

Minutes of a meeting of the Council



held on Wednesday 7 October 2020 at 7.00 pm
as a Virtual Meeting

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Margaret Crick (Chair), Jerry Avery, Matthew Barber, Paul Barrow, Ron Batstone, Eric Batts, Samantha Bowering, Nathan Boyd, Cheryl Briggs, Andy Cooke, Andrew Crawford, Eric de la Harpe, Amos Duveen, Neil Fawcett, Andy Foulsham, Hayleigh Gascoigne, David Grant, Debby Hallett, Jenny Hannaby, Simon Howell, Alison Jenner, Bob Johnston, Diana Lugova, Robert Maddison, Sarah Medley, Patrick O'Leary, Helen Pighills, Mike Pighills, Judy Roberts, Val Shaw, Janet Shelley, Emily Smith, Bethia Thomas, Max Thompson, Elaine Ware, Catherine Webber and Richard Webber

Officers: Emily Cockle, Steven Corrigan, Steve Culliford, Simon Hewings, Suzanne Malcolm, Margaret Reed, Melanie Smans and Mark Stone

Council observed a minute's silence in memory of former district councillor and chair of council Ken Davies. Councillor Bob Johnston made a statement in tribute to Ken Davies.

Co.94 Apologies for absence

None.

Co.95 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 as a correct record and agree that the chair sign them as such.

Co.96 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

Co.97 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The chair advised councillors of general procedures to be followed in virtual meetings.

Co.98 Public participation

Four members of the public had registered to ask a question.

A. Councillor James Goodman, Wantage Town Councillor and Chairman of the Wantage & District Chamber of Commerce, asked the following question

"Following the Liberal Democrat administration's decision to scrap plans for a new leisure centre covering Wantage, Grove and surrounding villages, please would they explain where the S106 funding, which was previously allocated to this project, has now been re-allocated, or spent?"

Councillor Helen Pighills, Cabinet member for healthy communities, provided the following response:

"The previous administration, at a Cabinet meeting on 7 December 2018, paused a number of capital projects, including the proposed Wessex Leisure Centre, on the basis that there was no certainty that funding for the scheme would ever be available.

They did not then allocate funding for the project in their February 2019 budget.

It is clear that the amount of Section 106 developer contributions that are available to the council to spend on leisure fall well below the amount that would be needed to fund the proposed centre, so the new administration made the sensible decision to stop any further work on the project.

Of the original £18.8 million project, £5.9 million of funding was identified to be raised from S106 contributions. To date only £1.7 million of this has been received and the balance will become due as further housing completions are delivered by the developers. None of this S106 funding has yet been accessed or spent.

All available S106 funding can be viewed on the council website.

Contributions that were not specifically for the project are available for use on other schemes and will form part of future budget decisions by the Council.

Officers are working with the council's legal team on the contributions that specifically mention the Wessex Leisure Centre to ensure that these funds can be used for other leisure purposes within the communities that were intended to benefit.

Officers are progressing the development of a new Active Communities Strategy which will identify ways that S106 funding can be used for leisure activities across all communities of the Vale".

B. Mr Andrew Coker, Church Warden of the parish of Abingdon, asked the following question

"Why would you think of selling Old Abbey House when as you have said on many occasions it could play such an important community role?"

Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, provided the following response

"Thank you for your question and for your comments about the importance of Old Abbey House. Both in terms of its position at the centre of the town and the affection local people have for the building. It is incredibly sad to walk past the building all boarded up, and with maintenance costs mounting up as a result of it being empty for far too long, I am anxious to see it back in use.

Speaking personally, I would be delighted if a viable community use could be found. The council continues to encourage groups and individuals to submit proposals for business cases with their ideas. However, in the current financial climate we also need

to consider the cost implications for maintaining this building as we try to manage ongoing budgetary pressures in a responsible way.

Existing budget pressures have been exacerbated by unexpected costs in relation to the council's Covid-19 response. There are ongoing financial implications that we need to manage carefully not just for Old Abbey House, but also for all our properties across the district.

Old Abbey House requires considerable ongoing expenditure to maintain and to improve on its current condition. The council does not have the required funds available to continue to manage the building. To bring the building back into use will require considerable expenditure and hence the need to undertake the market testing exercise.

As part of the market testing exercise community groups have been encouraged to come forward with their proposals for the building and a number of conversations are ongoing.

