

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council



held on **Wednesday 10 October 2018 at 7.00 pm**
at **The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY**

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Monica Lovatt (Chairman), Ben Mabbett (Vice-Chairman), Alice Badcock, Mike Badcock, Matthew Barber, Eric Batts, Ed Blagrove, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Margaret Crick, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Debby Hallett, Robert Hall, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Vicky Jenkins, Bob Johnston, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Chris McCarthy, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Julia Reynolds, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Janet Shelley, Emily Smith, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, William Jacobs, Holly Jones, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Co.24 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Davenport and Murray.

Co.25 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2018 as a correct record and agree that the chairman sign them as such.

Co.26 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

Co.27 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The chairman provided housekeeping information.

Co.28 Public participation

No public speakers had registered to address Council.

Co.29 Petitions

None.

Co.30 Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan – Scoping Document

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 28 September 2018, to approve the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan's scoping document. Cabinet authorised the head of planning, in agreement with the other Oxfordshire councils' equivalent, to make any necessary minor and presentational changes to the draft Joint Statutory Spatial Plan's Scoping Document before publication.

In introducing this item Councillor Cox, Cabinet member for planning, advised that, under the terms of the Housing and Growth Deal, Council, at its meeting on 14 February 2018, agreed to adopt a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, also known as the Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan, subject to some non-negotiable matters set out in appendix 4 of the Cabinet report.

The majority of councillors supported the scoping document recognising that officers will continue to seek a number of changes identified by Cabinet at its meeting on 28 September 2018. The document will provide a framework for Oxfordshire under which the council can produce a local plan and make appropriate allocations for development. However, a number of councillors expressed concern that the scoping document did not address the issues of concern raised at the Council meeting in February 2018, particularly that the scoping document should not make housing allocations in the Vale. There is no guarantee that officers will gain agreement to the amendments proposed by Cabinet and as such the scoping document should not be signed off by Council.

RESOLVED: to approve the Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan's scoping document (as set out in Appendix 3 to the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 28 September 2018).

Co.31 Making the Radley Neighbourhood Development Plan

Council considered the recommendations of Cabinet, made at its meeting on 5 October 2018, on making the Radley Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the development plan for Vale.

Councillors congratulated local residents who had been involved in the development of the plan.

RESOLVED to:

1. make the Radley Neighbourhood Development Plan so that it continues to be part of the council's development plan; and
2. authorise the head of planning, in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to correct any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors in the Radley Neighbourhood Development Plan, together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

Co.32 Treasury management outturn 2017/18

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 5 October 2018, on the outturn performance of the treasury management function for the financial year 2017/18.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet had considered the head of finance's report and were satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the treasury management outturn report for 2017/18 attached to the report of the head of finance to the Cabinet meeting on 5 October 2018;
2. approve the actual 2017/18 prudential indicators within the head of finance's report.

Co.33 Community Governance Review

At its meeting on 8 October 2018 the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee made final decisions in respect of its community governance reviews of the boundary between Great Coxwel and Great Faringdon parishes, and the boundary between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes.

These changes impact on district ward and county division boundaries. To make district ward and county divisions coterminous with these parish changes Council was invited to authorise the head of legal and democratic to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to alter the district wards and county division boundaries where necessary.

RESOLVED: to

1. authorise the head of legal and democratic to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to change district wards and county divisions to reflect the changes made to the parish boundary of Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell;
2. authorise the head of legal and democratic to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make a related alteration order to change district wards to reflect the change made to the parish boundary of Great Coxwell and Great Faringdon.

Co.34 Election fees and charges 2019

Margaret Reed, the council's returning officer, indicated that she would leave the room during any debate and vote on this item.

Council considered the report of the returning officer on the setting of fees and charges for the 2019 district and parish elections.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree the scales of fees for district and parish council elections, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referendums as set out in the Appendix to the report of the returning officer to the Council meeting on 10 October 2018;
2. agree to continue to charge parish and town councils for running elections on their behalf.

Co.35 Report of the Leader of the Council

Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council, provided an update on a number of matters. The text of his address is attached to these minutes.

