

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Council



held on **Wednesday 12 December 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, Roger Cox, Stuart Davenport, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Katie Finch, Debby Hallett, Robert Hall, Jenny Hannaby, Dudley Hoddinott, Vicky Jenkins, Bob Johnston, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Julia Reynolds, Judy Roberts, Robert Sharp, Emily Smith, Henry Spencer, Reg Waite and Elaine Ware

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Abbie Mulcairn, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

#### **Co.43 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Constance, Crick, Hayward, Howell, McCarthy, Murray and Webber.

#### **Co.44 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 October 2018 and the special Council meeting held on 19 November 2018.

#### **Co.45 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest**

None.

#### **Co.46 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

The Chairman provided housekeeping information. She advised that her Civic Dinner would take place on 9 February at Milton Hill House. She referred to the successful Community Awards Lunch at which the voluntary work of residents was recognised.

With the agreement of Council, she agreed to alter the order of the agenda to take agenda item 8 Council Tax Empty Homes Premium prior to agenda item 8 Council Tax Base because decisions taken on the empty homes premium could impact on the council tax base.

#### **Co.47 Public participation**

No public speakers had registered to address Council.

## **Co.48      Petitions**

None.

## **Co.49      Council Tax Empty Homes Premium**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 7 December 2018, on the level of premium to be applied to long-term empty dwellings.

**RESOLVED:** that in accordance with the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 the Long Term Empty Property Premium (currently set at a 50%) is:

1. increased to 100% from 1 April 2019 for those properties which are empty for two years and over;
2. increased to 200% premium from 1 April 2020 for those properties which are empty for five years and over;
3. increased to 300% premium from 1 April 2021 for those properties which are empty for 10 years and over.

## **Co.50      Council Tax Base 2019/20**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 7 December 2018, on the council tax base for 2019/20.

**RESOLVED:**

1. to approve the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 7 December 2018 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2019/20;
2. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2019/20 be 51,706.2; and
3. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2019/20 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 2 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 7 December 2018.

## **Co.51      Joint Gambling Policy**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 7 December 2018, on a Joint Gambling Policy developed with South Oxfordshire District Council.

**RESOLVED** to:

1. adopt the Joint Gambling Policy attached to the council agenda for the meeting held on 12 December 2018;
2. authorise the head of housing and environment to make minor editorial changes to the joint gambling policy; and
3. authorise the head of housing and environment to publish the joint gambling policy in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

Wednesday, 12 December 2018

**Co.2**

## **Co.52 Vale of White Horse Scrutiny Committee Annual Report**

Councillor Hallett, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, presented her annual report and referred to the important role the committee played to ensure the council learns from past experiences.

Councillor Monica Lovatt, the council's representative on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, confirmed that the committee produced an annual report in May each year. She undertook to circulate it to councillors.

On behalf of Council the chairman thanked Councillor Hallett for her report.

## **Co.53 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.54 Questions on notice**

1. Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for Development and Regeneration

My question comes from my growing concern about the level to which we are performing on our duty to maintain and repair our property assets.

The most recent instance was Old Abbey House, which has been allowed to fall into disrepair, making it attractive for vandalism and anti-social behaviour nearby. A decision was made to board up the access points and place a security fence around this property right in the centre of Abingdon-on-Thames.

Members will be aware of other recent examples of buildings we own needing significant amounts spent on Planned and Preventive Maintenance (PPM). How does this council budget for PPM on properties that we own? Where can we find those amounts in our annual budget? If we have NOT been including this in our budget each year, shouldn't we be doing so?

Could the Cabinet member provide a list of our property assets, their location, value and condition, and the PPM costs for the past four years.

### **Answer:**

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

The council owns a very large number of property assets, ranging from very small parcels of land to large office premises such as Abbey House. As one would expect, different approaches are appropriate for different properties in order to deliver value for money and best use of public funds.

Following the recent in-sourcing of property management, work has commenced on an updated asset review of all property held by the council. Budgets are being reviewed and accordingly I will be asking to include an essential growth item within the 2019/20 budget to provide the council with an ongoing repairs and maintenance budget to enable PPM to be delivered where required. Under the new management

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

structure, a new permanent property manager has been appointed and will join the council in January. That property manager will lead on the commissioning of a PPM report for all the relevant council assets during 2019. Accordingly, a further essential growth item in the proposed 2019/20 budget will be funded to undertake this full PPM study that will then inform the council what budgets are required for future years for PPM work. A report will be brought to members once this PPM report is complete.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question, seeking confirmation of when the inventory of council owned property will be available, Councillor Blagrove responded that Councillor Murray, as the responsible Cabinet member, would provide a written response.

2. Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for Partnership and Insight

What will be the mechanism by which the Vale representatives on the Growth Deal's three working sub-groups (Infrastructure, Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, and Housing) periodically and regularly feed back to full Council to let members know how the Growth Deal is progressing, the impact on our communities and how we can contribute to the plans?

Please can the Cabinet member tell us this evening what each group is prioritising and detail the work done by our representatives on our behalf so far?

**Answer:**

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

The working groups referenced are sub-groups of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and as such their reporting line is to the Growth Board rather than to each individual council. Meetings of the Growth Board are held in public, and each sub-group presented written and oral updates at the most recent meeting on 27 November. The Growth Board papers, including notes from the sub-groups, are published on the SODC website where any interested party can find full details.

Officers will continue to provide updates on the growth deal through *In Focus*.

The Joint Statutory Spatial Plan will be subject to further decision making processes and the next stage is currently planned to be on the agenda for a meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2019.

Updates will continue to be provided via the leader's update report at Council.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question asking why the minutes of the sub-groups are not public, Councillor Cox responded that the sub groups meet in private and the meetings are not subject to the provisions of Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

3. Councillor Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet member for Community Services

Reductions in grants from central government and the probable reduction or disappearance of New Homes Bonus leaves our non-statutory services incredibly vulnerable. Leisure projects such as the Wessex Leisure Centre are clearly at risk of not going ahead - evidenced by this council's pause in capital spending.

What is the Cabinet member's contingency plan to pay for the Wessex Leisure Centre and other leisure provision if the New Homes Bonus is reduced or scrapped by the Conservative government?

**Answer:**

Councillor Badcock responded as follows:

The decision to pause this and other projects at the district council is purely a precautionary measure while the Council awaits details of longer term funding arrangements from Government. Under current funding rules the council remains in a strong overall financial position, but at this time it is not yet known how the council will be affected by the future spending review. Therefore, it is too early to determine the options available to the council on this and other projects affected until such time the council receive further details on the elements of its funding that are determined by Government. Hence the decision to take the prudent step to wait for more certainty before committing to any further capital spending.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question asking whether it was irresponsible to have proceeded with capital projects when the uncertainty over government funding has existed for two years, Councillor Badcock responded that the council is taking prudent steps to wait for more certainty over funding before committing to further capital expenditure.

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

In 2015, the Vale Conservatives stated that the Vale was in a position to front fund the Lodge Hill slip roads.

The developers of the 950 homes North of Abingdon were given outline planning permission in July 2017, which included their s106 contribution towards the Lodge Hill southern slips. But we still do not have a reserved matters application from the developer.

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Vale administration is still able to 'front fund' the Lodge Hill slips and assure us that the diamond interchange will be delivered by 2020 whether the North Abingdon development goes ahead or not?

**Answer:**

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

The Lodge Hill south facing slip roads scheme is being progressed by the County Council, for planned delivery by end of 2020. In summer 2017, central government pledged to fund circa £9 million, around half the cost of the scheme. The remainder of the costs will come from developers via S106 contributions, with the County Council forward funding this portion of the budget to ensure timely delivery. Design work on the scheme is on-going, with a planning application expected to be submitted in 2019.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question seeking clarification of the district council's commitment to front fund the slip roads, Councillor Cox responded that the council continues to work with the highway authority. Section 106 funding was examined at the last Scrutiny Committee and was found sound.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

5. Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

Air Quality is of increasing concern for health professionals and residents, particularly in and around our established Air Quality Management Areas. Ten out of 11 targets in this council's 2015 Air Quality Action Plan were not met and when asked this at full Council in December 2017 the Cabinet member pointed to a lack of resource as the reason for the lack of progress. Since then our part-time air quality officer has gone on maternity leave and no replacement has been appointed. We've been told that instead, all officers are to be responsible for air quality. It seems clear to me that if no one is responsible, there's a real danger that nothing will be done.

What actions has the council taken over the past year that demonstrate to the public we are taking air quality and the mortality associated with it seriously?

**Answer:**

Councillor Ware responded as follows:

We are aiming to develop a more flexible/agile team. We will however continue to have people in the team with particular areas of expertise or who have been nominated to lead on specific projects.

We currently have two officers who focus on air quality and their case work also includes other environmental protection team work in addition an officer is currently on maternity leave. The environmental protection team leader, works with these officers to ensure that air quality action plan project work and air quality monitoring work is continued and developed. The team leader reports directly to the environmental services manager.