A report will be presented to Cabinet in December setting out the options based on the interest received during this exercise. Therefore, I cannot confirm today whether we will progress a sale or not until Cabinet have considered in detail all the viable options available”.

C. Mrs Hester Hand, Chair of Friends of Abingdon Civic Society, asked the following question

“Please can the Council explain the process for deciding on the future of Old Abbey House, in particular:

- a) how options other than sale on the open market are being or will be considered and
- b) the nature and timing of the public consultation which we have been assured will take place before any decision is taken?”.

Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, responded as follows:

“Since the marketing testing exercise began in June, the council has encouraged all interested parties, including community groups to come forward with their ideas for Old Abbey House. A bid letter will be sent to all interested parties shortly inviting final offers. These will remain sealed until opened simultaneous and evaluated against a range of agreed criteria (these criteria will be set out with the bid letter). A report will be brought forward to Cabinet on 4 December setting out the bids and evaluation for Cabinet’s consideration.

Public consultation has been ongoing since the market testing exercise began in June. A range of communications have been issued by the council inviting interested community groups, charities, and private sector organisations to come forward with ideas for the building. I encourage interested parties to contact the council or VSL with formal proposals while this process is ongoing and ask that council members pass on any information or comments they receive from people in their wards to me or Councillor Crawford, Cabinet member for Finance and Community Assets. The report detailing the bids and proposals is due to be considered by Cabinet on 4 December”.

D. Alice Badcock asked the following question

“Could the administration explain what focus it has currently on Abingdon, which seems to be getting left behind compared to the rest of the Vale”?

Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, responded to the individual elements of the question, set out in bold, as follows:

- 1. After you declared the failure of the previous administration to rejuvenate the Upper Reaches, almost 18 months into the new administration it still sits derelict and unused. You appear to have taken “a low priority” approach to remedy this situation that you caused the last time you ran the administration of this Council**

“As the previous administration was aware, this is a complicated site and due to changing market conditions the existing lease holder was not able to proceed with their original plans. It was unfortunate that in a newspaper article just before the 2019 elections it was announced that a deal had been reached with a hotel company to take over the Upper Reaches, raising the community’s expectations. After the election I learnt this was not that case that no such deal had been reached.

Since then, the council has been actively working with the lessees of the site and we hope they will have a plan for the site that can be shared over the forthcoming months”.

- 2. Old Abbey House has been left to fall down by neglect, what is your plan to clear the site? What do you propose for the site?**

“Old Abbey House has indeed been neglected since 2015 when the council ceased to use it as an office. An announcement was made by the previous administration in 2017 that Old Abbey House would be developed into social housing. Unfortunately, that announcement was made before any feasibility study was carried out, and the proposal did not progress.

The new administration is keen to see Old Abbey House brought back into use as soon as possible. Given the ongoing financial pressures the council is currently undertaking a market testing exercise in respect of Old Abbey House and is seeking bids and proposals for all possible viable uses. There are no plans to clear the site.

A report will be considered by Cabinet on 4 December 2020”.

- 3. Illegal parking in Abingdon – when do you propose to introduce civil enforcement something you promoted when you were in opposition?**

“Parking continues to be a huge problem in towns and villages across the Vale. Civil Parking Enforcement is indeed something I, and the Vale Liberal Democrat group, have championed for many years and I am pleased to report this is now moving forward at pace. Officers have been working in partnership with other councils across Oxfordshire to progress this project. Subject to Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale Cabinet approving the proposal at respective Cabinet meetings between 13 October and 4 December an application to the Department for Transport will be made by early 2021. Assuming the Department of Transport progress the application within normal timescales, we are aiming for implementation between September and November 2021”.

4.The Abbey Meadows splash play area has been rendered unusable by children due to fouling by Canada Geese. What action are you going to take to restore this facility to the children of Abingdon and the Vale?

“During the summer months the park area experiences large gatherings of birds. Notices have been put in place to discourage members of the public feeding the birds.

When open, GLL, the operators of the splash play area, jet wash and clean the splashpad before use every day, clear it throughout the day and wash it at the end of the day. They use chemicals on this splashpad (algaeicide) to ensure the general plant debris that grows can be cleared and also to manage the bird faeces. (This goes directly into the drain and not into the river source).

