

Minutes of a meeting of the Council



held on Wednesday 15 February 2017 at 7.30 pm
at The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Mike Badcock (Chairman), Reg Waite (Vice-Chairman), Alice Badcock, Eric Batts, Matthew Barber, Ed Blagrove, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Margaret Crick, Stuart Davenport, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, 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, Mike Murray, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Julia Reynolds, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Janet Shelley, Emily Smith, Henry Spencer, Elaine Ware and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Simon Hewings (Capita), David Hill, William Jacobs and Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: 4

Co.58 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Gervase Duffield.

Co.59 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

Co.60 Declarations of interest

Councillor Emily Smith made a statement that she was employed by Oxfordshire County Council. However, as the subject of the motion (agenda item 17) would not directly impact on her employment she would take part in the discussion and voting on the item.

Co.61 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman provided housekeeping information.

Co.62 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting council.

Mr Eastoe, an Abingdon resident, addressed Council on the planning application for 900 houses in North Abingdon. He expressed the view that the planning application should not be granted without major road improvements to the Lodge Hill interchange. Without these improvements there would be a detrimental impact on traffic flows in Abingdon and the surrounding areas. He proposed the inclusion of a section 106 agreement to require the necessary improvements to Lodge Hill prior to the commencement of any development.

The Chairman thanked Mr Eastoe for his address and advised that his comments would be passed to planning officers and that the application would be subject to consultation and consideration by the Planning Committee in due course.

Co.63 Urgent business

None.

Co.64 Petitions under standing order 13

None.

Co.65 Questions under standing order 12

A. Question from Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning

'As there is a likelihood that the Lodge Hill slip roads as defined in the Local Plan Part 1 may not have the necessary funding to go ahead, there is public concern about the impact of traffic from strategic sites on local roads. Could the Cabinet member for planning tell me what traffic modelling (if any) was carried out by the Vale, its consultants or third parties such as developers, in preparation for Local Plan Part 1, of the impact of traffic on the A4183 (and other local roads) from the potential development which we now refer to as the "North Abingdon Site" if the new slip roads at Lodge Hill aren't provided?'

Answer

Councillor Roger Cox responded that comprehensive traffic modelling was undertaken to support new development allocated in Local Plan Part 1, and evidence was submitted in support of the plan. All work undertaken is summarised in the 'Evaluation of Transport Impacts Study, Final Report, November 2014' available in the Local Plan Part 1 examination library on the Vale website.

New slips at Lodge Hill were tested as part of the package of transport mitigation to support new housing allocations. The traffic modelling shows that the introduction of Lodge Hill slips would reduce traffic levels on key routes in Abingdon, with forecast flows to reduce on the A4183 and on Copenhagen Drive. Overall delays are also forecast to reduce.

No transport modelling evidence was submitted to the examination from the North Abingdon site promoter that looked specifically at traffic impacts with or without the Lodge Hill Slip Roads. Such transport modelling would be assessed as part of any planning application at this site.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Cox undertook to provide a written response setting out of the availability of the modelling evidence.

B. Question from Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Matthew Barber, leader of the council

‘In October 2014, Council passed a motion that called on officers to report on how the Vale could make and support the business case for a new express train service from Bristol to Bedford, stopping at Wantage/Grove, Didcot, Oxford, Bicester and Milton Keynes. What actions and decisions have been taken to move this forward?’

Answer

Councillor Barber responded that work is progressing on the business case for a station at Grove coordinated by Oxfordshire County Council with support from Vale of White Horse District Council. The Local Plan had identified a location for a station and negotiations were ongoing. A consortium had been established to take the matter forward to the East/West rail project.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Barber undertook to provide written details of the development of the business case and identified funding.

C. Question from Councillor Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Matthew Barber, leader of the council

‘In May 2016, Council passed a motion that called for ‘officers to work with Oxfordshire County Council (and other relevant local authorities, Network Rail and Great Western Railway) to produce a business case for an express rail link from Bristol to Milton Keynes via a new station at Grove / Wantage. It must include new track and signalling so as not to obstruct present and future high speed services from Paddington and link with the current electrification scheme.’ What actions and decisions have been taken to produce this business case?’

Answer

Councillor Barber referred to his answer to the previous question.