Progress has been made against all but two of the 2015 targets, as reported to the Scrutiny Committee in October this year. Since the meeting in October officers have submitted a grant application to Defra for funding to be used for the production of a Low Emission Strategy and we should hear by the end of February if we have been successful.

Whilst I appreciate your concern, officers have satisfied me that we have adjusted and are adopting the best approach to delivering this work.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question Council was advised that the chief executive had ultimate responsibility for the delivery of this area of work.

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

For the past few years it's been clear that local government funding is uncertain and under threat. Whether you support the Government's austerity programme or not, one thing I hope we agree on is that the council needs to take professional and positive steps to mitigate the risk of cuts in Government funding to local authorities leading to real cuts in our services.

With the expectation of inevitable further funding cuts, it's natural to look to our non-statutory services to see where we can be leaner. That would have us look at our leisure centres and community centres, among other things.

The Beacon is a wonderful, valued community asset in Wantage, and its use has grown over the past several years. The cost to the council has recently been approximately £240,000 per year (as seen in the table below, from our finance team).

Financial Year	Budgeted Income	Actual Income	Budgeted Expenditure	Actual Expenditure	Planned Budget	Council Contribution	Variance against planned budget
2008/09	-91,980	-79,930	308,070	316,456	216,090	236,526	20,436
2009/10	-85,900	-87,862	259,540	243,417	173,640	155,555	-18,085
2010/11	-82,000	-80,260	253,290	255,988	171,290	175,728	4,438
2011/12	-84,500	-62,561	214,340	175,041	129,840	112,480	-17,360
2012/13	-83,450	-67,471	228,240	199,321	144,790	131,850	-12,940
2013/14	-96,010	-102,646	304,334	286,964	208,324	184,318	-24,006
2014/15	-126,010	-156,441	306,985	383,084	180,975	226,643	45,668
2015/16	-170,949	-188,129	381,176	396,386	210,227	208,257	-1,970
2016/17	-192,449	-185,827	404,443	431,070	211,994	245,243	33,249
2017/18	-249,800	-225,315	459,080	465,663	209,280	240,348	31,068

We discovered recently that The Beacon's financial reporting to Scrutiny Committee has had errors for the past few years. This has raised for me some concerns about how well the council is managing that asset, and what actions council has taken to mitigate the risk to The Beacon of funding cuts.

It would seem to me that the more they are reliant on council tax to fund their programmes and building, the more at risk they are as Government funding is reduced.

What actions has the council taken to identify ways for The Beacon to reduce its dependency on council funding? What actions are planned to help mitigate in future?

**Answer:**

Councillor Badcock responded as follows:

The Beacon is not a separate entity to the Council, and forms part of a wider service offer focused on community wellbeing. Officers are currently undertaking an in-depth review of the current and future budget requirement to determine the most likely spending profile of this valuable social asset. This review will help shape the direction of the Business Plan and Marketing Plan for 2019 – 2022. Officers have already put in place new financial control strategies and will be introducing profit and loss reporting, improved financial reporting and action and revised key performance indicators designed to measure outcomes as well as outputs.

The wider Communities Team is working closely with the Economic Development Lead - Vale Towns, to drive use of demographic and geographic data to programme activities and events that will appeal to more communities across the Vale of White Horse. Customer insight will be gathered from existing and potential users to influence future programming to increase user numbers and income, whilst delivering events that add to the quality of life, health and wellbeing of the communities in Vale of White Horse.

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

Given that Vale of White Horse District Council has not owned social housing since about 1995, what policies are in place now to enable the council to deliver and manage the council owned social housing scheme planned at Old Abbey House in Abingdon?

**Answer:**

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

Officers are exploring a range of options for the provision of affordable housing in Old Abbey House directly with a number of registered providers. Although it has not yet been formally determined, officer's advice is that it would not be in the best interest for the council to deliver and manage the provision at Old Abbey House directly and it would be more beneficial for this to be done by an experienced registered provider.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question, seeking a view as to whether the publication of a press release on this issue, raising expectations, was premature before the feasibility study had been completed, Councillor Blagrove responded that Councillor Murray, as the responsible Cabinet member, would provide a written response.

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

In October 2018, following the autumn budget statement, the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) put out a statement titled 'National and Local Leadership Needed to Meet Growth Arc Potential'.

The statement says, "There are also plans... for new governance structure across the Arc to be in place by Spring 2019: these will take account of existing democratic accountabilities including the Cambridge-Peterborough Combined Authority as well as district and county councils".

What are these plans that the NIC refer to? How did this arrangement come about? And how will this impact the Vale residents and the district council?

