

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council



held on **Wednesday 12 October 2016 at 7.00 pm**
at the **The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY**

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Mike Badcock (Chairman), Alice Badcock, Eric Batts, Matthew Barber, Ed Blagrove, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Margaret Crick, Stuart Davenport, Katie Finch, Robert Hall, Debby Hallett, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Vicky Jenkins, Bob Johnston, Mohinder Kainth, Monica Lovatt, Sandy Lovatt, Ben Mabbett, Chris McCarthy, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Julia Reynolds, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Emily Smith and Catherine Webber

Officers: Gerry Brough, Steven Corrigan, David Hill, William Jacobs and Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: 5

Co.31 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Janet Shelley, Henry Spencer, Reg Waite and Elaine Ware.

Co.32 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

Co.33 Declarations of interest

None.

Co.34 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman provided housekeeping information. He welcomed the council's new chief executive, David Hill, to his first Council meeting.

Co.35 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting council.

Council received three requests to address the meeting on agenda item 11 – OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan.

- A. The following statement was circulated to all councillors in advance of the meeting on behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire. Mr Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager, read out the question.

We welcome the decision taken at the Vale and South Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting, endorsed by Cabinet last week that the revised SEP Refresh should be considered at Full Council. We have for some time demanded that our locally elected representatives have the opportunity to consider this most important of issues. Today, local councillors have the chance to engage in robust debate on the revised SEP Refresh. We urge you take this final opportunity before the SEP Refresh is signed off, to seriously consider the impact that this plan will have on the future of Oxfordshire.

Need not Greed Oxfordshire believe the time has come for our local authorities to take full responsibility for the overall growth figures in the revised SEP 2016.

We are deeply concerned at the 'pass-the-parcel' game being played by OxLEP and our district and county councils, with each blaming the other for the inflated and unrealistic targets for employment and housing.

We believe this Plan sets very damaging and unrealistic growth targets which would radically change Oxfordshire's communities and environment - today, you - our elected representatives, have the opportunity to have your say.

- Do you genuinely believe we can create 85,000 jobs by 2031?
- Do you genuinely believe we can build 100,000 houses by 2031? Are you prepared for the consequences when this target isn't met and we see an increase in the speculative development that is already blighting so many of our communities?
- Do you genuinely think the development currently proposed will solve the affordable housing issues we have in the County?
- Do you genuinely think that Oxfordshire, the most rural county in the south-east, is the right place to accommodate a 30% increase in population by 2031?

If your answer to any of these questions is NO, we urge you to speak out against OxLEP's Strategic Economic Plan as currently drafted at today's meeting.

Need not Greed Oxon want to see an alternative approach to growth in our county.

We are calling for a review of the economic growth figures and by association the housing figures, for the county outlined in the revised SEP Refresh, in the light of:

1. The implications of Brexit.
2. The social and environmental constraints - ie not just 'how much growth can we get' but also 'how much growth can our infrastructure, services and environment absorb'.
3. A re-consideration of the priorities for action - ie how to provide affordable housing for existing local residents, rather than seeking to attract ever more people into the area making the jobs versus housing balance worse.
4. Genuine public consultation on the future vision for Oxfordshire.

As our elected representative, will you take a stand today and help force re-consideration of these overly aggressive and unrealistic growth targets that make no allowances for Brexit and that take little account of environmental and social impacts?

- B. Julie Maberley, Campaign Manager, Wantage and Grove Campaign Group addressed the Council as follows:

We note that item 11 on the agenda tonight is the OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan and that this includes an excellent Cabinet report on the plan.

In paragraph nine of this report it points out that:

“The SEP refresh document “focuses on strategy rather than the details of delivery”. However, the SEP refresh document would have been stronger if; – more detail had been provided to indicate how the strategy intends to exploit opportunities and respond to threats,”

As the impact of Brexit could be a major threat to this plan, we would encourage you to request that the refresh include more details on how the plan could respond to this threat.