A planned project to build a fence across the front section by the river in order to provide customer safety preventing direct to the river and to try to prevent birds from landing has been delayed due to Covid and limited staff resources due to more urgent priorities, but is hoped to be delivered in time for the next season when the splash pad is open again”.

Co.99 Petitions

In accordance with the council’s petition scheme, which provides for a Council debate if a petition is signed by in excess of 500 people, Council considered a petition, which had received in excess of 1,600 signatures, calling on Vale of White Horse District Council to:

1. Keep Old Abbey House in public or community ownership/use for the benefit of the growing population of Abingdon.
2. Support the creation of a mixed usage, flexible community facility which could include space to host art, cultural and musical events, a restaurant, room hire for start-ups/community groups/societies and help attract residents and visitors to the historic heart of Abingdon

Julie Kelly addressed Council in support of the petition. She expressed concern regarding the current state of Old Abbey House and shared the comments and proposals people had made on the petition about the possible uses for the building.

In responding to the petition Councillor Smith, Leader of the council, thanked Julie Kelly for starting the petition and presenting it to Council. She acknowledged that the petition showed the strength of feeling and affection local people have for Old Abbey House and its place at the heart the town.

She referred to the answers to questions provided earlier in the meeting which showed that the council is working to find a viable and sustainable use for Old Abbey House. Several suggestions, bids and proposals have been made via the council’s property team and agents. She did not think it would be appropriate for the Council to simply agree or reject the action requested by the petition without information about the legal and cost implications, but the petition does need to be considered as part of the decision about the future of Old Abbey House.

She proposed that Council refer the petition to Cabinet to consider at its meeting on 4 December 2020 to consider alongside the bids and businesses cases that have been received for Old Abbey House at that point together with the legal and cost implications.

A number of councillors expressed concern at the current state of the building and stressed the importance of listening to the views of local residents in agreeing a future use for the building. Council agreed that the petition should be considered as part of the decision about the future of Old Abbey House.

RESOLVED: to refer the petition to Cabinet for consideration alongside the bids and businesses cases that have been received for Old Abbey House.

Co.100 Making the Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 25 September 2020, on the progress of the Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Development Plan Review and the relevant considerations in relation to whether the revised plan should be made (formally adopted).

Concern was expressed that neither of the local ward councillors were consulted or were aware of the process. Councillor Hallett, Cabinet member responsible for neighbourhood plans, shared the concern and undertook to investigate and respond to the two ward councillors.

RESOLVED: to

1. make the revised Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Development Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 25 September 2020, so that it becomes part of the council's development plan; and
2. authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for corporate services and transformation, and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to make non-material changes, such as the correction of any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

Co.101 Treasury outturn 2019/20

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 25 September 2020, on the outturn performance of the treasury management function for the financial year 2019/20. The Joint Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet had considered the interim head of finance's report and were satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the treasury management outturn report 2019/20; and
2. approve the actual 2019/20 prudential indicators within the report.

Co.102 Budget 2020/21

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 2 October 2020, on changes to the 2020/21 budgets to reflect the financial impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and other matters, on the council.

The majority of councillors supported Cabinet's recommendations. Views were expressed, that whilst recognising the challenges facing the council at an unprecedented time, the report lacked detail and included costs not directly related to Covid-19.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree that the net revenue expenditure budget for 2020/21 be increased to £15.835 million, with the increase to be funded from revenue reserves; and
2. agree the additions to the capital programme to be funded from capital receipts, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 2 October 2020.

Co.103 Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Council noted that the papers published for the meeting did not include the revised appendix four which was drafted following the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on . In light of this Council agreed to defer consideration of this item to a further meeting to be held before the end of October.

Mark Stone, Chief Executive, apologised to councillors for this error.

Co.104 Delegation of enforcement functions from Oxfordshire County Council to Vale of White Horse District Council under Covid-19 legislation

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 2 October 2020, on the delegation of functions granted to Oxfordshire County Council under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020 that give local authorities powers relating to the control and prevention of coronavirus.

RESOLVED to:

1. accept the delegation of functions from Oxfordshire County Council to enable Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out the enforcement actions detailed in The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020;
2. authorise the head of legal and democratic to enter into all necessary contracts and agreements to implement the delivery of the enforcement actions on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020;
3. authorise the head of legal and democratic to enter into all necessary contracts and agreements to implement the delivery of the enforcement actions on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council for any further period for which The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 may be extended by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and any enforcement actions which Oxfordshire County Council may delegate to the council in pursuance of any other provision (whether by statute, regulation or direction) by which The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 may be replaced, amended or supplemented;
4. authorise the head of housing and environment to perform the enforcement actions set out in any such agreements referred to (1) to (3) above, and to authorise other officers to exercise any of these actions.