Co.36 Questions on notice

A. Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council

The chairman of the Local Government Association's Brexit Taskforce has said "the UKs exit from the European Union will have a significant impact on local government. Brexit will ultimately be judged on the success or failure by local areas; real people in real communities. Councils are taking a lead on preparations for Brexit because our residents and our local businesses expect us to be ready." What has Vale of White Horse District Council done in terms of an analysis of the potential impact on local business, employment and the services we deliver? And what mitigation is being put in place to protect Vale residents, housing provision and our Enterprise Zones?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

Until a decision and deal is made about it being a hard or soft Brexit, it is difficult to analyse the potential impact with any certainty. Once more information is available about the deal and policy implications, the economic development team will be in a position to work with partners to make sure Vale businesses make the most of the post-Brexit opportunities.

As at 1 October 2018 there were 36 companies in the Vale that are EU owned. To mitigate any negative impact on Vale businesses and the local workforce, the economic development team has taken the following proactive steps:

- Partnering with the Department of International Trade (DIT) inward investment team to personally visit key foreign owned businesses in the district to discuss their plans post-Brexit and the support available at a local, county and national level. To date, foreign owned businesses in the Vale have not expressed significant concern as the policies that will impact them have not been decided (e.g. customs, migration laws etc).
- Partnering with OxLEP's inward investment team and the DIT Capital Investment team to identify and promote opportunities for Vale businesses in non-EU markets. This includes identifying capital investment opportunities to foreign investors. This relates to the DIT work to secure free-trade agreements with non-EU countries including Australia and New Zealand. Officers are working with DIT to open a dialogue with relevant businesses in Australia.
- The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy outlines how the government investment can support local businesses post-Brexit. This includes increasing productivity and growth opportunities. As the council's representative on the LIS steering group, the importance of Vale businesses and their growth potential are highlighted and considered when formulating the growth opportunities.
- The government has announced that EU citizens who reside and work in the UK before 31 December 2020 will be allowed to remain. Anecdotally, some businesses who employ EU migrants have had a few return to their country of origin but these numbers are small. The economic

development team is connected with EY which provide the latest legal information about migration laws, policy and processes. When the government decides the post-Brexit migration laws, the information and interpretation by EY will be shared with local businesses. At a recent workshop EY advised employers to identify their employees who are EU nationals and to advise them of the support available.

The Partnerships and Insight team are working on a light touch analysis of the potential implications of Brexit, this will cover aspects around the economy, workforce and legislation impact.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Cox confirmed, subject to taking advice, that the Partnership and Insight team's analysis of the potential implications of Brexit would be published.

B. Councillor Helen Pighills to Councillor Mike Murray Cabinet member for Development and Regeneration

A year has now passed since, the then Leader, Councillor Barber formally announced plans to turn Old Abbey House in Abingdon into council owned social housing. Please can the Cabinet member update us on this development and when residents can expect a planning application to be submitted for consultation?

Answer

In the absence of Councillor Mike Murray, Councillor Ed Blagrove responded as follows:

"Since the announcement that we were to investigate the provision of affordable housing at Old Abbey House, officers have, in conjunction with the Council's advisors, been exploring the potential for conversion or appropriate redevelopment of the building. Old Abbey House sits in a much valued and sensitive location, and opportunities are being carefully considered in the context of these and other constraints in respect of conversion or sensitive redevelopment of the site. In support of this, discussions have taken place with relevant officers with regards to site constraints and how it could be appropriately brought forward for this use. It is important that this process is properly carried out to ensure that any future planning application carries the best prospects for the successful future development or refurbishment of Old Abbey House".

Supplementary question

Councillor Pighills asked the following supplementary question:

Has the fact that they have been focussed on Old Abbey House meant that they have not looked for an alternative and more appropriate location for council owned social housing, for example have they approached the developers at the North Abingdon site to see if the quota of social housing on that site could be increased?

Answer

Councillor Blagrove responded that Councillor Murray, as the responsible Cabinet member, would provide a written response.

C. Councillor Catherine Webber to Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council

In the leader's press statement responding to the announcement that the Expressway will be using a route through Corridor B, the leader stated that "we" support the "principles" of the Expressway but mentioned concerns about any route going west of Oxford.

