

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council



held on Wednesday 10 December 2014 at 7.00 pm
at the The Ridgeway (main hall first floor), The Beacon, (formerly Wantage Civic Hall), Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY

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, Margaret Crick, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Debby Hallett, Jeanette Halliday, Jim Halliday, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Bob Johnston, Bill Jones, Mohinder Kainth, Pat Lonergan, Sandy Lovatt, Ron Mansfield, Sue Marchant, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Elizabeth Miles, Gill Morgan, Jerry Patterson, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Val Shaw, Janet Shelley, Andrew Skinner, Alison Thomson, Melinda Tilley, Margaret Turner, Tony de Vere, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware, Catherine Webber, Richard Webber and John Woodford

Officers: David Buckle, Steven Corrigan, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: 5

Co.43 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Jason Fiddaman, Angela Lawrence, Aidan Melville, Mike Murray and Julia Reynolds.

Co.44 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2014 and agree that the chairman sign them.

Co.45 Declarations of interest

None.

Co.46 Chairman's announcements

The chairman reported that £3,000 was raised at his recent charity dance. He thanked officers for their hard work throughout the year and wished officers and councillors a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Co.47 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting council.

None.

Co.48 Urgent business

The Chairman of the council agreed to take the following item as an urgent item because any delay in the consideration of the recommendation would delay the implementation of the programme.

Cabinet, at its meeting on Friday 5 December, considered a report on increasing superfast broadband coverage in the Vale. Since the Council agenda was published, Cabinet received information on the extent of the work required and was able to finalise its plans and recommend Council to transfer £250,000 from the capital contingency budget to the broadband budget for the delivery of the extension of the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme in the Vale.

RESOLVED: to transfer £250,000 from the capital contingency budget to the broadband budget for the delivery of the extension of the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme in the Vale

Co.49 Petitions under standing order 13

None.

Co.50 Questions under standing order 12

The chairman reported that written responses would be provided to all the questions from members of the council submitted under standing order 12 and set out in the agenda. The written responses would be circulated to all councillors and published on the council's website.

Co.51 Council tax base 2015/16

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 5 December 2014, on the council tax base for 2015/16.

RESOLVED:

1. to approve the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2014 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2015/16;
2. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2015/16 be 47,563.1;
3. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2015/16 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2014.

Co.52 Council tax reduction scheme grant to towns and parishes

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 5 December 2014, on the total amount of council tax reduction scheme grant to pass down to town and parish councils for 2015/16 to 2017/18.

RESOLVED:

1. that the total council tax reduction scheme grant to be passed down to town and parish councils for financial years 2015/16 to 2017/18 be:

2015/16	£120,445
2016/17	£ 80,297
2017/18	£ 40,149
2. that the individual grant amounts for towns and parishes for 2015/16 be as set out in appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2014; and
3. to authorise the head of finance, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to determine the individual town and parish allocations in 2016/17 and 2017/18, based on the current method of distribution.

Co.53 DCLG Building Foundations for Growth: Enterprise Zone Capital Grants Allocation to Milton Park

Council considered a proposal to establish a budget for £7million for the administration of the government grant to build a bio-technology innovation centre at Milton Park.

RESOLVED: to agree to establish a budget on receipt of the grant funding of £7million Enterprise Zone grant funding for MEPC to build a bio-technology innovation centre at Milton Park.

Co.54 Councillors' allowances scheme

Council considered the independent remuneration panel's report on the councillors' allowances scheme.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree a revised councillors' allowances scheme with effect from 11 May 2015, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel subject to the approval of the necessary budget as part of the council's budget setting process for 2015/16; and
2. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to finalise a councillors' allowances scheme based on the decision in 1 above, to make any consequential amendments to the constitution, and advertise the changes.

Co.55 Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 - proposal to appoint a joint Independent Remuneration Panel

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services on a proposal to appoint a joint remuneration panel with South Oxfordshire District Council

for the purposes of reviewing the councillors' allowances schemes and making recommendations to the councils.

