield	
Sue Marchant	Jason Fiddaman	
Julie Mayhew-Archer	Anthony Hayward	
Elizabeth Miles	Simon Howell	
Jerry Patterson	Bill Jones	
Helen Pighills	Sandy Lovatt	
Judy Roberts	Mike Murray	
Val Shaw	Fiona Roper	
Andrew Skinner	Robert Sharp	
Catherine Webber	Janet Shelley	
Richard Webber	Alison Thomson	
John Woodford	Melinda Tilley	
	Margaret Turner	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Totals:		
21	24	Nil

The chairman declared the amendment lost.

As all seven amendments were lost, the chairman asked Council to debate the original motion.

Councillor Roger Cox, spoke as seconder to the motion. He believed the opposition showed no regard for fiscal prudence, and in their amendments were frittering money away. He called on Council to support the motion.

Other councillors believed that the opposition, when in power up to 1995, did not have the luxury of the new homes bonus. This was the sole reason the council's budget had since been transformed. The opposition accused the ruling group of squirreling money away rather than doing something to help residents today.

Councillor Richard Webber then made his budget speech as leader of the opposition, recorded here verbatim:

'It was Michael Gove, every teacher's favourite politician who said on Question Time "No-one becomes a Liberal Democrat" as a career move. For once, absolutely right, Michael. Liberal Democrats are far too interested in trying to put things right than they are in careers or wooing friends.

The Leader of this council claims a very special relationship with two ladies, the Lady "Competence" and her sister "Prudence". It is, they claim, a relationship that is only available to Tories. They become outraged and petulant if they think anyone else is trying to compete for their ladyfriend's affections. This relationship should be examined more closely.

Take, for example her ladyship, “Competence”. It is true that our medium term financial position has improved to the point where, at the end of five years, we are predicting a surplus of around £15 million, depending on which of the daily iterations we are working to. Untold riches by the standards of the past 20 years! The Lady “Competence” should be smiling. But she isn’t. Indeed, she is looking anxiously over your shoulder for alternative suitors. Why so? How unfair! How fickle!

It is the New Homes Bonus, she says. All that money you think you have is as a result of the New Homes Bonus. Take away the New Homes Bonus, and you are in a worse position than you have ever been. But we have it, you cry! Who will take it away from us? The next Government she says, and not just a Labour Government. It was a good wheeze to get some votes in the Tory south but it is killing councils up north. And even you are beginning to realise that you will never get back to power unless you can win some of them over. It is about votes or competence and you don’t seem to have a way of wooing both of us. Frankly, you have been unbelievably fortunate at other people’s expense, you’ve been lucky with your New Homes Bonus gained on the back of enormous quantities of housing foisted on people who don’t want it, and what about the interim housing supply policy, the Westway fiasco, not to mention the “emerging” Local Plan - are you really saying that after 4 years of your administration, the Local Plan still won’t be in place? None of it sounds very competent to me - you are a long way from claiming my hand, so if you need a friend, I suggest you approach my sister “Prudence”, she might be interested, because I, most certainly am not. And so, turning her back on you, the Lady Competence is off to hunt for other suitors.

Undeterred (it takes a lot to deter a Tory, or make them change their mind, or persuade them to apologise when they get it wrong, and even when they do, they make such a mess of it, don’t they?), the Leader, cunningly disguised as the Cabinet Member for Finance hunts down the Lady “Prudence”.

“See here, Prudence” says the Cabinet Member for Grants, (he is rather more direct than the others), I really am quite a catch, look at all this money I am stashing up! I could be spending just a little of it on what is needed now – you know grants, seed funding for transport improvements, helping to alleviate some of the impact of all the housing we’ve taken, helping to alleviate some of the holes (I use this word advisedly) left by my County chums but no, we’ve done so much better than that – we’ve stashed it up for a rainy day, sat on it all, ready to give the irritating masses a few little handouts for May 2015 – but we have been ever so prudent – how about you and me get together?

Great, says Prudence, let’s talk. Eyes ablaze with hope and anticipation, the Leader, the cabinet Member for Finance, the Cabinet Member for Grants, Pooh Bah (the Lord High Everything Else for non Gilbert and Sullivan fans) make their promises to Prudence. From now on “stashing” will be the name of the game. “Stashing not spending will be our mantra!”

“Why?” asks prudence. “Why are you stashing?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Because, if you want my affection, you have to understand that the purpose of stashing is to do good wherever possible.”