Co.105 Report of the leader of the council

Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, provided an update on a number of matters. The text of her address is available on the council's [website](#).

Council noted the details of urgent decisions taken by Cabinet members and Cabinet as set out on the agenda in respect of the following issues:

- Discretionary grants fund
- Discretionary business grants round two
- Discretionary business grants top up fund
- Emergency Assistance Grant policy
- Commercial negotiations with Capita and the review of Exchequer Services and Finance IT systems

Co.106 Update on Oxfordshire Growth Board

Council received a written update report on the Oxfordshire Growth Board from Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet member for strategic partnerships and place.

In response to a question regarding the Frilford Junction Improvements and Relief to Marcham, Councillor Fawcett responded that there was funding for a feasibility study, but the project had not moved forward. In terms of the implications of the projects not proceeding, he responded that without infrastructure improvements, required by both Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council policies, it was difficult to see further large scale development proceeding in the area although this would be a matter for any planning application.

Co.107 Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Steering Group

At its meeting on 12 February 2020, Council appointed Councillor David Grant as the council's representative on the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Steering Group.

Following recent changes to Cabinet member portfolios made by Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, Council considered a recommendation to appoint Councillor Catherine Webber, Cabinet member for climate emergency and environment, to the steering group.

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor Catherine Webber as the council's representative on the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Steering Group.

Co.108 Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

At the annual meeting of Council held on 15 May 2019 Councillors Andy Cooke, Hayleigh Gascoigne and Matthew Barber were appointed to the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.

Council considered a recommendation to appoint Councillor Jenny Hannaby in place of Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne.

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor Jenny Hannaby as a member of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.

Co.109 Planning Committee membership

At its annual meeting held on 15 May 2019, Council resolved to allocate one of the Liberal Democrat seats on the Planning Committee to the Conservative Group. Council considered a recommendation to rescind this decision to restore the political balance on the committee from 2 November 2020.

RESOLVED:

1. To rescind the decision taken at the at the annual meeting held on 15 May 2019 to allocate one of the Liberal Democrat seats on the Planning Committee to the Conservative Group;
2. To appoint Councillor Shelley to the Conservative seat and Councillors Batts, Boyd and Howell as substitute members;
3. To appoint Councillor Avery to the Liberal Democrat Group seat;
4. That these changes become effective from 2 November 2020.

Co.110 Review of the council's constitution

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer on proposed changes to the council's constitution. This set out a series of recommendations discussed by the Joint Constitution Review Group.

RESOLVED: for Vale of White Horse District Council to

- (a) amend the Summary and Explanation section of the constitution as follows:
 - (i) to use 'Chair' as the default term throughout the constitution,
 - (ii) that the minutes of all meetings should record when councillors arrive late for a meeting or leave early,
 - (iii) to add a definition of the leader of the opposition, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report of the head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer to Council on 7 October 2020;
- (b) amend the Council, Cabinet and all committee procedure rules to include:
"The Chair may choose to indicate how they wish to be addressed, according to personal preference."
- (c) amend the Council procedure rules as follows:
 - (i) procedure rule 4 be amended so that when the budget is discussed at Council meetings, questions and motions from councillors will follow consideration of the budget,
 - (ii) procedure rule 33 be amended to allow councillors to also ask questions of representatives appointed to outside bodies or joint committees,
 - (iii) procedure rule 36 be amended to require written answers to councillors' questions at Council meetings, to be provided to Democratic Services for circulation at least 24 hours before a Council meeting to allow more time for councillors to digest the answer and draft a supplementary question,
 - (iv) procedure rule 40 be amended to state that motions to Council may not relate to a decision on an individual case, or a decision made on an individual case under planning, licensing or other regulatory legislation;