A number of councillors did not support the proposal. They noted that the two councils were separate organisations, had different allowances and that a joint panel would achieve limited efficiencies. However, the view was expressed that the new Council should consider the issue following the May 2015 elections.

RESOLVED: to

1. not appoint a joint remuneration panel with South Oxfordshire District Council at this time;
2. consider the issue following the May 2015 elections.

Co.56 Declaration of vacancy - Grove

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services on the declaration of a vacancy in the Grove ward.

RESOLVED: to:

1. note that Kate Precious has ceased to be a member of this authority;
2. declare as vacant the office held by Kate Precious as a councillor for the Grove ward;
3. note that no by election will be held to fill the vacancy.

Co.57 Election fees and charges 2015

Council considered the report of the returning officer on the setting of fees and charges for district and parish elections, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referendums in 2015/16.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree the scales of fees for district and parish council elections, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referendums for 2015/16 as set out in the Appendix to the report of the returning officer to Council on 10 December 2015;
2. agree to continue to charge parish and town councils for running elections on their behalf.

Co.58 Report of the leader of the council

In accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rules, Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council reported that on 10 October 2014 he took a confidential decision to enter into a new contract for an electoral management system to address problems with the current provider and to vire funds from the capital contingency budget for the purchase of the system and the revenue contingency to cover training on the new system and cover the existing contract costs. The chairman of the scrutiny committee agreed to waive call-in because any delay could impact on the council's delivery of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

Co.59 Notices of motion under standing order 11

Council considered the following motions submitted under standing order 11.

1. Motion proposed by Councillor Richard Webber and seconded by Councillor Catherine Webber

“This council believes that the present system of s106 negotiations leaves much to be desired, and that council should begin immediately the revision of our present process to produce a system which is more open, more transparent and includes input from parish and town councils”.

The following amendment moved by Councillor Roger Cox and seconded by Councillor Matthew Barber, with additional words shown in bold and deleted words marked with a strikethrough, was accepted by the mover and seconder of the original motion with the consent of Council.

“This council believes that the present system of s106 negotiations leaves much to be desired, and that the council should **continue to revise the** ~~begin immediately the revision of our present~~ process to produce a system which is more open, more transparent and includes input from parish and town councils”.

RESOLVED:

THAT this council believes the present system of s106 negotiations leaves much to be desired, and that the council should continue to revise the process to produce a system which is more open, more transparent and includes input from parish and town councils.

2. Motion proposed by Councillor Debby Hallett, seconded by Councillor Jim Halliday

“Council recognises that residents have reported that they rely on written communications to get their council information. To better serve the people of the Vale, Council requests Cabinet to include in their 2015-16 budget, a programme for circulating, on a regular basis to all Vale households, written information about Vale activities, services and programmes”.

Councillor Yvonne Constance moved and Councillor St John Dickson seconded the following amendment with additional words shown in bold and deleted words marked with a strikethrough:

“Council recognises that **some** residents have reported that they rely on written communications to get their council information. To better serve the people of the Vale, **and in the interests of efficiency**, Council requests Cabinet to include ~~in their 2015-16 budget, a programme for circulating, on a regular basis to all Vale households,~~ written information about Vale activities, service and programmes **with future council tax demands**”.