Puzzled now, all the powers that be come together to ask, with one voice, “But Prudence, you are prudence and we are being prudent – we make a natural pair”

But Prudence, being the pure maiden she is simply smiles her Mona Lisa smile and says “True, I am prudence but I have a purpose. You talk of rainy days, have you not looked outside? There are people in need out there, a few are truly desperate, for prudence to have a purpose, you must spend a little where you can, alleviate pain where you have caused it – but you are taking from those that have nothing and that gives prudence no meaning, no purpose, no point at all” – and with that she fades and melts away out of the Tories lives for ever.

You have chosen to reject each and every one of our amendments. There will now be no help for the most needy in the district. The grants system will continue to be unfit for purpose. The northern Vale will continue to be the one major area of the Vale with poor leisure provision. An opportunity to do something about the lack of infrastructure in Abingdon, Wantage and Grove will have been overlooked. An attempt to stimulate self-building across the district and ensure that at least some houses are affordable has been rejected. All amendments which have been fully costed and vetted by our Section 151 Officer whose job it is to check that they are reasonable, competent and prudent. Doubtless the Tories will still try to accuse us of incompetence and lack of prudence. In which case, the Leader might care to consider adding the job of Section 151 Officer to his ever-increasing CV. We, however, would rather the job stayed in the hands of the present incumbent.

The budget we are now left to vote on is unimaginative, hesitant and indecisive. It is a budget of missed opportunities.

So Mr Gove, if you don't mind, I'll give the career move a miss, stay a Liberal Democrat and vote against this squirrel of a budget.'

Councillor Barber, as mover of the motion, had a final right of reply. He congratulated Councillor Webber on his speech and asked that it be so recorded in the minutes verbatim. In response, he pointed out that the ruling group had taken money out of the budget, with savings from the changes to office accommodation. The new homes bonus could disappear but the opposition had still proposed over £4 million spend in their amendments. He asked where the opposition's budget proposals were. He questioned the assertion that Wantage was being overlooked, when Cabinet was looking at options for leisure facilities in the Wantage and Grove area. He commended the budget to the Council.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the budget motion.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillor:
John Amys	Tony de Vere	Angela Lawrence
Marilyn Badcock	Debby Hallett	
Mike Badcock	Jeanette Halliday	
Matthew Barber	Jim Halliday	
Eric Batts	Jenny Hannaby	
Yvonne Constance	Dudley Hoddinott	
Roger Cox	Bob Johnston	

Charlotte Dickson	Pat Lonergan	
St John Dickson	Ron Mansfield	
Gervase Duffield	Sue Marchant	
Jason Fiddaman	Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Anthony Hayward	Elizabeth Miles	
Simon Howell	Jerry Patterson	
Bill Jones	Helen Pighills	
Sandy Lovatt	Judy Roberts	
Mike Murray	Val Shaw	
Fiona Roper	Andrew Skinner	
Robert Sharp	Catherine Webber	
Janet Shelley	Richard Webber	
Alison Thomson	John Woodford	
Melinda Tilley		
Margaret Turner		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Totals:		
24	20	1

The chairman declared the motion carried.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) set the revenue budget for 2014/15 as set out in appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report;
- (b) approve the capital programme for 2014/15 to 2018/19 as set out in appendix D.1 to the head of finance's report, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D.2 of the head of finance's report;
- (c) set the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the head of finance's report; and
- (d) approve the medium term financial plan to 2018/19 as set out in appendix F.1 to the head of finance's report.

Co.65 Council tax 2014/15

Council considered the head of finance's report on setting the council tax for the 2014/15 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. Where such circumstances applied, councillors were under a statutory obligation to disclose the restriction placed on them and refrain from voting. No councillor made any such declaration.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the recommendations.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
John Amys		
Marilyn Badcock		
Mike Badcock		
Matthew Barber		
Eric Batts		
Yvonne Constance		
Roger Cox		
Charlotte Dickson		
St John Dickson		
Tony de Vere		
Gervase Duffield		
Jason Fiddaman		
Debby Hallett		
Jeanette Halliday		
Jim Halliday		
Anthony Hayward		
Dudley Hoddinott		
Simon Howell		
Bob Johnston		
Bill Jones		
Angela Lawrence		
Pat Lonergan		
Sandy Lovatt		
Ron Mansfield		
Sue Marchant		
Julie Mayhew-Archer		
Elizabeth Miles		
Mike Murray		
Jerry Patterson		
Helen Pighills		
Judy Roberts		
Fiona Roper		
Robert Sharp		
Val Shaw		
Janet Shelley		
Andrew Skinner		
Alison Thomson		
Meilinda Tilley		
Margaret Turner		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Catherine Webber		
Richard Webber		
John Woodford		
Totals: 44	Nil	Nil

