

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council



held on Wednesday 18 July 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, Eric Batts, Ed Blagrove, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Stuart Davenport, Katie Finch, Debby Hallett, Robert Hall, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Vicky Jenkins, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Chris McCarthy, Mike Murray, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Julia Reynolds, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Emily Smith, Henry Spencer, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware and Catherine Webber

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Number of members of the public: 7

Co.13 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Matthew Barber, Margaret Crick, Charlotte Dickson, St.John Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Bob Johnston and Janet Shelley.

Co.14 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2018 as a correct record and agree that the chairman sign them as such.

Co.15 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

Co.16 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The chairman provided housekeeping information.

Co.17 Public participation

A. Dr Jim Halliday asked the following question to the Leader of the council, Councillor Roger Cox

"I know that the Council has been working with the County Council and BT Open Reach to extend the superfast broadband coverage in the Vale, and that just over 96 percent of the Vale can now access speeds of over 24 Megabits per second. However, this coverage has yet to reach parts of central Abingdon - residents and businesses in Stert Street, Abbey Close, Bridge Street, High Street, Thames Street, Checker Walk, East St Helen Street and the Market Place who have the mis-fortune to be connected to BT cabinets 14 and 54 remain on the slow speed. Given that for some of these premises BT Open Reach is the only possible provider of super-fast broadband, and that currently no conversion dates even seem to be available, please could the Leader ask the Chief Executive to press BT Open Reach to provide a firm date when cabinets 14 and 54 will be upgraded, and then to monitor their progress on a regular basis?"

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

"Better Broadband for Oxfordshire is a project to bring superfast broadband to over 96 per cent of homes and businesses in Oxfordshire. It is a collaboration between Oxfordshire County Council, BDUK and BT that will fill coverage gaps not served commercially. The first phase was a £25 million investment funded by Oxfordshire County Council, the government and BT. The second phase saw investment of £10.68 million made up of funding from the district councils, Oxfordshire County Council, BT, OxLEP, SEMLEP and government match funding. This included a contribution of £250,000 from Vale Council which was matched by government.

The two cabinets in question are not part of the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire intervention area as they are served commercially. An Open Market Review exercise was undertaken in 2017 where commercial suppliers advised that they are covering/have plans for specific cabinets.

The council has been advised that Openreach has stated they are 'unlikely' to deliver any further Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) commercially whilst they focus on delivery of Fibre to the Premise (FTTP). The council understands Virgin Media has partial coverage in the postcodes served by Abingdon cabinets 14 and 54, but the coverage is not complete. Through the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire project board, the council will continue to press Openreach to expedite the delivery of FTTP for these areas which will deliver much higher speeds.

A possible solution is to access the government's £67 million Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. Gigabit vouchers can be used by small and medium sized businesses and neighbouring residents to contribute to the installation cost of Full Fibre Broadband. For example a number of businesses and resident near cabinets 14 and 54 could form a group project to deliver the connection. Businesses can claim up to £3,000 against the cost of connection either individually or as part of a group project. Residents can benefit from the scheme as part of a group project, which also includes businesses, and can claim for a voucher of up to a value of £500. The Better Broadband for Oxfordshire team is happy to discuss this scheme with local residents and businesses".

B. Mr Mayhew-Archer asked the following question to the Leader of the council, Councillor Roger Cox:

“Two years ago we were told the Five Councils Partnership would result in a saving for the council of £9m over nine years. A million pounds a year.

Nine days ago the chief executive told the Scrutiny Committee that the savings won't be a million pounds a year. In fact there won't be any savings at all. In fact his assessment of the venture was “Break even at best”. “Break even at best”. That sounds worrying to me. Does it worry any councillors? if it does could you ask to be put on the Scrutiny Committee in place of some of the councillors on the committee.