Paragraph 10 lists a number of issues that the proposed final version of the SEP does not fully address. We encourage you to present these issues to OxLEP and to withhold support for the SEP unless they are addressed.

The plan is based on growth forecasts involving an additional 88,000 jobs and 100,000 new homes. Unless the issues listed in paragraph 10 are addressed it is difficult to see how these growth forecasts can be achieved.

OxLEP is responsible for developing the Oxfordshire economy and its economic plan should, as a minimum, demonstrate how the growth in the economy is to be achieved.

According to its own website “OxLEP has made considerable progress in strengthening Oxfordshire's economy by establishing robust and effective relationships between businesses, academia and the public sector” so as your report states it is very disappointing that so few businesses have commented on the refresh. Without the support of a large proportion of the businesses in Oxfordshire and their commitment to growth it is difficult to see how this plan could be achieved.

Even the Vale4business is conspicuous by its absence in response to the plan. We encourage you to ask for evidence that the businesses with which OxLEP has such “robust relationships” support the plan.

After all, the entire basis of the emerging Local Plan is based on the growth forecasts in the SEP and without the business growth many of the homes already approved or applied for will not be built. As you know, the 5 year supply is crucial to us having control of the development plan for the Vale.

If the economy doesn't develop at the speed required then the ability for unscrupulous developers to obtain planning permissions because of a lack of sufficient homes being built to provide a five year supply will further blight our green and pleasant land.

Please take the SEP seriously and ensure that business support for the forecasts exist.

- C. Mrs Joyce Hutchinson addressed Council. She welcomed the council's response to the SEP. She raised the following points:
- Need to support employment across Oxfordshire and invest in enterprise.

- Oxford City Council is unable to deliver housing.
- Infrastructure is currently inadequate – building more houses without the necessary infrastructure will compound the existing problems.
- Houses are required to provide accommodation for key workers.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their contributions and advised that the points raised would be considered at agenda item 11.

Co.36 Urgent business

None.

Co.37 Petitions under standing order 13

The Chairman reported that on 14 October the council received a petition from residents of Sutton Courtenay regarding planning issues within the village. The petition had been handed to the planning department and would be handled in accordance with the council's petition scheme.

Co.38 Questions under standing order 12

None.

Co.39 Treasury management outturn 2015/16

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 12 August 2016, on the outturn performance of the treasury management function for the financial year 2015/16.

Councillor Robert Sharp, Cabinet member for finance, provided the following responses to questions submitted in advance of the meeting:

- Can you explain the loss in investment property net book value of £12.4 million over the past year?

Answer - The value of investment property we hold has fallen due to the sale of Emcor house and re-classifications of property.

- What was the net book value lost there on the sale of Emcor House?

Answer - There was no loss on the sale of Emcor House. It was sold during 2015/16 and therefore was not in the asset register as at 31 March 2016, causing the reduction in total value of the portfolio. It was included in the opening asset value of £20.6million (31 March 2015), with a net book value of £800,000 at the point of sale.

- Land in Botley was reclassified, which led to a net book value loss of how much? Why does reclassification result in a loss of value in 2015/16?

Answer - The land at Botley has not been disposed of and there is no loss in value arising from the reclassification of this asset out of investment property to other land & buildings due to its regenerative nature. The value transferred was £7million.

- In section 14, how do the void periods in Old Abbey House affect net book value, or is it only income that's affected?

Answer - This loss of income does not affect the value of investment properties held and is mentioned only in relation to reduced income during 2015/16.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the treasury management outturn report for 2015/16;
2. approve the actual 2015/16 prudential indicators within the report.

Co.40 Longworth Neighbourhood Plan

Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet, made at its meeting on 7 October 2016, to make the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for Vale of White Horse.