**Answer:**

Councillor Cox responded as follows:

Alongside the autumn budget statement, the government published a paper entitled "Government response to 'Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc'. The governance proposals were summarised as follows.

"The government is committed to working with local authorities to put in place appropriate governance arrangements to support the delivery of the wider Arc priorities. The government will work with local partners to agree a governance



structure that supports the delivery of local growth, while retaining appropriate democratic accountability, by Spring 2019.

"The government expects the new local governance structure for the Arc to be robust, credible and inclusive, with a clear and proactive remit. The structure should also be streamlined and practical for Government to 'do business' with in order to make more rapid progress. It should have sufficient influence and expertise to challenge all parties to take key decisions at the right times, and to maintain confidence amongst all stakeholders, including universities, business and environmental groups.

"To build up to one million homes by 2050 and deliver the full economic potential of the Arc, the planning and delivery of business, housing and infrastructure should be coordinated across the Arc. This will require rapid progress with strategic spatial plans and local plans. The government is working with local partners to prepare an ambitious Joint Vision Statement by Spring 2019. Where there is a clear need, the government will direct local planning authorities to undertake joint plans. The government will ensure that growth in the corridor is underpinned by appropriate governance structures and delivery vehicles."

Across the whole arc, arrangements are already in place for meetings of the council leaders, chaired by Councillor Barry Wood of Cherwell District Council. Officers from all Local Enterprise Partnerships and authorities in the arc, this council included, meet regularly and are now in the process of establishing three working groups with themes of place-making, transport and connectivity, and economic growth.

Collectively, Oxfordshire is already in a strong position with regard to the arc. We have the well established Oxfordshire Growth Board, referenced positively in the government paper, and we have already embarked upon plans for a joint statutory spatial plan or JSSP. It is this Oxfordshire Plan 2050, as the JSSP will be known, which will shape future growth in the county. The governance arrangements ensure that this council retains its sovereign ability to vote on the adoption of the plan in due course.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question seeking an assurance that the council would not be transferring powers to another body, Councillor Cox responded that the corridors leaders' meeting had formulated a draft vision statement that will be published once agreed at the next meeting. Members of the body have taken care to ensure that each council will have its views taken into account in decision making.

9. Councillor Sandy Lovatt to Councillor Alice Badcock, Cabinet member for Community Services

The Social and Cultural activities in the Vale are as important for the health, vitality and wellbeing of the community as its economic and environmental activities. This was vividly illustrated by the sheer joy and goodwill demonstrated by the Community Awards Event that took place in the Beacon on Saturday 24 November. Does the Cabinet member agree with me that the provision of facilities such as The Beacon are a vital service to the community and that their benefits far outweigh the costs?

**Answer:**

Councillor Badcock responded as follows:

The Beacon provides a vital meeting place and venue for communities across Vale of White Horse, including local groups and businesses which are otherwise not catered

for. Centres, such as The Beacon are at the heart of local communities, and provide a place to meet and make new friends, learn new skills, be active and be entertained through music, film and performing art. The Beacon is part of a wider Community Service that aims to improve people's quality of life by contributing to the social, physical, and educational wellbeing of the community, including combating loneliness and social exclusion. However, we also recognise that such facilities need to be efficiently managed and provide value for money to communities, as well as social value.

**Supplementary question:**

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Badcock confirmed that she agreed that The Beacon is essential to the promotion of a community health and wellbeing strategy and that, as a sustainable community asset, could not be judged solely as a commercial asset.

10. Councillor Chris Palmer to Councillor Ed Blagrove, Cabinet member for Corporate Services

Does this council have ambitions to move to a paperless environment and what measures are being taken to make this work on a practical level?

**Answer:**

Councillor Blagrove responded as follows:

While there is much to admire in an aspiration to become paperless, and some businesses and organisations can achieve this, I do not believe becoming paperless would be either achievable or desirable for this council. Much of our work as a council relies on their being paper versions of documents in order to ensure we are providing the quality services our residents have, rightly, come to expect.

That said we should always seek to limit our paper usage wherever we can, as long as we feel confident an electronic only option is right. Therefore, whilst the term paperless is not appropriate the council is committed to moving towards a paper light environment, this will allow officers the freedom to choose their approach in delivering services to our residents and businesses.

The council's technology strategy was approved by Cabinet on 5 October 2018, having previously been to our scrutiny committee, which outlines a set of core principles for the investment in and adoption of technology to support effective working and embrace the potential it offers for improved services to our residents and businesses.

Strategic Management Team are currently scoping a proposed programme of 16 projects over five years, which together will deliver the aims and objectives of the technology strategy, and ongoing updates from the head of corporate services to members will be provided as the programme of work progresses.