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- i Can the leader please explain what exactly are those principles he supports?
- ii But why is the leader not fighting to protect other Vale residents in harm's way, communities and environment to the east of Oxford such as Sunningwell, Radley, Marcham, Shippon, Wootton, and Abingdon?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

My statement actually said that I support the principles of the Oxford Cambridge corridor, not the proposed expressway. Those principles include economic growth, provision of housing for future generations, and improved transport connectivity.

The concerns I expressed were about an expressway route potentially going to the west of Oxford and I did not include or exclude any particular communities in the Vale on the basis of geography. Officers and I will continue to engage with Highways England at every opportunity.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding views of residents, Councillor Cox stated that local ward councillors had a role in feeding these back to the council.

D. Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council

Given there has not been any public consultation on the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, and none is expected for another year, Councillor Cox's position on the Highways England Stakeholder group will be a vitally important opportunity to ensure Highways England understand the views of Vale residents and potential impacts of routes through communities in corridor B.

However, full Council has not yet debated a position on the Expressway or canvassed the opinions of members, parish councils and residents about the significant environmental and social impacts on Vale communities.

How is the leader planning to collect and understand the views and concerns of local members and parish councils to ensure he and the Cabinet are fully appraised of the impact of each route before representing us at the first Highways England stakeholder meeting in November?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

The expressway project is owned by Highways England and they have the responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the choice of route. Highways England will carry out a full and formal public consultation later in the project when the route options become clear.

Although this council has no decision-making authority regarding the proposed expressway, officers and I will continue to take part in the informal stakeholder processes.

The Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to debate the expressway corridor options in October 2017. It would make sense for the committee to consider the route options at an appropriate stage in the Highways England process.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding the consultation process, Councillor Cox responded that no information is currently available, but the likely outcome would be a public inquiry.

E. Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Planning

In December 2014 Council passed a motion as follows "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". What decisions and actions have been taken since then to create a more open and transparent system and to include town and parish councils in the s106 process?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

We adopted a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document in June 2017, which sets out our approach, including consultation with towns and parishes, to negotiating planning obligations captured in S106 agreements. We encourage and support towns and parishes to undertake a community or a neighbourhood plan that can identify local infrastructure needs, which are justified and costed. We have in place a system that allows an online view of each planning obligation, including financial sums expected, collected and spent. We publish and provide towns and parishes with six-monthly reports on S106 funds we are holding on their behalf and transfer those funds appropriately and as quickly as possible.

Supplementary question:

In response to a supplementary question regarding the lack of such information in hard copy format, Councillor Cox responded that local ward councillors could provide the information in hard copy for relevant parish councils.

F. Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet Member for Community Services

The Vale's Local Leisure Facilities Strategy published in 2016 was submitted as one of our detailed policies for Local Plan Part 2. Page 29 and 38 highlight the replacement of the Louie Memorial Pavilion and the 4th Oxford Scout Hut in North Hinksey as High priority for funding during this financial year (2018/19). But, as we learned at the last full council meeting the Botley service centre area has not received any funding from the Vale for leisure for the last 4 years, nor is any planned.

What is the Cabinet member doing to ensure that this High priority project happens?

Answer

Councillor Badcock responded as follows:

1. The pavilion, scout hut and park are all owned by the North Hinksey Parish Council. To support the parish council, Vale of White Horse district Council recently funded a feasibility study looking at the options available in the area to design a master plan covering the whole site, at a cost of £15,900. This process was undertaken to put the Parish Council in a position to attract additional funding into the site.
2. The Leisure Strategy provided the evidence base for the council to negotiate a S106 contribution of £30,356.05 towards play equipment in the area. This money will assist the parish council in the delivery of its master plan for the entire site.

Supplementary question:

In response Councillor Smith stated that the s106 funding for play equipment was agreed 10 years ago and asked what the Cabinet member is doing to ensure that the projects listed as high priorities in the Leisure Strategy documents and action plans actually happen

Councillor Badcock undertook to provide a written response.

G. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council

The Vale of White Horse Residents' Survey 2018 highlighted "large increases in negative attitudes in terms of the council needing to be more open and honest". What does he think are the top reasons for these results, and what is Cabinet planning to do to rectify this perception?

Answer:

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

It is true that the last resident survey shows a significant increase in the people who think the council needs to be more open and honest. However, other reputation measures in the survey show that overall satisfaction with the way the council runs things has improved and there is stability in the perception that the council acts on the concerns of residents. Trust in the council remains high at 83%.

However, there is always room for improvement, and this commitment is reflected in the management restructure with the establishment of the new community enablement and customer engagement teams. The new structure provides us with a framework to improve and increase our engagement with residents.

Specific areas of work which have already commenced include reshaping the town and parish council forums, a full review and redesign of our website, the development of a corporate customer services team, a technology strategy to enable connectivity in our district, with residents and within the council and reviewing our communication processes and protocols. These initiatives support the move towards increasing resident choice as to how they engage and obtain information from us.

A very important aspect of being open and honest is also our democratic processes which enables public access and involvement. Indeed, external audit in their various reports to joint audit and governance committee have commented positively on the council's openness and transparency.

Members are also encouraged to positively promote the work of the council in their ward areas and encourage active involvement. In doing so it is important to be accurate, open and honest and reflect the decision-making structures of the council.

Supplementary question:

In response to a supplementary question regarding how the council will address the survey result that showed the public felt the council needed to be more open and transparent, Councillor Cox referred to his answer setting out what the council is and plans to do and the need to address public perception.

Co.37 Motions on notice

Motion proposed by Councillor Debby Hallett, seconded by Councillor Bob Johnston:

Council notes that Vale of White Horse is an area of exceptionally high property values relative to the rest of England.

Council notes that the statutory definition of 'Affordable Housing', whether to buy or to rent, is related directly to these property values (currently 80% of market value).

Council notes the study brought to Vale Scrutiny Committee in February 2018 by the then interim head of housing and economic development, which shed further light on the nature of affordability in Vale of White Horse.

- This study looked at house prices and rents in quartiles and determined that to buy a lower quartile property, costing £255,000 in Vale, an income of £57,000 is needed, which is an upper quartile income. So only the highest income levels can afford to buy the lowest priced properties in our district.
- Over recent years, growth in local incomes has not kept pace with growth in house prices or rents, so the so-called 'affordable' housing is not affordable to too many households and individuals.

Therefore, Council asks Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council, to write to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the council's concern. Council urges the Secretary of State to give consideration to the definition of affordable housing, taking into account the impact very high property values have on the current definition. Council urges him to consider a national debate on affordability and the implementation of a regional based definition of 'affordable housing', using a maximum price model for affordable housing within an area based on local incomes and circumstances, rather than the market value of the house.

With the consent of Council and following a short adjournment to consider a proposed amendment, the mover and seconder of the original motion accepted amended wording suggested by Councillor Ed Blagrove and seconded by Councillor Mike Badcock (new words in bold deleted words shown by a strikethrough).

It is a priority for this council to provide enough affordable housing for the needs of our residents, however it is also a great challenge to do so given the current definition of affordable housing and the model upon which it is based.

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This Council requests ~~Therefore, Council asks Councillor Roger Cox, as Leader of the council, to write to the James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to oversee a review, as a matter of urgency, into the definition of affordable housing, to strongly consider a more regional based model and the introduction of a maximum cost per housing type.~~ setting out the council's concern. Council urges the Secretary of State to give consideration to the definition of affordable housing, taking into account the impact very high property values have on the current definition. Council urges him to consider a national debate on affordability and the implementation of a regional based definition of 'affordable housing', using a maximum price model for affordable housing within an area based on local incomes and circumstances, rather than the market value of the house.

Councillors noted that affordable rents and affordable home ownership is linked to local market house prices which are well above the national average. To meet the statutory definition of affordable can be far more expensive than many other parts of the country relative to local income, impacting on the ability of people to get on the property ladder or find suitable accommodation.

RESOLVED:

That it is a priority for this council to provide enough affordable housing for the needs of our residents, however it is also a great challenge to do so given the current definition of affordable housing and the model upon which it is based.

This Council requests Councillor Roger Cox, as Leader of the council, to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to oversee a review, as a matter of urgency, into the definition of affordable housing, to strongly consider a more regional based model and the introduction of a maximum cost per housing type.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm

Council leader's statement

Released on October 11, 2018

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL - 10 OCTOBER 2018 – LEADER'S STATEMENT

1. Oxfordshire Leaders' Meetings. As Chairman of the Oxfordshire Leaders meetings, I can report the six councils are working positively together on a wide range of issues:

Jane Murphy Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council and I wrote to the Secretary of State about housing land supply and received a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) giving us a three-year land supply – HCW - S955 which gave time limited flexibilities in planning, provided Oxfordshire could demonstrate a three-year land supply. This lasts until the adoption of the Oxfordshire-wide Joint Spatial Strategy by the District and City councils.

I wrote separately to Ed Vaizey who passed on my letter to James Brokenshire about the effects of the potential loss of New Homes Bonus (NHB) and requesting early clarity, especially on retention levels.

We also joined with the District Councils Network in requesting Government to confirm the four-year NHB deal offer made in 2016-17. Our approach to the current uncertainty is also reflected by the LGA's national position and response. I wrote to Kit Malthouse, Minister of State for Housing about the implications of building more houses than planned by local councils in the Corridor. I and other leaders reminded him at a self build/custom build site meeting at Craven Hill in Bicester that any reduction in NHB would have serious consequences.

2. Corridor and Expressway. I attended my second Corridor Leaders meeting comprising the leaders of all county, district and borough councils from Swindon to Cambridge. The Joint Vision and Scope of joint working is now being amended to reflect the wishes of delegates, which is to remain supportive of the Corridor and await further thoughts from the government. The government has contacted all councils along the Corridor outlining their intention to provide a common data set to support new settlement identification and development and this will feed into the Corridor Leaders thinking

3. Economic Heartland of England. Championed by government as the Silicon Valley joining Oxford and Cambridge, which is planning to deliver the businesses and commercial aspects of cross Corridor working. Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick spoke and confirmed this at the meeting. He is keen to see councils across the Corridor work collectively to promote it 'end to end', rather than 'compete' on behalf of a sub-section and undermine wider growth. This was very much the NIC view and is now held across government. It is one I support.

4. Growth Board. Cllr Jane Murphy SODC is Chairman and I am Vice-Chairman. There is largely consensus and unanimity on the major strategic issues such as: JSSP, the developing ToRs; Scrutiny of the Board; housing numbers and affordable housing opportunities. Uppermost in our minds is the health and well-being of all our residents. Along with our partners, the Environment Agency, Active Oxford, Rural Connectivity and Homes

England, Cllr Jane Murphy wrote on behalf of all members to Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport, on 1 October 18 seeking greater certainty around the Expressway Route. This is essential if we are to secure Oxfordshire's spatial planning commitments and associated infrastructure and investment.

5. OxLEP. I have participated in the Audit and Governance Review of OxLEP and attended the AGM and Board meeting. This has been a game changing year for Oxfordshire reflecting the significant economic developments that have emerged over 12 months. As Oxfordshire continues to demonstrate how it can be a 'global asset' to UKPLC both now and in the longer term, having delivered 43,000 new jobs in the last five years and developing one of only three government-backed pilot Local Industrial Strategies. The draft Local Industrial Strategy has been well received by council leaders. We will now examine it critically with officers and offer amendments.

6. Unitary MHCLG. Jane and I wrote jointly to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for MHCLG, asking about our proposal for unitarisation. Minister Rishi Sunak replied that as we are all working well together in Oxfordshire, at present, he sees no need to proceed with a unitary decision. [His response](#) is on our website.

7. LPP2. Sessions have been completed with Harwell, Dalton Barracks. The inspector called for additional information on: WMS on three-year land supply in Oxfordshire; Harwell Campus housing tenure; Ox Cam Expressway; Wootton 7 St Helens NDP. We await a formal letter from the inspector asking for modifications. LPP2 is being examined under the original NPPF. Policies in the previous NPPF will apply to plans submitted before 24 January 2019, thus there are no implications for LPP2 from revised NPPF and LPP2 is supportive of the council-approved Growth Deal. Once adopted there will be a consistency check as required by the revised NPPF.