In supporting the original motion a number of councillors expressed the view that residents rely on regular written communication to remain informed about council services and events. However, other councillors expressed the view that regular written communication was an inefficient use of resources with the majority of resident's accessing information online.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors:	Councillors:	
John Amys	Margaret Crick	Mike Badcock
Marilyn Badcock	Tony de Vere	
Matthew Barber	Debby Hallett	
Eric Batts	Jeanette Halliday	
Yvonne Constance	Jim Halliday	
Roger Cox	Jenny Hannaby	
Charlotte Dickson	Dudley Hoddinott	
St John Dickson	Bob Johnston	
Anthony Hayward	Pat Lonergan	
Simon Howell	Ron Mansfield	
Bill Jones	Sue Marchant	
Mohinder Kainth	Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Sandy Lovatt	Elizabeth Miles	
Gill Morgan	Jerry Patterson	
Robert Sharp	Helen Pighills	
Janet Shelley	Judy Roberts	
Alison Thomson	Val Shaw	
Melinda Tilley	Andrew Skinner	
Margaret Turner	Catherine Webber	
Reg Waite	Richard Webber	
Elaine Ware	John Woodford	
Totals:		
21	21	1

The chairman declared the amendment carried on his casting vote.

On being put the substantive motion, as amended, was declared carried.

RESOLVED:

That Council recognises that some residents have reported that they rely on written communications to get their council information. To better serve the people of the Vale, and in the interests of efficiency, Council requests Cabinet to include written information about Vale activities, service and programmes with future council tax demands.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm

Written answers to questions from Members at Council 10 December 2014**1. Question from Councillor Pat Lonergan to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy**

What system was used to rank and evaluate potential strategic housing sites considered for inclusion in the Local Plan 2031?

The Council followed a comprehensive process to assess sites for inclusion in the local plan. This is described in detail in the Sites Selection Topic Paper available from the council website:

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2031/evidence-base>

The key stages are summarised by the attached table and involved investigating all land around each of the market towns, local service centres and larger villages across the district and assessing them for their suitability.

Stage	Description of process
Stage 1	Identification of potential sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed by Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) • Investigation of land around main settlements and at employment locations
Stage 2	Initial Site Filters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site size threshold (200 homes) • Exclusion of sites with planning status
Stage 3	Identification of key constraints/ opportunities and further site sift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit with spatial strategy, supporting Science Vale and main settlements • Constraints (AONB, Flood Zone, Green Belt, and others) • Level of facilities and services available at site locations
Stage 4	Detailed evidence testing, informal consultation and sustainability appraisal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Capacity Study • Transport Modelling • Viability Assessment • Historic Landscape Character Assessment • Green Belt Review • Informal consultation with infrastructure providers and key stakeholders • Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
Stage 5	Identification of Preferred Sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet objectively assessed housing need in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment • Sites which can deliver homes in the first five years identified to contribute towards the five year housing land supply • Preferred sites included in February 2014 Local Plan Part 1 Consultation Document

2. Question from Councillor Andrew Skinner to Councillor Reg Waite, Cabinet member for human resources

Internal Audit has recently lost employees who had lengthy commutes. In the last 12 months, how many council employees have left, and, of these, how many mentioned difficulty affording housing in the area in their exit interview?

Over the past 12 months, 52 employees have left the Council. Of those, 17 completed an exit questionnaire. None of them mentioned any difficulty in affording housing in the area. Of those leaving in the last 12 months almost half did so due to the ending of temporary contracts, retirement or redundancy as a result of structural changes. Of the 17 completing questionnaires none cited affordable housing as their reason for leaving.

3. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for legal and democratic services

What response should petitioners expect when a petition is presented at full council?

Petitioners who present a petition to Council are normally advised that their petition will be passed to the relevant officer or committee for consideration.

4. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy leisure and property

What's the status of the free wifi the Vale planned to install in Botley?

The free wi-fi is installed at West Way, Botley and is operational. However, there remains an outstanding issue of landlord's consent for the placement of some of the equipment. Vale officers are working with all parties to resolve this issue as quickly as possible and will not be promoting the service until consent has been obtained.

5. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council

In the light of hundreds of people objecting to the Doric plans and signing petitions asking the Vale to terminate their land sale contract with Doric, what does the Leader of the Council have to say to the people of Botley?