In moving Cabinet's recommendation Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning, stated that the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan supports the council's strategy for development in smaller villages, encourages new development to sustain and where possible enhance the distinctive character of Longworth, includes a policy that seeks to retain key community facilities in the village and adds greater protection to two key community spaces – the allotments and recreational playing field. Over 80% of those who voted in the referendum on 18 August 2016 supported the plan.

RESOLVED: to make the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for Vale of White Horse.

Co.41 OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 October 2016, on the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) Strategic Economic Plan. As part of that report Cabinet considered and supported the Joint Scrutiny Committee request that Cabinet defer its response to the SEP pending its consideration by Council.

Councillors welcomed the document. The following points were raised during the discussion:

- Housing - Vale requires the additional housing identified in order to support future economic growth and accommodate the growth in population attracted by the new jobs.
- Oxford City Council continued to allocate land for employment whilst failing to provide housing which compounds the current housing shortage and transport problems.
- Affordable housing – there was a lack of suitable accommodation for key workers and those on lower incomes.
- Infrastructure – the document should address the infrastructure problems (particularly transport) and include reference to the possibility of a Grove/Wantage railway station.
- Skills shortage – the document should address the existing skills shortage in Oxfordshire. The creation of new jobs would not benefit the local community if local people were unable to fill the positions.
- There was also no reference to disability issues in the document.

A number of councillors remained sceptical that the SEP had a plan to address weaknesses and respond to threats. It remained inward looking and provided an Oxford-centric perspective rather than addressing County-wide issues.

RESOLVED: to endorse the decision of Cabinet to:

- (i) welcome some of the changes made to the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan which seek to make it “shorter and clearer”, and acknowledge that this has largely been achieved;
- (ii) support the broad thrust of the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan document in terms of the stated vision, identified strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and proposed actions; and
- (iii) believe the document would be more robust if it:
 - more fully addressed the issues highlighted in the body of the Cabinet report, and
 - more clearly linked actions to identified issues, and confirmed where responsibility lies for implementing these various actions,and to note that the Leader will take account of points raised at Council in responding to the consultation.

Co.42 Report of the Leader of the council

Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council, provided a number of updates as detailed below.

Growth Board – he reported that at its meeting on 26 September 2016, the Oxfordshire Growth Board approved the apportionment of the agreed working figure for the unmet housing need for Oxford which assumed a worst case scenario of 2,200 houses in the Vale.

Devolution – the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed a motion that the district councils, Oxford City and county council would work together to realise savings and improve public services. They would work with partners, including the police and Clinical Commissioning Group, to explore how these transformational changes can be progressed. Work would continue on the feasibility of establishing a combined authority for Oxfordshire.

In accordance with the scrutiny committee procedure rules, Council noted that on 12 August 2016 Councillor Mike Murray took a confidential decision to grant a lease to Boundary Park Sports Association. The chairman of the scrutiny committee agreed to waive call-in because any delay could impact on the agreement.

Council noted the following changes to the Conservative Group’s membership of committees:

- Councillor Mohinder Kainth to replace Councillor Katie Finch on the Scrutiny and Joint Scrutiny committees;
- Councillor Chris Palmer to replace Councillor Monica Lovatt on the Joint Scrutiny Committee;
- Councillor Yvonne Constance to replace Councillor Ben Mabbett on the General Licensing and Licensing Acts committees.

Co.43 Notices of motion under standing order 11

- (1) Motion moved by Councillor Debby Hallett and seconded by Councillor Judy Roberts:

With the consent of Council, in accordance with standing order 24(4), Councillor Debby Hallett altered her motion to replace Oxford with Oxfordshire in the fifth line of bullet point two of the motion below.

“Council notes that government is still open to practical suggestions for devolved government. Council notes that the benefits of devolution are far more likely to be achieved if council leaders in Oxfordshire are serious about reaching a consensus.

Council also notes that both of the recently-commissioned reports identified strengths and weaknesses in each proposal, and made recommendations for addressing them.

Council believes these recommendations are capable of forming the basis for further discussion.