RESOLVED:

- (a) to note that at its meeting on 11 December 2013 the council calculated the council tax base 2014/15:
- (i) for the whole council area as **46,640.5** [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)];
 - (ii) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in column 1 of appendix 1 of the head of finance’s report.
- (b) that the council tax requirement for the council’s own purposes for 2014/15 (excluding parish precepts) is £5,442,480.
- (c) that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- (i) £73,643,953 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.
 - (ii) £65,287,306 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (iii) £8,356,647 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).
 - (iv) £179.17 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).
 - (v) £2,914,167 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 head of finance’s report.
 - (vi) £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.
- (d) to note that for the year 2014/15 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 | £805.61 |
| Band B | £939.87 |
| Band C | £1,074.14 |
| Band D | £1,208.41 |
| Band E | £1,476.95 |
| Band F | £1,745.48 |
| Band G | £2,014.02 |
| Band H | £2,416.82 |
- (e) to note that for the year 2014/15 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	£107.01
Band B	£124.84
Band C	£142.68
Band D	£160.51
Band E	£196.18
Band F	£231.85
Band G	£267.52
Band H	£321.02

- (f) 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 head of finance's report as the amounts of council tax for 2014/15 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown in appendix 3 of the head of finance's report.
- (g) 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 head of finance's report.
- (h) to determine that the council's basic amount of council tax for 2014/15 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Co.66 Declaration of vacancy - Wantage Charlton

Council noted that as Mr John Morgan had resigned from the Council, the report from the head of legal and democratic services no longer required the Council's consideration.

Co.67 Community governance reviews

Council considered the report of the chief executive on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group. The report invited Council to agree the revised terms of reference for the community governance review and to agree the draft recommendations set out in the schedules CGR1 to CGR25 appended the report. Council noted the recommendations would be subject to consultation until 31 May 2014. Council would consider the consultation responses in July 2014.

Councillors asked that the comments made at this meeting by Cumnor and St Helen Without Parish Councils were taken as consultation responses.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) agree the revised terms of reference for the review set out in Appendix A to the chief executive's report;
- (b) agree the draft recommendation in relation to each item under review as set out in schedules CGR1 to CGR25, which form Appendix B to the chief executive's report and make these subject to public consultation; and
- (c) accept the comments made at this meeting by Cumnor and St Helen Without Parish Councils as consultation responses.

Co.68 Pay policy statement 2014/15

Council considered the report from the Head of HR, IT and Customer Services to approve the council's statement of pay policy for 2014/15. The council was required to produce and publish annually a pay policy statement.

RESOLVED: to approve the council's statement of pay policy for 2014/15.

Co.69 Report of the leader of the council

(1) Urgent cabinet decisions

Council noted that no cabinet decisions had been taken as a matter of urgency since the last meeting of the council.

(2) Delegation of cabinet functions

Council noted that the Leader had not changed his scheme of delegation.

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

The Leader of the Council gave thanks to all those who had helped tackle the recent flooding events. He believed that the hard work of the council's staff and contractors had been remarkable, and had helped to protect a large number of properties in the district that would otherwise have been flooded. Staff had been dealing with the unprecedented rainfall since last year, and continued to assist residents on a daily basis. He was grateful to the many volunteers across the district who had not only been active over the past few months, but had spent many more months and years clearing watercourses and building defences, all of which had helped to protect the Vale's residents.

Sadly, a number of properties were flooded, with devastating consequences for householders. The council would continue to support residents and help with the clean up where it could. The nature of the flooding was such that in many places, ground water appeared in areas that would not normally be at first risk of flooding. There were a number of cases that the council was investigating to see if there was a remedy.

Once again South Hinksey was the community hardest hit in the Vale and following the floods in January, the Leader had met the parish council to look at how the Vale could work with the parish council and other agencies to implement a defence scheme for this small, but badly affected community. After significant pressure from the council, the County Council, and Nicola Blackwood MP, the Army were deployed to build flood defences last weekend. Local troops from the Royal Logistic Corp descended in numbers last Friday and worked alongside the Environment Agency and private contractors to erect an 800 metre flood barrier. The Leader expressed his gratitude for the resources and effort put into this project. The council would continue to support South Hinksey and other communities in finding a long-term solution, and the council was willing to pursue flood protection measures.