Throughout the progress of the application I have reminded Cllr Roberts that the Vale is not the applicant in the planning application and it must, and has successfully, separated its dual roles as planning authority and land owner. The Vale as land owner did not put forward the proposals and I have personally and publicly raised a number of the concerns of the community with Doric. The Council's planning committee has independently considered the facts of the application including representations from both the applicant and objectors and unanimously rejected the proposal. The Council has a contractual arrangement with Doric which is extended by their decision to appeal. Whilst I am disappointed by the appeal, I am confident that an alternative solution can be found and have already committed to meeting with West Way Community Concern in the New Year.

6. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy leisure and property

In June 2013, after completion of the Leisure and Sports Facilities Study, the Cabinet Member said there was to be a “follow up piece of work” that would include surveys of community or village halls. When is this survey due to be completed, and when will the report be available?

The surveys of community and village halls form part of the survey work that is being carried out currently for the joint playing pitch strategy and associated work. Survey work takes a number of months to complete, particularly given the need to capture both winter (football and rugby) and summer (cricket) seasons for the strategy. The report on the strategy and associated work is expect in summer of 2015.

7. Question from Councillor Margaret Crick to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council

Councillor Lovatt has inferred in the press (Abingdon Herald, 9th April) that developers behind the north Abingdon housing schemes could also pay for the £12m conversion of Lodge Hill to a diamond interchange. Would the leader confirm or correct this?

The Publication Version of the Local Plan 2031 sets out clear policy requirements for each strategic allocation. The Lodge Hill slip roads has £9m, funded via the LEP and the balance will be secured via a contribution under s106 by each of the sites proposed to the north of Abingdon-on-Thames (North Abingdon; North West Abingdon; North West Radley and South Kennington). The amount of the individual contribution is a matter for negotiation and has not yet been finalised.

8. Question from Councillor Tony de Vere to Councillor Elaine Ware Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property

Can the Leader inform Council what the position is with the redevelopment of the Charter area in Abingdon?

Officers continue to meet regularly with Scottish Widows to discuss the Charter area. Discussions to secure a potential supermarket operator is proving difficult and officers are now considering what alternative options are available to the Council in relation to this site. Good progress is being made in relation to the letting of the new units in Bury Street with further tenant announcements likely in the coming months. Cllr de Vere wil recall that at the time the previous administration signed the agreements over Bury Street and the Charter we warned of the danger of how the deal as structured with two separate agreements. This is however the situation that we inherited and we will continue to seek the best results for the people of Abingdon and the wider Vale.

9. Question from Councillor Catherine Webber to Councillor Charlotte Dickson, Chairman of the General Licensing Committee

Written answers to questions from Members at Council 10 December 2014

Please would the Chair update the Council on the state of the AQMAs in Abingdon, Botley and Marcham?

Abingdon: There has been some reduction in NO2 levels over the last couple of years. If this improvement continues, next year we will consider reducing the size of the air quality management area (AQMA).

Botley: The NO2 levels in Botley have remained constant over the last 7 years and remain above the Air Quality Objective. It is very difficult to influence the number of vehicles on the A34. We will be looking at the feasibility of erecting barriers along the southbound carriageway and the district wide air quality action plan has actions to reduce the overall emission which hopefully will have some effect on the NO2 emissions on the A34.

Marcham: We will be carrying out a consultation process with residents in Marcham about the AQMA and in early 2015 we will be taking a report to Licensing Committee recommending that the council formally declare the area.

10. Question from Councillor Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning

Please would the Cabinet Member give the Council a brief update on the Grove Airfield s106 negotiations?

I am delighted to inform Council that after much detailed work, effort and firm negotiations, officers have successfully concluded section 106 negotiations.

Members will recall that with the land being in multiple ownerships and with major infrastructure contributions being sought, the discussions have been particularly complicated.

Additional time has been spent in recent weeks in seeking to meet the needs of Grove Parish Council in relation to the public open space.

The S106 agreement is now with the developers to be signed by individual landowners.