I say this because many members of the current Scrutiny Committee didn't seem bothered at all that this 5 councils partnership contract might end up costing the council money. Having read the report of Capita's performance in HR, payroll and IT I'm hard-pressed to understand how any member of the committee could declare there is no problem with outsourcing but one did. I'm also hard pressed to understand how any member of the committee could read the reports and say “people don't mind paying more if they are getting a better service” but one did.

But then this was a pretty odd Scrutiny Committee. Two of the members were members of the cabinet which took the council into the 5 Councils' partnership so they were effectively scrutinising the consequences of their own decision. That doesn't sound like proper scrutiny to me.

What worries me is that this council seems unable to admit when it has made a mistake. Instead it starts invoking legal reasons for exempting minutes and packing committees with people who aren't going to ask awkward questions. And the problem with councils that don't admit to mistakes is that they don't learn from those mistakes.

So my question is Councillor Cox is do you agree with your chief executive's assessment of "Break even at best" and if so what do you think went wrong?"

Councillor Cox undertook to respond to this issue in his leader's report.

C. Mr Crawford asked the following question to the Leader of the council, Councillor Roger Cox

Could the leader of the council please provide me with details of the deficit or surplus The Beacon has generated, expressed both as absolute values and as percentages of the council tax generated by households within Wantage parish for each of the last municipal years?

In addition, would he provide me with any documents the council has generated or commissioned which assess the possible financial impact on The Beacon of the two new large community buildings which Vale of White Horse District Council has decided should be built at Grove Airfield and Crab Hill through section 106 agreements with developers?

Councillor Cox undertook to provide a written response.

Co.18 Petitions

None.

Co.19 Creation of S106 budget - Chilton Parish Council

On 10 July 2018 Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning policy, took a decision to recommend Council to create a budget for £286,377.59 and to transfer the money to Chilton Parish Council for the maintenance of public open space.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the application for the commuted sum for maintaining the public open space land;
2. create a budget for £286,377.59 to be transferred to Chilton Parish Council for the maintenance of the Public Open Space in connection with the following planning permission:

Development: Land to the South of Chilton Field

Address: Avon Road Chilton

Planning Ref: P05/V1086/O

Co.20 Community Governance Review - related alteration orders

At its meeting on 27 November 2017 the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee made final decisions on a number of community governance reviews. Two of these reviews in respect of Grove and Wantage and Grove, Lockinge and Wantage involved amendments to parish boundaries.

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 both the district wards and county division boundaries.

RESOLVED: to 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 parish boundaries.

Co.21 Report of the leader of the council

Councillor Roger Cox, Leader of the council, provided the following update:

“The chief executive has continued to keep me apprised of the developing position in relation to the ‘5 Councils’ Contract. As all members will be aware, we recently approved a renegotiation of the contract and I am pleased to say that the insourcing of services from VINCI and the establishment of a direct relationship with Indigo for our Parking Service delivery has gone exceptionally well. Whilst we all too often take it for granted, I would like to pay tribute to the staff involved in this process, they have actioned our decision quickly, with a strong focus on residents and have done so without fuss or drama.

In relation to the elements of the contract that remain with Capita, our officers continue to work in a positive manner with Capita to reshape the services they provide. I am pleased that Capita have committed to work with us to achieve this and that they support the benefits of the positive and truthful approach our officers have taken as confirmed via their recent email to our Scrutiny Committee, which I have asked to be copied to all members.

Financially, I am advised that our 'best case' scenario under a full cost model of assessment is that the contract, over its life time, will 'break even at best'. I have held many meetings with officers regarding this matter, as I am aware it is a significant shift from the savings that members were originally advised of.

I am content that the chief executive and his team have not only secured the best possible renegotiation of the contract, but that the straightforward and pragmatic approach that they have taken has increased transparency and member understanding of the contract considerably. This work is ongoing and I am sure all councillors would agree that we should offer our support to the officers involved in this. I would be happy to meet with any councillor, the chief executive and our section 151 officer to expand on this area, which remains commercially sensitive at this time.