**Co.55 Motions on notice**

No motions were submitted for consideration.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm

**VALE LEADER'S REPORT – COUNCIL 12 DECEMBER**

I wrote to Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State for Housing regarding the housing growth in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor and he replied on 11 October 18. Essentially, a public consultation will be held in late 2019 to inform a decision on the route within the selected corridor. A preferred route will then be selected, which will be followed by a further opportunity for public consultation.

On 15 October I participated in the 'Oxfordshire Partnership' meeting at Oxfordshire County Council which received reports from:

- Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Safeguarding Children Board;
- Safeguarding Adults; Safer Oxfordshire;
- Thames Valley Emergency Services;
- Stronger Communities Alliance;
- Growth Board;
- Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Environment Partnership;
- Strategic Schools Partnership.

As Vice-Chairman of the Growth Board I hosted a forum for developers and registered providers of social housing which explored the opportunities to help deliver Affordable Housing. We want this programme to be a beacon of success and a step change in delivering affordable housing in Oxfordshire. The target is 148 in year one and 1320 in the three-year programme.

I note that Oxford City, Liberal Democrat Councillor Andrew Grant attacked the City's lack of building affordable housing, saying, "Neighbouring Vale of White Horse District Council built at almost six times the rate with over 2,000 completions".

I wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government on 26 October asking for a 'review' of the definition of 'Affordable Housing' as agreed at council on 10 October. That letter was In Focus and on the website. On 10 December I received a reply, dated 29 November, which will be placed on the council website.

On 29 October, as cabinet member for planning, I critically examined the Vale council Quarter 2 Planning Performance Review. The illustrative slides giving the overall situation were placed on the website and were sent to all councillors.

On 30 October the council received a letter from the Inspector of Local Plan Part 2 stating he was satisfied that Plan met the duty to co-operate but did not meet the test of soundness without some modifications; his letter is in the public domain.

You will recall that cabinet met on 16 November to endorse recommendations in the report and that council endorsed that recommendation unanimously on Monday 19 November. As an aside, I noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee roundly praised our Housing Allocations Policy which we have now consulted upon.

That same evening the Chairman and I represented the council at the South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Annual Awards ceremony at Pembroke College, for an awards presentation by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen, that included a British Empire Medal to a lady from Milton Heights.

Wednesday 31 October saw the launch event for the combined South and Vale Business Awards 2019 at Cornerstone, intended to build on the huge success of last year's Vale4Business event.

Closer to home, I participated in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Action Group on 8 November, the most active Neighbourhood Action Group in the region. Thus, I have met with the whole gambit of Thames Valley Police top brass: The Chief Constable, our Area Commander and Neighbourhood Commander, all in one month.

On 14 November Cllr Alice Badcock and I each presented a certificate to each of the winners of six categories in the council's senior citizens 'Go Active' scheme, from across both South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale.

On 15 November I hosted an Oxfordshire Growth Deal Partnership officers' workshop for 120 delegates from all six councils who participated in study groups focused on:

- Infrastructure;
- Joint Statutory Spatial Plan;
- Affordable Housing;
- the Local Industrial Strategy.

There was a Highways England drop in session to brief members on the Expressway options on 16 November. The information covered was published In Focus on 26 November which contained a link to Highways England website and a map.

A joint South and Vale Renewable Energy Workshop for Neighbourhood Development Planning groups was attended by 30 people on Wednesday 21 Nov 18.

At a meeting of the Oxford Flood Scheme Sponsoring Group on 22 November, members were updated on the progress of the various aspect of the scheme, further details can be found on the Environment Agency website.

At the Growth Board on 27 November, I was pleased to see that all the minor and presentational changes to the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Local Development Scheme and Scoping document, submitted by the Vale, had been agreed by the Heads of Planning of the other five councils, which was a point raised at full council.

On Saturday 1 December I had the pleasure of singing as a member of the Cotswold Voices community choir with Wantage Silver Band at a joint concert in the Beacon, our excellent and well used community facility.

The Didcot Garden Town Board re-convened on Monday 10 December, when it progressed the various aspects of work intended to facilitate that project. A press release will be issued on 13 December.

Following the Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership Annual General Meeting at Harwell Campus on 25 September, which was a public meeting, the main OxLEP Board met yesterday and considered its: Operating plan; Budget; Quarter 2 Report; and the latest draft of the Local Industrial Strategy.

I congratulate you Chairman for hosting your Staff Christmas Reception today when you had the opportunity to thank officers for their work this calendar year. I would like to do likewise tonight, as this is the final meeting of full council for the 2018 calendar year.