- (d) amend the Joint Audit and Governance Committee procedure rules to clarify that only South Oxfordshire District Council members should vote on matters that solely relate to South Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse District Council members should only vote on matters that relate solely to the Vale;
- (e) retain the following Planning Committee procedure rules:
 - (i) procedure rule 4 to continue to exclude Cabinet members from being committee members, and to continue to exclude ward members from participating and voting on applications within their ward,
 - (ii) procedure rule 22(c) to continue the committee’s ability to ask public speakers questions of clarification;
- (f) amend the Joint Staff Committee procedure rules terms of reference by replacing “to undertake development and performance reviews for the chief executive and head of paid service (based on the objectives and targets for the chief executive and head of paid service set by the leaders)” with: “To review the objectives and targets set by the leaders for the chief executive and review the formal performance and development reviews undertaken by the leaders.”;
- (g) amend the scheme of delegation to the chief executive to add a delegation to allow the authorisation of additional senior officers to sign documents and to attest the affixing of the common seal, if this becomes necessary;
- (h) amend the scheme of delegation to the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations, to act as the councils’ data protection officer and the senior information risk owner;
- (i) amend the scheme of delegation to the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer as follows (new text in bold type):
 “1.3 As returning officer, to designate an alternative polling place if the designated polling place becomes unavailable for a particular election, **referendum or poll.**”
- (j) amend the scheme of delegation to the head of development and regeneration as follows:
 - (i) add three paragraphs to the section relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy, as set out in paragraph 26 of this report,
 - (ii) amend paragraph 1.2 (b) regarding the surrender or termination of leases and licences as follows (new text in bold type):
 “To approve and accept surrenders or terminations of leases and licences, and any ancillary documents (**including deeds of variation**), and determine applications for the assignment, sub lettings, and transfer of leases and licences and the granting of sub leases and under leases and other applications for consent required by lessees.”
 - (iii) add a new paragraph 1.2 (m) as follows:
 “To grant the consent of the council and agree to release covenants in respect of land and property matters including retrospective consents under restrictive covenants contained in historic conveyances and transfers of former council housing.”
- (k) amend the scheme of delegation to the head of housing and environment as follows:

- (i) delete paragraphs 1,7, 1.10, 1.16, 1.17, 1.20 and 1.21, as set out in paragraph 30 of this report,
- (ii) rename the section on 'refuse and street cleaning' to 'waste and street cleaning',
- (iii) add the following paragraph to the section on waste:

“To authorise an exemption for residents who wish to pay their annual subscription to the garden waste service by means other than direct debit.”,
- (iv) amend paragraph 16.2 relating to clean neighbourhoods as follows (additional text in bold; deletions shown crossed through):

“To **exercise the council’s powers and duties** ~~authorise town and parish council officers and staff nominated by the district council’s contractors to~~ implement the fixed penalty provisions of the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.”,
- (v) amend paragraph 19.1 and delete paragraph 19.2 as follows:

“19.1 To exercise the council’s powers and duties under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, **the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, The Zoo Licensing Act 1981**, including licensing and registration functions, service of notices, taking of enforcement action, inspections, **risk assessing**, powers of entry and the appointment of inspectors.
~~19.2 To exercise the council’s powers and duties under The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, The Pet Animals Act 1951, The Breeding of Dogs Acts 1973 and 1991, The Animal Boarding Establishments Acts 1963 and 1970, The Zoo Licensing Act 1981, and The Riding Establishments Acts 1964 & 1970, and the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999, including licensing and registration functions, taking of enforcement action, inspections, powers of entry and the appointment of inspectors.”~~
- (vi) amend paragraph 22.2 relating to private water supplies as follows:

“To give authority to approved companies or organisations to carry out **risk assessment functions and** water sampling on behalf of the council under the Water Industry Act 1991.”;
- (l) amend the scheme of delegation to the head of planning as follows:
 - (i) amend paragraph 1.1(a) to remove ambiguous wording as follows:

“A ward councillor (to include adjacent ward councillor whose parish has been consulted) calls in the application to be considered by the Planning Committee within 28 days of the date of registration of the application (unless an extension to the consultation period has been granted). This request must be in writing and deal with the planning issues to ensure that the audit trail for making that decision is clear and unambiguous. Councillors’ right of call-in does not apply to applications for certificates of lawful development.”,
 - (ii) that paragraph 1.15 relating to neighbourhood plans also applies to South Oxfordshire:

“1.15 To designate neighbourhood planning areas.” (This delegation is subject to consultation with the Cabinet member for planning.),
 - (iii) add a paragraph to allow the designation of a neighbourhood plan forum, where there is a parish meeting but no parish council,