I have specifically sought out assurance from the chief executive and our section 151 officer regarding the original decision making process and the information that was made available to members, staff and residents at that time. Based on this, I am satisfied that the original decisions taken by members were appropriate based on the information made available to them at that time. I think all councillors will agree that we are fortunate that our current officers are realists and have committed themselves to resolving the challenges we face and that we are better informed regarding the detail of the 5Cs contract now than at any other time. However, based on the information that was available to us at the time, I do not believe members made a decision that was illogical, inappropriate or unreasonable. Furthermore, I believe that is the view of our chief executive. If required, I am sure he would confirm that to you all tonight.

My belief in the knowledge and ability of our current officers is supported by the fact that all the councils involved in the 5Cs contract sought agreement that our chief executive should lead the most recent renegotiation, something he undertook in addition to his demanding day job. This renegotiation, approved by full Council, has provided the platform we are now seeking to further enhance. I have asked that a paper on the outcome of our current discussions with Capita is brought forward to full Council as soon as practicable. I have specifically requested that this focuses specifically on the issues that impact Vale of White Horse, rather than other partners to the contract, who may be impacted differently.

I am clear and fully supportive of the view that our officers' primary duty is to our council, but I have asked that they deliver our requirements in a way that is as inclusive and mindful of the needs and views of our partner councils as they are able to. I am content this is the case and have asked that you are all appraised of this as soon as possible.

Whilst not directly related to the 5Councils contract renegotiation issues I mentioned earlier, I wish to inform full Council that our external auditors have confirmed that their audit of our accounts will not be completed in line with the statutory deadline, which as members may be aware is two months earlier than in previous years. I am very disappointed by this, but I am assured by the chief executive and our section 151

officer that they are not aware of any issues of financial concern or fraud relating to this decision by our external auditors. Regrettably, it appears that EY believe that Capita, who provide our accountancy service and our officers have failed to provide our auditors with all the information and detail they require in a timely enough fashion. This has been made clear by our officers at the recent Joint Audit and Governance Committee. I, along with the Cabinet member for finance and our Joint Audit and Governance co-Chair have been explicit with the chief executive that we are seeking a full explanation of the reasons for this issue and a meeting is already scheduled with our external auditors EY, to achieve this. I would wish to emphasise that I respect and welcome the role of our external auditors and support the work they and our chief executive and section 151 officer are undertaking to address this issue, but it must not be repeated and we all need to be appraised of the reasons for the delay we have experienced.

Another aspect of our external auditor's role is to assess our Value For Money in the use of public funds. This area was not fully supported by our auditors last year, due predominately to capacity and knowledge issues across our senior structure. It is possible that the difference between our initially hoped for 5Cs savings and the current position may lead to a further qualification of our Value For Money assessment this year. However, I remain hopeful that the open and honest approach our officers are taking to addressing this issue, and its limited impact on our long term financial planning, will mean that this is not the case. That said, the delay in the completion of the audit work by EY means I cannot be sure of this at this time.

I, and my Cabinet, are of the view that officers are doing all they can to make progress across this complex and challenging agenda. I would ask that all members support them in this and that you accept my assurance that as soon as I am able, I will ask the chief executive to bring a paper to full council that expands and clarifies the above."

He advised Council of changes to his Leader's scheme to provide for Councillor Ware to represent the council on the following:

Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Oversight Committee
South and Vale Community Safety Partnership

Co.22 Questions on notice

There were 13 questions from members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 33.

A. Councillor Julia Reynolds to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for Development and Regeneration

What is the council doing to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War?

Answer

Councillor Murray responded that the council is planning a schedule of opportunities to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War. As part of the refurbishment of Wantage Bandstand the Vale is working with Wantage Town Council to install a commemorative plaque. The council is also reviewing other works and activities reaching important milestones this year and investigating ways in which they can also feature in the commemorations.