The Leader would be attending the County Council's Flood Summit on 21 March, at which long-term options would be considered. The most prominent of these was the Western Conveyance, now known as the Oxford Relief River. There would naturally be some concerns about how this would affect Abingdon but he asked councillors to act responsibly and not stoke those concerns, as the council should take this matter seriously. The Environment Agency was confident that the increase in river levels at Abingdon would be less than 5mm; the Leader saw no evidence to contradict that. Nevertheless, he was meeting representatives from the Environment Agency to look at possible flood protection measures for Abingdon, and seeking to have these incorporated into the wider scheme for the Oxford Relief River proposal. Schemes of this scale would take time to implement so the council would continue to look at small schemes to protect the most vulnerable communities, and the council could only do that with the hard work of our staff and volunteers.

Co.70 Notices of motion under standing order 11

Council considered the notices of motion submitted under standing order 11.

- (1) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jim Halliday, seconded by Jeanette Halliday

'The Council notes that the Oxfordshire County Council is currently considering installing an extra pedestrian crossing in Ock Street, Abingdon and moving the location of the existing crossing in Marcham Road. Council is concerned that this will not only cause potential safety issues, but may also have air quality implications due to the likelihood of increased queuing traffic - particularly in Marcham Road, Ock Street, Spring Road and Drayton Road. It therefore asks the Chief Executive to relay these concerns to both the OCC Highways Team and the County Councillors representing Abingdon.'

In supporting the motion, councillors believed that the county's proposal was a poor attempt to reduce traffic. It would cause additional air pollution in this part of the town, would make crossing the road even more dangerous for pedestrians, and would exacerbate traffic problems.

Council supported the motion, and asked the chief executive to object in the strongest terms to the county council's proposals.

RESOLVED: The Council notes that the Oxfordshire County Council is currently considering installing an extra pedestrian crossing in Ock Street, Abingdon and moving the location of the existing crossing in Marcham Road. Council is concerned that this will not only cause potential safety issues, but may also have air quality implications due to the likelihood of increased queuing traffic - particularly in Marcham Road, Ock Street, Spring Road and Drayton Road. It therefore asks the Chief Executive to relay these concerns to both the OCC Highways Team and the County Councillors representing Abingdon.

Further to minute Co.71 below, the following motions were deferred until the next Council meeting on 14 May 2014:

- (2) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jerry Patterson, seconded by Andrew Skinner

‘Council resolves that the Vale’s Abbey House building will continue to be branded as the “Vale of White Horse District Council”, and that the signs and Vale Coat of Arms at the front and side entrances since the building’s opening in 1992, will remain permanently in place where they are, regardless of any other authority or organisation sharing the accommodation. Furthermore, Council resolves that the official address of the Vale of White Horse District Council will continue to be at Abbey House.’

- (3) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jenny Hannaby, seconded by Sue Marchant

‘Council notes that Network Rail is shortly to start an extensive programme of bridge works within the District, and that these have the potential to cause considerable inconvenience to Vale residents unless carefully planned and scheduled. Council therefore asks its officers to work together with the County Council and Network Rail to ensure the disruption is kept to a minimum and that all the relevant parish and town councils are kept fully informed.’

- (4) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Debby Hallett, seconded by Catherine Webber

‘Council resolves to fulfil its legal responsibility to create Air Quality Action Plans for Botley and for Marcham.’

- (5) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Tony de Vere, seconder to be confirmed

‘Council requests Cabinet to consider modifying the grants scheme so that applications that have Vale-wide benefits are handled in a more equitable and transparent manner than currently seems to be happening.’

- (6) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Julie mayhew-Archer, seconded by Richard Webber

‘Council congratulates all the council officers involved and all the flood action groups for their successful work in minimising the worst effects of the recent flooding in the Vale. Council will continue to support flood management and relief efforts and encourages all possible public participation.’

Co.71 Continuation or conclusion of meeting

With the time at 9.30pm, in accordance with standing order 27, the chairman asked Council whether it wished to continue the meeting for a further thirty minutes to complete the remaining business or finish the meeting at this point. Council, by a show of hands

RESOLVED: to conclude the meeting at this point and defer motions 2 to 6 (as set out in minute Co.70) to the next Council meeting on 14 May 2014.

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

None

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

Wednesday, 19 February 2014

Co.24

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm