

Council Agenda



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Date: 7 July 2020
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Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday 15 July 2020 at 7.00 pm
Virtual meeting

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M Reed".

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic

Joining instructions for members of the public: To watch the virtual meeting, you must copy the following link to your internet browser:

<https://tinyurl.com/y7qegvzg>

When your web browser opens, select "Watch on the Web instead" button and then when the "Welcome to the live event!" window opens select "join anonymously".

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Agenda

Open to the public including the press

1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

(Pages 9 - 20)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meetings held on 12 and 19 February 2020 - attached.

3. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

5. Chief Executive's update

To receive any updates from the chief executive.

6. Public participation

To receive any written questions or written statements from members of the public.

7. Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

8. Recommendations from Cabinet, individual Cabinet members, and committees

At its meeting on 1 June 2020, the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee considered a public statement from Extinction Rebellion Abingdon regarding the creation and improvement of cycling infrastructure. The committee noted that Oxfordshire County Council was working on the promotion of active travel and considering traffic restriction measures and welcomed this move. The committee resolved to ask its chair to write to the county council to show support of the active travel and traffic restriction measures being developed and support these to become a permanent measure. The committee also asked Cabinet to recommend to Council that it writes to the county council to show the district council's support for these measures.

Any recommendation of Cabinet will be reported to Council.

9. Progress on approved Council motions

(Pages 21 - 35)

To note progress on the approved Council motions – report attached.

10. Virtual meeting procedure rules and scheme of delegation

(Pages 36 - 45)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic – attached.

11. Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of the leader.

12. Questions on notice

To receive questions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 33.

A. Question from Councillor Simon Howell to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Emily Smith

In March, this Council launched a COVID-19 Grant Scheme aimed at supporting community initiatives in our respective areas to respond to the pandemic. Three months on, I believe that there is no visibility as to how much has been spent and what remains of this funding. Can the Leader provide an update on the status of this scheme and whether community groups can still apply for any funds still available?

B. Question from Councillor Nathan Boyd to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Emily Smith

On 27 May 2020 the Leader wrote a letter to the Prime Minister Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP regarding the behaviour of one of his advisors, Dominic Cummings. Considering the reluctance of the administration to even support the proposal of writing a letter on a planning matter, which directly affected this council previously, can the leader please explain why it was appropriate to write, on behalf of the council, with no motion being put before council beforehand?

C. Question from Councillor Elaine Ware to Councillor Helen Pighills Cabinet Member for Community Services

In July 2019 the Leader reported that a Health & Well-being Strategy was being developed. What progress has been made in preparing this strategy?

D. Question from Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne to Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the Council

We were all horrified to hear in the world media about what happened to George Floyd at the hands of the Minnesota Police Department, and all the other similar events that have been highlighted, involving wrongful killing of black people at the hands of the very people who are meant to protect them. This has spurred a huge movement across the UK to address racism. In our own district, a number of groups have formed such as Black

Lives Matter Didcot, and Black Lives Matter Abingdon and they are fiercely committed to tackling racism. One of their demands is “Accountability in Council Policy & Decision Making”.

What are we doing as a district council to tackle racism within our own operations and within our communities? How can we strive for better representation of ‘the Black voice’?

13. Motions on notice

To consider motions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 38.

Motion 1: Councillor Simon Howell to propose, Councillor Nathan Boyd to second.

Establishment of a Local Economy Resilience Advisory Committee.

Council recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown both the national and local economy into a state of turmoil and crisis. The impact on our local businesses and our local communities will only grow in the coming months and requires an immediate response.

This Council will urgently set up a new committee called the Local Economy Resilience Advisory Committee, to guide this council’s response to this crisis. Following the model of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, this new committee will be advisory to the Cabinet and should be made up of seven members in total based on political balance (the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the committee seats and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader). The term of reference for the new committee should be drawn up by the Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Place, in consultation with the Cabinet member for development and regeneration and group leaders. It will operate alongside and have equal weight to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, to ensure this council works cross party and does everything it can to help local business, the high streets of our market towns and villages, and our communities survive this economic shock.

Motion 2: Councillor Nathan Boyd to propose, Councillor Elaine Ware to second

Future publication of all communication within five days.

Council notes that when a councillor is asked a question or a follow up, the constitution states that the response should be published within five days. It is only right that all communications from ministers or government departments that either thank officers and councillors for their hard work on behalf of residents or bring up any shortcomings or failures of the council are published in a similar way. This seems only fair to our residents and would help us further abide to the principles of Objectivity, Accountability and Openness that The Nolan Principles demand.

Therefore Council requests that all future official central government correspondence to and from the Vale of White Horse District Council is published within five working days so that there is openness and transparency in how central government correspondence influences decisions we make for our residents and that any embargoed or confidential correspondence is circulated to councillors in the same timeframe.

Motion 3: Councillor Nathan Boyd to propose, Councillor Matthew Barber to second.

Local Government Re-organisation

This Council recognises the excellent work of all local government staff across Oxfordshire during the COVID-19 crisis. Councils have worked together in difficult times, showing that organisational barriers to joint working can be overcome.

All Councils have gone the extra mile in delivering services to our residents that prioritise the most vulnerable. This has inevitably incurred additional costs.

All Councils acknowledge the additional Government funding to date, but we have a duty to respond to the national financial challenge ahead and to be open with residents.

All Councils across Oxfordshire are now considering how they can balance budgets and protect frontline services. No Councillor nor party wants to see drastic cuts to vital Council services.

We, as a group of democratically elected representatives, should take the opportunity provided by the devolution white paper to ensure that we provide the best possible public services for our residents.

Further to the motion passed at the December 2019 Council meeting, and reflecting that much has changed since, Council calls on the Leader to write to the Secretary of State requesting that we re-open and actively pursue consideration of a Unitary Authority for Oxfordshire and re-start a wide-ranging conversation with our local authority partners, residents and stakeholders to explore all options for a new future for Oxfordshire. Our aims are clear: safeguard public services in the future, support a vibrant local democracy and ensure a strong economy.

Motion 4: Councillor Andrew Crawford to propose, seconder to be notified

This Council notes that the latest data show the number of COVID 19 deaths per 1,000 Care Home beds in the Vale of White Horse to be almost twice that of the average of local authorities across the UK.* This picture is reflected across the majority of Oxfordshire's District Councils.

We also note that the County's rate of COVID 19 infection to be close to the average of local authorities, so the anomaly highlighted above is not explained by a higher general infection rate. We further note Oxfordshire is listed as the 6th worst Local Authority in England for the percentage of care homes which have experienced an outbreak of COVID 19 with 73% of all care homes affected.**

As the first serious phase of the pandemic recedes, we owe it to all those who have died, their relatives and all those that have worked hard throughout the pandemic to determine the reasons for these significant anomalies.

Council therefore asks the Leader of the council to request the Chair of the Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee of Oxfordshire County Council to convene a meeting with the aim of setting up a rapid and transparent Task Force to analyse and ascertain the reasons for the observed excess deaths and infection rates in Oxfordshire's care homes during the previous three months. Such a review would allow lessons to be learnt and recommendations to be made to reduce both future COVID 19 infections and subsequent deaths, as well as the additional pressure this puts on local public services and the economy.

*Cumulative deaths to 12.6.20 show the Vale of White Horse has 53.8 COVID related deaths per 1,000 care home beds against a mean for all English counties of 28.1. Source LG Inform using ONS data. https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/covid-19-and-care-homes?mod-area=E07000180&mod-group=AllDistrictInRegion_SouthEast&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup

** Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, University of Oxford. COVID-19 Care Homes in England. <https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/covid-19-care-homes/>

Motion 5: Councillor Eric de la Harpe to propose, Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne to second

This Council notes that:

- The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and set a goal to achieve a carbon-neutral District by 2045.
- Towns in this District suffer from traffic congestion and, consequently, poor air quality.
- Low levels of physical inactivity contribute to poor health outcomes for many residents in this District.
- All three of the above challenges can be addressed, in part, by encouraging more residents to use active travel more often.
- During the recent COVID-19 lock-down, levels of active travel increased significantly with some bicycle retailers seeing nearly 200% increase in sales (1) and air pollution fell by 60% in some places. Many residents remarked how pleasant it was.
- As we come out of lock-down, however, the situation may revert to status quo unless bold and ambitious action is taken towards a new normal.
- There is a groundswell of public enthusiasm for creating a new and different normal and an available resource in volunteer groups willing to become involved.
- New developments, such as Didcot Garden Town, present ideal opportunities to incorporate and showcase a new normal for active travel networks.
- While people usually adopt active travel for recreational purposes, the primary goal is to reduce car usage in day-to-day activities. Active travel networks need, therefore, to be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive connectors between:
 - Oxford and surrounding towns and villages as proposed in the Oxfordshire Greenways Project,
 - Towns and villages themselves,
 - Towns and villages and the Science Parks as in the Science Vale Cycling Network, and
 - Residential areas and places of employment and retail within towns as proposed in Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

While not strictly a form of active travel, this Council recognises the benefits of e-scooters and includes them under a broader definition of active travel that also includes e-bikes.

This Council therefore:

1. calls upon the Cabinet to:
 - i. Include policies to enhance active travel outcomes across the district as part of the new Vale Local Plan and more urgently as part of the Design Guide.
 - ii. Include active travel as part of the proposed new Active Communities Strategy.
 - iii. Actively engage with the County's consultations on their emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan to ensure the County are better aware of this Council priorities.
2. calls upon the Leader of the Vale to write a letter to Leader of County Council, Cabinet Member for the Environment and the Walking and Cycling Champion asking them to:
 - a. Prioritise quality control of all active travel infrastructure in accordance with the Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards, ensuring all proposals are audited for safety and encouragement of active travel.
 - b. Review their Parking Standards considering the risks poor car parking poses to people on cycles and pedestrians.
 - c. Establish systems for the County to work with Town and Parish Councils to identify CIL funding that could be used to enhance cycle ways and footpaths that link with new routes within new housing development
 - d. Continue to resource the work on the Science Vale cycle network and expand this work planning cycle networks within the designated Science Vale area across the Vale of White Horse District.
 - e. Continue to resource the Oxfordshire Greenways project.
 - f. Expedite the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all towns and parishes in the Vale District, engaging with local cycling and walking group volunteers to undertake the preliminary groundwork.
 - g. Work with our towns and parishes to identify local needs in addition to sources of funding to implement their LCWIPs.
 - h. Fast-track bold and ambitious measures in our towns and parishes to make social distancing possible at pinch-points and consider these measures permanent rather than temporary.

Motion 6: Councillor Emily Smith to propose, Councillor Simon Howell to second

Council notes that since early March the Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on our district and the country. At least 120 have lost their lives. Many have been seriously ill and are still fighting the virus.

Local businesses have and will continue to suffer the economic impact of this pandemic and young people have had disruption to their education and employment prospects damaged by the resulting lockdown.

Council recognises the huge effort of our officers during the period. Adjusting to working remotely, volunteering to go beyond the day to job to help support shielded people and those isolating and working long hours to keep vital council services running. Council also recognises the quick establishment of new ways of working with community groups and responding incredibly quickly to the demands made of us as part of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum operation to protect the NHS.

Council thanks and recognises the huge response from every town, village and hamlet to put in place an infrastructure to help. It is the feet on the street and the community effort that has truly helped look after all elements of the community across the Vale.

Council thanks every officer for the heroic part they have played, and will continue to play, helping residents in need of support through this dangerous and uncertain time.