The Chairman of the council is also working with officers to identify other activities that can be undertaken by the council and its staff to recognise the sacrifices made by so many across the globe during this and other conflicts including the Korean War and The Falklands conflict.

B. Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for Development and Regeneration

I was shocked to learn that this council has £10million in developer contributions to pay for affordable housing sitting in the bank unspent. With these funds needing to be spent by various dates before having to be returned to developers, where can I find the council's strategy for delivering these desperately needed affordable homes?

Answer

Councillor Murray responded that since 2005, the council has secured agreement of £9.6 million of funding towards affordable housing provision, the largest proportion recently being from the West Way development in Botley where the council secured £6.3 million, however this funding is released in line with triggers set out in planning obligation agreements (s.106 Agreements) during the life of the development as (for example) tranches of housing is completed and occupied.

Accordingly, to date, the council has received just over £2 million affordable housing contributions. He stated that whilst Councillor Smith is correct that there is a time limit for investment of this money, none of the money received so far has an expenditure deadline of before 2022.

The affordable housing team monitors receipt of funds and all expiry dates to ensure we spend this funding in a timely and appropriate way. The S106 schedule identifies the contributions.

The council's housing delivery strategy outlines the way in which the council can deliver the new-build housing numbers to meet the needs of communities across the area, whether that is for affordable housing for first time buyers, housing suitable for those who are retired, or accommodation that supports those with mobility issues or to help attract people to live and work in our key employment sites.

The council is developing an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to provide clarity on the delivery of affordable housing requirements that will meet housing need in line with the council's local plan policies.

Contributions need to be spent and invested wisely, and in terms with the original Section 106 if they are to have an impact. Officers are therefore actively exploring the synergy between these funds and the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, to ensure that maximum benefit for residents is delivered. The council is not in a position where it will return any of this funding, but is committed to ensuring it delivers the very best long-term outcomes for residents.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding the existence of a housing development strategy, Councillor Murray confirmed the development of a supplementary planning document.

C. Councillor Catherine Webber to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Planning

How much section 106 funding has the Vale had to return to developers since 2011 because it wasn't spent on time – as both a £ figure and a percentage? How many s106 payments from developers are currently overdue?

Answer:

Councillor Cox responded that the council has returned no S106 funding to developers since 2011 for which he congratulated officers on behalf of Council.

He confirmed that Vale of White Horse currently has one overdue receipt due to the council. Appropriate action would be taken to recover this which amounted to less than £200,000.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Cox confirmed that no S106 payments had been lost and appropriate action is being taken to ensure payment.

D. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Planning

The last Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) internal audit in August 2017 stated a CIL spending strategy had been completed and was awaiting councillor approval. As that that function is being transferred from Planning to Development and Regeneration, my question is for the Cabinet member for Planning as the responsible Cabinet member for the past several years. What's the status of the CIL spending strategy now?

Answer:

Councillor Cox responded that the council completed a Joint CIL internal audit in August 2017, with South Oxfordshire District Council. The reference to the CIL Spending Strategy quoted was in fact South Oxfordshire's Spending Strategy. Vale implemented its CIL Charging Scheme in November 2017 and is currently (through the Development & Regeneration Service) in the process of drafting a specific Vale of White Horse CIL Spending Strategy. He stated that he is pleased with the progress being made and confident that it will be brought before members by December.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding the timing of a report to the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Cox confirmed that this would be in December.

E. Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Planning

The Vale currently has 194 individuals and groups on our 'Self-build register'. How many self-build properties have been delivered on plots in the Vale since April 2016 when the register was created?

And how confident is the Cabinet Member for Planning that we will be able make enough self-build or custom-build plots available to meet the demand by 31 October 2019 as per the 2016 Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations, and what is the basis for that confidence?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded that he supported the view of the chief executive and officers and is confident that the council is complying with the Regulations. These require the council to have granted sufficient planning permission to meet the Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

identified need of 72 self and customer build dwellings by October 2019. Since monitoring self and customer built dwellings, the council has granted planning permission for nine dwellings. However, he believed that in reviewing completions for single dwellings between April 2016 and March 2018 (74 single dwellings built) a number will contribute to the self/customer build category and he supports officers in their assessment that the council will meet or exceed the required number by October 2019.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding whether the council's Local Plan allocated sites for self build, Councillor Cox responded that it did not but the council is investigating options.

F. With the agreement of Council, in the absence of Councillor Margaret Crick, Councillor Catherine Webber asked the following question to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

What action is this council taking to reduce the single use plastics in the Vale – the council's own use, our contractors and that of local business and other local organisations?

Answer

Councillor Ware responded that the council fully supports the recent national focus on reducing the amount of single use plastics.

She stated that the council is supporting the international campaign Plastic Free July. Next week staff have been set the challenge of reducing their use of plastic. There is still some confusion around what plastics can be recycled so in the staff communal areas we are providing examples of single use plastics (to discourage their use), reusable alternatives and what can and can't currently be recycled.

As part of the council's waste recycling promotion programme recycling officers visit schools, community groups and attend roadshows where they discuss the waste hierarchy and promote reduction and reuse of plastics as well as providing information of what can be recycled. The council has one of the highest recycling rates in the country and already recycles all plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays.

At a recent Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership meeting, all the Oxfordshire authorities discussed and agreed in principle to a coordinated media campaign to reduce the use of single use plastics and to encourage residents to recycle more.

A group of officers from the waste team, economic development and food safety team are working together to investigate how local businesses can be encouraged to reduce their use of single use plastics.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question on the need for an educational campaign regarding what plastics can be recycled, Councillor Ware responded that the Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership has agreed to coordinate a media campaign on this point.

G. Councillor Helen Pighills to Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet member for Community Services

The new outdoor pool in Abingdon is a wonderful facility and is proving very popular with swimmers with five times more swimmers than last July, so can the cabinet member explain why the pool is not being open for longer to meet such a large increase in demand?

Answer

Councillor Badcock thanked Councillor Pighills for her comments and confirmed that the council is delighted with the refurbishment of the outdoor pool at Abbey Meadow and how popular the pool has proved since its re-opening last month. The core opening hours (9am to 6pm, daily) is consistent with opening hours from previous years managed under contract with its leisure management operator GLL.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding the possibility of a trial period to assess early morning and evening opening and closing times, Councillor Badcock responded that under its agreement with GLL, of which the district council subsidise the management of the Abbey Meadow outdoor pool, GLL has the capacity should it wish, to increase the hours of operation where they consider there is a viable business case. GLL and officers have monitored the interests closely in the first month of operation and will continue to review the demand and interest for increasing the hours of use and other aspects of the service – in order to do so, changes to GLL’s existing staffing arrangements would be required. GLL have also introduced a new online booking form which will also further enhance GLL data analysis whilst also delivering an improved service to our customers, officers will work with GLL to further improve this over time.

H. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet member for Community Services

Could the Cabinet Member please provide to Council:

1. Capital spend in the past five years for leisure facilities, including leisure centres, in each of our market towns/areas: Wantage & Grove, Faringdon, Abingdon and Botley.
2. Capital spending plans from the Medium Term Financial Plan for the next five years for each of these areas.
3. Where we can find the leisure strategy for each of these areas, describing council's plans to address capacity and conditions issues of leisure facilities, and in particular Leisure Centres, in our growing communities.

Answer

Councillor Badcock responded to question 1 with the following information for spending in the last five years:

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Grove	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Wantage	£45,960.00	£155,989.89	£155,582.73	£14,479.00	£533,630.15
Faringdon	£13,172.94	£32,981.73	£43,338.87	£58,190.00	£38,177.99
Abingdon	£431,804.87	£394,944.13	£251,183.07	£2,242,853.49	£1,249,662.78
Botley	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	£490,937.81	£583,915.75	£450,104.67	£2,315,522.49	£1,821,470.92

In respect of question 2 regarding capital spending plans from the Medium Term Financial Plan for the next five years, Councillor Badcock provided the following information:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Grove	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Wantage	£2,310,333.33	£10,501,000.00	£5,609,000.00	£655,000.00	£100,000.00
Faringdon	£1,247,333.33	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00
Abingdon	£860,000.00	£100,000.00	£284,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00
Botley	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	£4,417,666.67	£10,701,000.00	£5,993,000.00	£855,000.00	£300,000.00

In respect of question 3 she stated that the Leisure Strategy is made up from a suite of documents:

- The Playing Pitch Study,
- Leisure & Sports facilities Study 2013 – 2031 (Part 1 & Part 2)
- Open Spaces Report
- Local Leisure Facilities Report

The Leisure and Sports Facilities Study (Part 1) address strategic need in accordance with Sport England methodology and includes the capacity and condition issues of our leisure centres.

The documents form part of the evidence base to support the Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Additional Sites and Detailed Policies. The documents are available on the council's website.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question as to whether the Cabinet member considers the split of funding fair, Councillor Badcock undertook to provide a written response.

I. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Partnership and Insight

Could the Cabinet member please explain what happened to cause the delay in payment of training fees for two members in May 2018? When the council's payment wasn't received as expected, the organising agency contacted members and officers to chase the payment, causing embarrassment to council and members. Can the member assure us this will not recur?

Answer

Councillor Cox responded that this was a new supplier and it took a little time for payment arrangements to be set up and understood. Once issued, the training provider's invoice was dated 20 April, with payment due by 20 May. Payment was made on 16 May, within the 30 day terms and well in advance of the training date of 9 June.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding the new supplier, Councillor Cox referred to his previous answer.

J. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

Could the Cabinet member please update Council about any issues in the last 18 months with the collection of direct debits for garden waste services? If there have been issues, what are they and what's been done to ensure there is no recurrence?

Answer

There have been no issues that officers are aware of in the last 18 months with the collection of direct debits for Vale's garden waste customers. We are aware of a low number of isolated cases in South Oxfordshire where the direct debits failed and the customer has been contacted to re-establish a new direct debit.

K. Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

'Shared Ownership' allows people to purchase a 25% to 75% share in their own home, enabling key workers and others on average salaries the opportunity to get on to the property ladder. Yet the properties listed as part of this scheme in the Vale of White Horse are only ever advertised as available to people able to buy a share of 40% or more.

Can the Cabinet member tell us how many homes were bought at 25% in the Vale in the past year, and explain why the Vale is not promoting shared ownership to people on lower incomes who might only be able to afford a 25% share as other authorities do?

Answer

Councillor Ware responded that in 2017/18 a total of 10 shared ownership properties in Vale of White Horse were either purchased or are currently being purchased at a 25% equity share level. The total number of shared ownership properties in the district either purchased or progressing to purchase in 2017/ 18 was 83.

All shared ownership properties are advertised through the "Help to Buy South" website. The website explains that applicants can purchase between 25% and 75% of the home's value. The council's websites also provides a link to "Help to Buy South" and Officers can provide advice to households who are considering shared ownership.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Ware stated that the council's website provides an example of a 40% shared ownership although applicants can purchase a greater or smaller share.

L. Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Planning

Can the Cabinet member advise how an incorrect map relating to green belt land in North Hinksey was submitted at LLP1 and how this error will be rectified to ensure the green belt land is correctly identified in the Local Plan.