D. Question from Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Matthew Barber, leader of the council

‘In July 2015, Council passed a motion that requested the Environment Agency commission an independent review into the implications of the proposed Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, especially relating to possible flood risks in areas of the Vale downstream of Abingdon. What actions and decisions have been taken about this?’

Answer

Councillor Barber responded that the council had commissioned a company to undertake the necessary work. Modelling had been completed and passed to the Environment Agency. A report is expected later this month which would be shared with parish councils and the public.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Barber confirmed that he understood the delay had been caused by the Environment Agency agreeing the south section of the route.

E. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning

‘In December 2015, Council passed a motion in support of the Housing Bill, which would build starter homes, grant automatic planning permission to build on brownfield sites, sell off high value vacant council assets and use the money to build more affordable homes in the same area, and extend right to buy to housing association tenants. How many starter homes have been sold in the year since? How many automatic permissions have been given for brownfield development? How many council assets have been sold off, and how many new affordable houses have those sales funded? How many housing association tenants have exercised their right to buy?’

Answer

Councillor Cox responded that the Bill became the Housing and Planning Act 2016 in May last year. We are waiting for the relevant Regulations to come into force so we can implement or act on the proposed changes.

F. Question from Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning

‘Could the Cabinet member for planning tell us about the timetable for the construction of the Lodge Hill slip roads?’

Answer

Councillor Cox responded that there is currently no timetable for the construction of the Lodge Hill Slip Roads as there is no confirmed funding, c. £13 million, for the scheme. Unfortunately, funds were not secured for the scheme in the latest round of bids to the Government by the Local Enterprise Partnership. Our Council will continue to work with the County Council and others to ensure planned development makes appropriate contributions towards the scheme and that opportunities for any third-party funding are actively pursued.

Co.66 Appointment of external auditors

At its meeting on 23 January 2017 the Joint Audit and Governance Committee considered a report on appointing external auditors and recommended that Council opt in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments for the appointment of external auditors.

RESOLVED:

To opt in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors.

Co.67 Treasury management mid-year monitoring 2016/17

Council considered Cabinet’s recommendations, made at its meeting on 3 February 2017, on the treasury management activities for the first six months of 2016/17.

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The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 23 January 2017 and had not recommended any adjustments to the strategy as a result of the first six months' activities. Likewise, Cabinet concluded that the treasury management activities had operated within the agreed parameters set out in the approved treasury management strategy.

RESOLVED: to approve the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2016/17.

Co.68 Treasury management and investment strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 3 February 2017, on the council's treasury management strategy and investment strategy for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee considered the report at its meeting on 23 January 2017 and had not recommended any adjustments to the strategy. Cabinet agreed to recommend Council approve the strategy.

RESOLVED: to approve

1. the treasury management strategy 2017/18 set out in appendix A to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2017;
2. the prudential indicators and limits for 2017/18 to 2019/20 as set out in table 2, appendix A to the head of finance's report; and
3. the annual investment strategy 2017/18 set out in appendix A (paragraphs 24 to 63) and the lending criteria detailed in table 5 to the head of finance's report.

Co.69 Revenue budget 2017/18 and capital programme to 2021/22

The Chairman referred to regulations that require 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. In accordance with the regulations 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 at the relevant meeting. No councillor made any such declaration.

Appendix E, setting out the prudential indicators, was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Council noted the report of the chief finance officer, appendix G to the budget report, on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.

Councillor Barber moved and Councillor Cox seconded a motion to approve Cabinet's recommendations as follows:

That Council:

1. sets the revenue budget for 2017/18 as set out in the appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2017;
2. approves the capital programme for 2017/18 to 2021/22 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;
3. sets the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the head of finance's report;
4. approves the medium term financial plan to 2021/22 as set out in appendix F.1 to the head of finance's report.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Smith seconded an amendment to the above budget to provide for a grant fund of £100,000 for Children's Centres and £3,000 to pay for officer time to administer the grants.

Those councillors who spoke in support of the amendment expressed concern about the impact on local families and communities when Oxfordshire County Council ceases the provision of universal children's services on 1 March 2017. The children's centres in Botley, Abingdon, Grove and The Hanneys, Faringdon, Southmoor and Wantage provide essential wellbeing services to children under five and their families. They noted the efforts of both parents and the community groups working to find alternative ways of providing universal services for families. They expressed the view that Vale of White Horse District Council is in a position to help fund the set up costs for these projects in the coming year via the existing grants scheme following the same procedure as the New Homes Bonus and Community Capital Funds and therefore supported the inclusion of the additional funds to support these valuable organisations. A number of town and parish councils had committed funds to support their local Children's Centres.

Those councillors who spoke against the amendment stated that Oxfordshire County Council did not wish to see Children's Centres close and there may be additional funding. The view was expressed that the centres could access the existing grant schemes for funding and that, if required, additional funding could be found. Oxfordshire County Council will continue to comply with its statutory duty to provide early intervention services.

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

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Margaret Crick	Alice Badcock	
Debby Hallett	Mike Badcock	
Jenny Hannaby	Matthew Barber	
Dudley Hoddinott	Eric Batts	
Bob Johnston	Edward Blagrove	
Helen Pighills	Yvonne Constance	
Judy Roberts	Roger Cox	
Emily Smith	Stuart Davenport	
Catherine Webber	Charlotte Dickson	
	St John Dickson	
	Katie Finch	
	Robert Hall	

For	Against	Abstentions
	Anthony Hayward	
	Simon Howell	
	Vicky Jenkins	
	Mohinder Kainth	
	Monica Lovatt	
	Sandy Lovatt	
	Ben Mabbett	
	Chris McCarthy	
	Mike Murray	
	Chris Palmer	
	Julia Reynolds	
	Robert Sharp	
	Janet Shelley	
	Henry Spencer	
	Reg Waite	
	Elaine Ware	
Total: 9	Total: 28	Total: 0

Councillors supporting the Cabinet's revenue and capital budget proposals supported the view that the council continued to manage its financial matters sensibly while maintaining services and continuing its capital programme. They supported budgetary provision for a new leisure centre to serve Wantage and Grove, and the replacement of the outdoor swimming pool in Abingdon and to carry out a deep cleanse of the district. The continued reduction in funding from government necessitated an increase in council tax to maintain services for residents.

A number of councillors expressed concern regarding the level of savings from the Corporate Services Contracts.

The Chairman called for a recorded vote on the budget which was carried with the votes recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Alice Badcock	Dudley Hoddinott	Margaret Crick
Mike Badcock		Bob Johnston
Matthew Barber		Helen Pighills
Eric Batts		Judy Roberts
Edward Blagrove		Emily Smith
Yvonne Constance		Catherine Webber
Roger Cox		
Stuart Davenport		
Charlotte Dickson		
St John Dickson		
Katie Finch		
Robert Hall		
Debby Hallett		
Jenny Hannaby		
Anthony Hayward		
Simon Howell		

For	Against	Abstentions
Vicky Jenkins		
Mohinder Kainth		
Monica Lovatt		
Sandy Lovatt		
Ben Mabbett		
Chris McCarthy		
Mike Murray		
Chris Palmer		
Julia Reynolds		
Robert Sharp		
Janet Shelley		
Henry Spencer		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Total: 30	Total: 1	Total: 6

RESOLVED: to

1. set the revenue budget for 2017/18 as set out in the appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 3 February 2017;
2. approve the capital programme for 2017/18 to 2021/22 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;
3. set the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the head of finance's report;
4. approve the medium term financial plan to 2021/22 as set out in appendix F.1 to the head of finance's report.

Co.70 Council tax 2017/18

Council considered the report of the head of finance on the setting of the Council Tax for the 2017/18 financial year.

In accordance with regulations requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the council tax the Chairman called for a recorded vote which was carried with the voting being as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Alice Badcock		
Mike Badcock		
Matthew Barber		
Eric Batts		
Edward Blagrove		
Yvonne Constance		
Roger Cox		
Margaret Crick		
Stuart Davenport		
Charlotte Dickson		
St John Dickson		

For	Against	Abstentions
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		
Mike Murray		
Chris Palmer		
Helen Pighills		
Julia Reynolds		
Judy Roberts		
Robert Sharp		
Janet Shelley		
Emily Smith		
Henry Spencer		
Reg Waite		
Elaine Ware		
Catherine Webber		
Total: 37	Total: 0	Total: 0

RESOLVED:

1. to note that at its meeting on 14 December 2016 the council calculated the council tax base 2017/18:
 - (a) for the whole council area as **49,406.0** [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)]; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in column 1 of appendix 1.
2. that the council tax requirement for the council’s own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding parish precepts) is £6,012,216
3. that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £75,059,973 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils.
 - (b) £65,407,511 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