11. Question from Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer to Councillor Mike Murray, cabinet member for planning policy

Has land been reserved in the Local Plan 2031 for the necessary widening and/or dualing along Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive, which would be needed if the housing proposed in the plan is delivered?

The Council is working closely with Oxfordshire County Council and independent consultants to investigate any impacts on the highway network as a consequence of local plan proposed allocations. The detailed master planning stage of work, to be progressed to inform a planning application, will investigate the specific requirements for road improvements and the necessary details, should this be necessary. Land is not required to be safeguarded (as for example with Lodge Hill) as the land likely to be required for any widening would be in the

same ownership as the application site and controlled through the planning application process.

12. Question from Councillor Richard Webber to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property

Please could the Cabinet Member explain the thinking behind the “option packages” being offered as part of the consultation on Abbey Meadow?

The council has committed itself to creating a vision for the future of Abbey Garden and Meadow in Abingdon. We think it is important the vision reflects the views and aspirations of people living in the town and the rest of the district.

The project has the opportunity to bring about significant improvements to the site and have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the town as a whole. It is not, however, without significant risk.

If public consultation on the project is poorly managed, there is a risk of raising public expectations which cannot be met. The worst case scenario is a high-profile consultation which results in a ‘wish list’ of desired improvements to the site which are not viable.

To mitigate this risk, we have developed are three scenarios through an initial consultations phase involving councillors, key stakeholders and some local residents.

- **a focus on structured sport and recreation (i.e. improve what’s already there)**
- **a focus on tourism and leisure (i.e. develop a café / restaurant on site to make it a more informal open access, all year round venue)**
- **a focus on green open space (i.e. low key development that is open access and makes the most of the natural riverside landscape).**

The scenarios afford the council some degree of confidence that it can deliver on at least some of the improvements stakeholders have put forward.

There will be a widely publicised, high profile vote on the three scenarios in early 2015. The vote will give people the opportunity to get behind the vision for Abbey Garden and Meadow that pleases them the most.

We will also look to provide people with an opportunity to comment on some of the specific improvements that could be made for each scenario.

13. Question from Councillor Jim Halliday to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy

Please could he state how many Local Plan leaflets and CIL leaflets were printed this Autumn, the cost of each print run, the number of households and business each leaflet was mailed to, and the cost of each mailshot?

Written answers to questions from Members at Council 10 December 2014

60,000 copies of the Local Plan leaflet (The Future of the Vale) and 60,000 copies of the CIL and Design Guide Leaflet (Supporting Growth in the Vale).

The combined design and printing costs were £7,117.

The two leaflets were distributed to 52,499 residential premises

The total cost of distribution was £34,012.78, a delivery cost of 32p per leaflet per household.

The total cost of design, print and delivery of both leaflets per household was 78p

14. Question from Councillor Jeanette Halliday to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council

Did you review the content of the letters concerning individual election registration before they were sent out?

No. However I, along with all councillors, received a copy of the letter via email on 3 November 2014 prior to its despatch.

15. Question from Councillor Jim Halliday to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council

Please could he state how many letters were dispatched to residents about the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration, the cost of mailing these letters, and whether the Council received any funding from Government for this exercise, and if so how much ?

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration is ongoing as we remain in a transition phase and as required we continue to mail residents. This response relates to the mailings required as part of the transition phase that has involved the use of the print company to produce two mailings of Invitations to Register (ITRs) and Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) as well as a third print run of these documents for the canvass: these mailings relate to those electors that we could not immediately confirm on the electoral register. So far, the print company has printed and posted in the region of 30,000 ITRs and 17,000 HEFs.

Each ITR or HEF sent can generate a response from the elector on which administrators act and this is likely to generate yet another letter. These additional costs are not referred to here as they continue to accumulate.

The print company also sent out 82,933 confirmation letters.

Costs via the print company have amounted to £14,311.70. Postage costs have amounted to £24,485.21. The council received £40,477 in grant money.