Answer:

In response Councillor Cox stated that a clerical error was made following the Local Plan Part 1 Inspectors recommendation to retain a parcel of land at North Hinksey in the Green Belt on the Adopted Policies Map. Following legal advice, officers will be

preparing a report to Cabinet and Council on how to regularise this error. The chief executive has apologised for this error, which Councillor Cox regretted, but did not believe should detract from the overall work officers have undertaken to deliver the council's Local Plan. The chief executive has asked that any concerns regarding this matter are raised directly with him.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question seeking reassurance that the piece of land will be protected, Councillor Cox responded that he could not speculate but the council had attempted to resolve the issue at the LLP2 hearing.

M. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

The NPPF guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#para051>) tells us this:

51. Local planning authorities should identify and bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers.

This guidance assumes councils have such policies. Can the Cabinet member for housing share with members the approach we have in Vale for getting empty homes back into use, and report on how many empty houses council has put back into use in the last three years.

Answer

Councillor Ware responded that the council has a number of policies to encourage empty homes back into use. The council applies a 50% council tax premium to properties that have been empty for more than two years. (unless a statutory exemption applies). The council does not use Empty Dwelling Management Orders as they have proven prohibitively complex and time consuming to administer in the past.

The Environmental Protection team regularly engage with owners to help bring their properties back into use. The Housing Needs team provide Deposit Bonds and Rent-In-Advance loans to encourage private landlords to rent their properties to low income households. There is also an Empty Home Loan available to homeowners which provides a flexible loan over five years to bring the property up to a decent standard.

The number of long-term (empty longer than two years) empty properties in Vale, according to council tax records, were as follows:

31.03.2016	133
31.03.2017	129
31.03.2018	126

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question regarding how many empty homes the council had put back into use, Councillor Ware responded the council provides incentives for private landlords to put homes into use but has no control.

Co.23 Motions on notice

A. Motion proposed by Councillor Emily Smith, seconded by Councillor Jenny Hannaby:

Council recognises that:

- Thames Valley Police are stretched to capacity, and that parking enforcement is one of their lowest priorities
- members are regularly contacted by residents about inconvenient, illegal and dangerous parking violations that aren't being enforced
- we have the power to introduce civil parking enforcement, as neighbouring councils have done at no additional cost to their tax payers

This Council agrees in principle to introduce a civil parking enforcement scheme across the Vale of White Horse.

Council instructs officers to produce a Business Case (to include financial costs and income, delivery options and timescales) to be considered as part of next year's budget.

With the consent of Council, the mover and seconder of the original motion accepted amended wording suggested by Councillor Elaine Ware and seconded by Councillor Mike Badcock (new words in bold deleted words shown by a strikethrough).

Council recognises that:

- Thames Valley Police are stretched to capacity, and that parking enforcement is one of their lowest priorities
- members are regularly contacted by residents about inconvenient, illegal and dangerous parking violations that aren't being enforced
- we have the power to **request the county council to delegate** ~~introduce~~ civil parking enforcement, as neighbouring councils have done at no additional cost to their **council** tax payers

This Council ~~agrees in principle to introduce~~ **requests officers to investigate further the possibility of implementing** a civil parking enforcement scheme across the Vale of White Horse.

Council ~~instructs~~ **requests** officers to produce a Business Case (to include financial costs and income, delivery options and timescales) to be considered as part of next year's budget.

The majority of councillors supported the motion noting that it was an issue in both the towns and villages of the district. They noted that due to other competing priorities the police are unable to fully resource parking enforcement. Illegal parking impacted on businesses, waste collection and bus movements due traffic congestion. It was therefore time to introduce civil parking enforcement to manage the road network safely and to ensure the smooth flow of traffic. Council noted that the Cabinet member for housing and environment had already requested officers to investigate further the possibility of implementing Civil Parking Enforcement with a financial appraisal of the costs.

RESOLVED:

That Council recognises that:

- Thames Valley Police are stretched to capacity, and that parking enforcement is one of their lowest priorities
- members are regularly contacted by residents about inconvenient, illegal and dangerous parking violations that aren't being enforced
- we have the power to request the county council to delegate civil parking enforcement, as neighbouring councils have done at no additional cost to their council tax payers

This Council requests officers to investigate further the possibility of implementing a civil parking enforcement scheme across the Vale of White Horse.

Council requests officers to produce a Business Case (to include financial costs and income, delivery options and timescales) to be considered as part of next year's budget.

B. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Katie Finch, seconded by Councillor Chris Palmer:

This Council congratulates the Cabinet on the significant investment in Abingdon's Abbey Meadows, particularly the open air pool. The decision to secure the future of those facilities for many years to come is particularly welcomed by residents, especially in the light of the stated intention of a previous administration to close the pool permanently. Council is grateful for the significant efforts of officers and local interest groups in delivering the scheme.

Councillors welcomed the refurbished facility which is well used and receiving favourable feedback from the public. A number of councillors referred to a previous lack of finance which threatened the viability of the facility.

Councillors thanked Councillor Charlotte Dickson, former Cabinet member for leisure, officers and community groups for the role they had played in the specification and delivery of the current facility. With the agreement of Council, the mover and seconder of the motion agreed to include "officers and the contractor" in the motion.

RESOLVED:

That Council congratulates the Cabinet, officers and the contractor on the significant investment in Abingdon's Abbey Meadows, particularly the open air pool. The decision to secure the future of those facilities for many years to come is particularly welcomed by residents, especially in the light of the stated intention of a previous administration to close the pool permanently. Council is grateful for the significant efforts of officers and local interest groups in delivering the scheme.

C. With the agreement of Council, councillor Debby Hallett moved an altered motion from that set out in the agenda, seconded by Councillor Helen Pighills, to take account of a proposed amendment. Additional words are shown in bold with deleted words shown by a strikethrough:

Council recognises the hugely valuable work that charities across the Vale do to support residents and help make our district a better place to live. But Council also recognises charities and community groups are struggling in the current financial climate.

South Oxfordshire District Council has recently implemented a successful charity lottery, making it easier for residents who want to contribute and enabling that council to support more local voluntary sector organisations.

~~Council would like this scheme replicated for the Vale of White Horse and requests that officers compile a business case for a local charity lottery scheme for the Vale for member review and consideration.~~

Councillors supported the motion. The scheme, if implemented, would provide an opportunity for local people to support local charities and the voluntary sector. The relatively low prize payouts would not attract those with a gambling addiction. Councillors noted that a number of local authorities operate such schemes and that officers should be able to progress the matter in a relatively short timescale.

RESOLVED:

That Council recognises the hugely valuable work that charities across the Vale do to support residents and help make our district a better place to live. But Council also recognises charities and community groups are struggling in the current financial climate.

South Oxfordshire District Council has recently implemented a successful charity lottery, making it easier for residents who want to contribute and enabling that council to support more local voluntary sector organisations.

Council requests that officers compile a business case for a local charity lottery scheme for the Vale for member review and consideration.

D. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Debby Hallett, seconded by Councillor Judy Roberts

Council notes that the Seven Principles of Public Life requires members to make their decisions available for public scrutiny and that "information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so". Councillors must adhere to the Code of Conduct in our behaviour.

Council must be, and must be perceived to be, open and transparent in our decision making.

This Council asks the monitoring officer to bring forward to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee a protocol on publishing councillor code of conduct complaint decisions and outcomes for district and parish councillors.

Those councillors who supported the motion expressed the view that, if implemented, the revised process would illustrate that the council is open and transparent. It would provide the public with information about steps taken to improve the behaviour of district and parish councillors and provide reassurance in circumstances where no breach is established.

However, other councillors expressed the view that the current process is working well. The Joint Audit and Governance Committee receives an annual report and at its meeting in March did not consider that the current system required amending. Any proposals to do so should be considered as part of that review.

With the consent of Council and the seconder, in accordance with Council procedure rule 52, Councillor Hallett withdrew her motion.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

Wednesday, 18 July 2018