- (c) £9,652,462 being the amount by which the aggregate at (3)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (3)(b) above, calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B) of the Act).
 - (d) £195.37 being the amount at (3)(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31(B) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts).
 - (e) £3,640,246 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.
 - (f) £121.69 being the amount at (3)(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (3)(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates.
4. to note that for the year 2017/18 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	£897.06
Band B	£1,046.57
Band C	£1,196.08
Band D	£1,345.59
Band E	£1,644.61
Band F	£1,943.63
Band G	£2,242.65
Band H	£2,691.18

5. to note that for the year 2017/18 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	£113.52
Band B	£132.44
Band C	£151.36
Band D	£170.28
Band E	£208.12
Band F	£245.96
Band G	£283.80
Band H	£340.56

6. that the council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in appendix 3 as the amounts of council tax for 2017/18 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown in appendix 3.
7. to note the allocation of the town and parish element of the council tax reduction scheme grant payable to each parish shown in appendix 4.
8. that the council's basic amount of council tax for 2017/18 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Co.71 Pay policy statement 2017/18

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

RESOLVED: to approve the pay policy statement for 2017-18 attached to the report of the head of HR, IT and technical services to Council on 15 February 2016.

Co.72 Changes to the council's constitution

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services and monitoring officer on a proposed change to the council's constitution to clarify the decisions which can be taken by full Council.

RESOLVED: to

1. amend the full Council section of Part 2: Decision Making of the revised constitution agreed by Council on 14 December 2016 with effect from 1 March 2017 to provide for full Council to be responsible for the adoption or approval of a plan or strategy (other than a plan or strategy forming part of the policy framework), where the Council determines that it should take the decision whether to adopt or approve that plan or strategy;
2. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to update the constitution to reflect the agreed amendments;
3. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to make any minor or consequential amendments to the constitution for consistency and to reflect the council's style guide;
4. determine that Council should itself take the decision whether to adopt or approve any proposals for unitary local government for Oxfordshire (including submitting the same to the Secretary of State and all further decisions following the Secretary of State's response), having considered recommendations of the Cabinet.

Co.73 Report of the leader of the council

The Leader of the council referred to a meeting he had attended on the East – West rail link.

He provided an update on unitary council proposals and explained how his opinion had moved from support of a three unitary authority model and combined authority devolution bid to a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire which offered the best way forward to improve the delivery of services to all the residents of Oxfordshire and address reduced government funding.

Co.74 Notices of motion under standing order 11

Motion moved by Councillor Hallett and seconded by Councillor Johnston:
'This council supports the proposal for a new countywide unitary authority.'

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Co.11

Councillor Barber moved and Councillor Constance seconded the following amendment with the deletion of the words shown by strikethrough and additions in bold.

“This Council supports the ~~proposal for~~ principle of a new countywide unitary council for Oxfordshire but recognises that the One Oxfordshire discussion document currently being publicised by Oxfordshire County Council requires strengthening in order to maximise the benefits to, and influence of, local communities and to satisfy the concerns of residents about some aspects of the proposal including the need for more local decision making.

Council authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to work with other partner councils to develop the terms of a proposal for local government change in Oxfordshire and present a detailed report to Council in due course.”

With the agreement of Council the mover and seconder of the original motion accepted the amendment.

Councillors supported the principle of a new countywide unitary council for Oxfordshire to transform the way services are delivered to the residents of Oxfordshire, maintain high quality services and secure investment in infrastructure. A number of councillors expressed concern regarding the current One Oxfordshire proposal put forward by Oxfordshire County Council. The view was expressed that the current proposal required improvement to ensure local accountability with decisions taken at a much more local level and to recognise the different needs of rural communities and those of Oxford City. It was important to involve as many parties as possible in the discussions on the proposals including those who opposed the idea.

RESOLVED:

THAT Council supports the principle of a new countywide unitary council for Oxfordshire but recognises that the One Oxfordshire discussion document currently being publicised by Oxfordshire County Council requires strengthening in order to maximise the benefits to, and influence of, local communities and to satisfy the concerns of residents about some aspects of the proposal including the need for more local decision making.

Council authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to work with other partner councils to develop the terms of a proposal for local government change in Oxfordshire and present a detailed report to Council in due course.

The meeting closed at 9:25pm