8. Five Councils. I represented the council at an informal Five Councils Joint Committee where the dashboard of results showed significant improvement in services, many at 100 per cent and, almost all on target. Some are now possibly exceeding previous levels of service. Capita's new CEO John Lewis is modernising the business quickly and his local government board director, Jonathan Prew, is working closely with us as part of this. Our CEO Mark Stone is leading on behalf of the wider group of Five Council CEOs in his work and ongoing redesign. We have made significant steps forward, which are acknowledged across the partnership. I welcome and endorse the positive response from Scrutiny to recent updates on our approach and progress.

9. Council Tax. We wrote next to the CEO Valuation Office asking for more help with officers inspecting and classifying houses on the register to enable councils to collect the council tax as soon as possible. This has generated a positive response. Our collection rates remain among the very highest in the country and I thank all involved for their efforts.

10. Accounts. Audit and Governance Committee met at the end of September to consider feedback from our External Auditor EY to ensure that the accounts were signed off by the end of the month. I am pleased to report to Council that the audit concluded with a clean audit opinion on both the financial statements and the Value For Money statement. This improvement from the prior year reflects a significant level of engagement and support

from officers and I would like to thank them for their professionalism, perseverance in overcoming challenges and diligence in achieving this outcome.

11. Board Report. Our own internal performance measure of services is the Board Report, which again reflects a solid performance across all services, with many being at levels that are above the national standards set by government

12. Residents' Survey. I reported the residents' survey, which was largely positive, to the Scrutiny Committee. The survey continues to show high levels of satisfaction amongst those who use our services and our results are higher than others in the region.

13. Town and Parish Forum. I hosted the briefing on 24 September, which was presented by our eight heads of service, explaining their roles and team responsibilities. As previously approved by full council, I confirm the CEO will now work with the Heads of Service to populate the chart according to funds available. Please be aware that over the next 12 weeks many of our staff will be having a change of line manager and some will be applying for jobs as we complete the operational layers of the officer structure and reduce the number of agency staff within the organisation.

14. Crowmarsh. The old council buildings have been demolished. We are negotiating an extension of current 135 MP to allow for continuity prior to the move to Crowmarsh. We will shortly enter the design and build phase of the programme

15. WWI. Ed Blagrove laid a wreath from the Vale at The Menem Gate Memorial at Last Post. Vale representatives for wreath laying at towns and villages on 11 November can collect wreaths from my PA.

16. In Summary. We continue to build a strong economy, creating opportunities for all, ever improving our already high quality council services and continuing to listen to, and addressing, our residents' concerns.

However, I have been disappointed by some recent comments in the press. In response, I offer the comments of the council's Section 151 Officer.

The reason the current uncertainty over our future revenue position is impacting our approach to capital spending is that the two are directly related to each other.

This is partly because we are currently planning within the Medium Term Finance Strategy (MTFS) to incur capital borrowing, the repayment of which is revenue-funded (as with a mortgage). It is also because capital receipts are extinguished during the period of the MTFS and revenue reserves ultimately underpin and fund both our revenue and capital expenditure. In addition, capital schemes invariably increase long term revenue costs eg through asset maintenance costs.

The capital programme currently assumes a large contribution from money we hold in our reserves. Depending on future financial settlements it is possible that members may wish to (or may have to) draw down on these

reserves to fund other priorities and support the revenue budget instead of continuing with currently planned capital expenditure.

It is not correct to assume that the currently proposed capital programme is separate from our revenue position and the primary financial duty of the council is to propose and deliver a balanced budget, which includes both revenue and capital. At this time, it is not possible for us to be sure that this will not require the use of reserves, which are currently allocated to potential capital schemes, for revenue purposes.

Vale remains financially healthy and solvent, and our current pause in expenditure on discretionary capital schemes will ensure we continue to be so in future years, whilst retaining maximum flexibility for members in setting the 2019/20 budget and beyond.

Cllr Roger Cox - Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council