Council therefore:

- Calls on all council leaders in the county to resume talks about a workable model of local government re-organisation, with the express intention of reaching a workable consensus, and with the primary objective of achieving the best outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire in terms of service delivery and efficiencies
- Calls on the Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council to play a full and constructive part in such talks”.

There was general support for the motion. Councillors expressed the view that the current lack of agreement reduced the scope for savings and threatened service provision. Consensus was the only way to move forward. The residents of Oxfordshire expected an outcome from the money spent on the two option reports - one produced on behalf of Oxford City Council and the district councils and one on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The government had stated that the devolution deal, which would provide greater powers and funding, is dependent on new collaborative governance arrangements. Without an agreement there would be no devolution deal.

During the debate a councillor spoke in support of ‘option six’ referred to in Grant Thornton’s ‘Review of future options for local government in Oxfordshire’ produced on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. This option envisages a strategic unitary council for Oxfordshire with overall responsibility for determining a framework of delegation of powers and budgets with constitutionally established area boards, based on the administrative boundaries of the current City and district councils, exercising these delegated powers and budgets. These area boards could have precept raising powers and have representation on the county-wide unitary executive board. This option would achieve savings through a reduction in administrative costs, improve the delivery of services and importantly ensure decisions are taken close to the communities.

However, other councillors expressed the view that ‘option six’ would recreate the two-tier system of local government which members of the public wanted to replace. The view was expressed that such an option would require legislative provision and that

the ability for area boards to raise different council tax levels could prove contentious and confusing for residents.

RESOLVED: To note that government is still open to practical suggestions for devolved government and that the benefits of devolution are far more likely to be achieved if council leaders in Oxfordshire are serious about reaching a consensus.

Council also notes that both of the recently-commissioned reports identified strengths and weaknesses in each proposal, and made recommendations for addressing them.

Council believes these recommendations are capable of forming the basis for further discussion.

Council therefore:

- Calls on all council leaders in the county to resume talks about a workable model of local government re-organisation, with the express intention of reaching a workable consensus, and with the primary objective of achieving the best outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire in terms of service delivery and efficiencies
- Calls on the Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council to play a full and constructive part in such talks

(2) Motion moved by Councillor Bob Johnston and seconded by Councillor Jenny Hannaby:

“Given that HM Government has announced that the New Homes Bonus is to be top sliced to pay for Adult Social Services in areas such as Oxfordshire, this Council calls for the officers to prepare a report on the implications for the Vale’s finances. The report should go to Scrutiny in the first instance and thence to Cabinet and Full Council”.

Those councillors who spoke in support of the motion expressed the view that New Homes Bonus was critical to the finances of the council. A move by the government to divert some of this money to support adult services could have financial implications for the council. However, other councillors expressed the view that, whilst the government had consulted upon an amended New Homes Bonus scheme earlier in the year, the outcome of the consultation had not been published. It was therefore premature to commission the work requested in the motion. The government financial settlement would contain more detail at which time an informed analysis could be undertaken.

The chairman called for a recorded vote on the motion which was lost with the votes recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Margaret Crick	Alice Badcock	Mike Badcock
Debby Hallett	Matthew Barber	
Jenny Hannaby	Eric Batts	
Dudley Hoddinott	Edward Blagrove	
Bob Johnston	Yvonne Constance	
Helen Pighills	Roger Cox	
Judy Roberts	Stuart Davenport	

For	Against	Abstentions
Emily Smith	Katie Finch	
Catherine Webber	Robert Hall	
	Anthony Hayward	
	Simon Howell	
	Vicky Jenkins	
	Mohinder Kainth	
	Monica Lovatt	
	Sandy Lovatt	
	Ben Mabbett	
	Chris McCarthy	
	Chris Palmer	
	Julia Reynolds	
	Robert Sharp	
Total: 9	Total: 20	Total: 1

The meeting closed at 8.25pm