- (iv) add a paragraph to allow a neighbourhood plan to proceed to referendum;
- (m) add to the list of Proper Officer and Authorised Officer appointments, as set out in the appendix 1 to the report of the head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer to Council on 7 October 2020,
- (n) amend the Financial Procedure Rules as follows:
 - (i) amend paragraph 61 to require that any sale of property resulting in a significant reduction in income of £100,000 or more, impacting on the current budget and the medium term financial plan, must be referred to full Council for consideration,
 - (ii) amend paragraphs 74 and 75 to refer to head of development and regeneration following the transfer of responsibility for Community Infrastructure Levy spending from the head of planning under the management restructure;
- (o) authorise the head of legal and democratic to update the constitution to reflect the agreed amendments with effect from 1 November 2020; and
- (p) authorise the head of legal and democratic to make any minor or consequential amendments to the constitution for consistency.

Co.111 Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 - proposal to re-appoint a joint Independent Remuneration Panel

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic on the appointment of a joint independent remuneration panel with South Oxfordshire District Council to undertake a review of the councillors' allowances scheme and make recommendations to Council.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the agreement of South Oxfordshire District Council, to:

1. appoint a joint independent remuneration panel with South Oxfordshire District Council to carry out reviews of the councillors' allowances schemes at both councils and make recommendations on any changes to the schemes to the relevant Council;
2. make the appointment of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel effective until May 2024, one year after the 2023 district council elections;
3. to appoint South East Employers as one of the members of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, to act as chair and provide training to new panel members;
4. authorise the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

Co.112 Re-appointment of independent persons to advise on code of conduct issues

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer on extending the term of office of two independent persons to advise on code of conduct issues.

RESOLVED: to authorise the monitoring officer to extend the terms of office of Chris Smith and Martin Wright, the council's independent persons for code of conduct matters until 31 May 2021.

Co.113 Questions on notice

A. From Councillor Andy Foulsham to Councillor Andy Crawford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Assets

Could the Cabinet member outline the impact on the district council's finances of the measures to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on local residents, and of the inevitable reduction in income to the council? Could he also identify how much additional funding has been received from central Government to cover the expenditure incurred at their request?

Written answer

As shown in the revised budget report – agenda item 9 of tonight's papers – officers currently estimate a net cost to the council of over £400,000 due to COVID-19. This represents a combination of additional costs and loss of income totalling over £3.5 million. We have received over £1.5 million in government grant funding, and expect to receive over £1.7 million as compensation for lost income. In total, government funding is not expected to cover all our losses, hence the need for Council to agree to increase the revenue budget tonight. This Council's financial situation as a result of COVID-19 mirrors that of most authorities of all political hues around the country many of which are also finding themselves needing to establish an interim budget. On the income side there are 3 main categories which have impacted us. Firstly, initiatives which we have chosen to take in order to increase the safety of our residents – for example the decision to suspend car parking fees during the lockdown period. Second, the indirect results of government decisions such as the slow-down of house building during lockdown and the inevitable consequence that has had on planning fee income. Finally, direct results of government legislation to close down certain sectors of the economy such as community establishments like the Beacon which have resulted in a direct loss of income. In deciding to reimburse only just over 70% of lost income, the government have effectively required Local Authorities to finance these deficits from their own resources – ultimately the Council Tax Payer.

A further consequence of COVID-19 on our finances, and this is likely to be significant although difficult to quantify, is the impact of staff resources being diverted from their normal functions to dealing with the pandemic for our local residents. This Council had planned a series of initiatives to both increase income and reduce expenditure through 2020/21. Our staff have truly risen to the challenges which COVID-19 has created and we owe them a debt of gratitude. However, in doing so activities on transforming the financial health of this Council have been inevitably delayed and this in turn will have a negative impact on our finances and create further challenges when we come to considering the full year budget for 2021/22.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Crawford responded that it was not possible to estimate the impact of the new Covid-19 restrictions, likely to last a further six months, on the council's finances either direct or indirectly, or whether the additional financial resources incurred to deal with the pandemic would be reimbursed by central government.

B. From Councillor Sarah Medley to Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Development and Infrastructure

At the full Council meeting in July, we highlighted the concerns of many residents in Harwell and Didcot regarding the cycle accessibility and safety of the proposed design of the B4493 roundabout as part of the plans for the Valley Park development. We have since been raising this issue with the relevant decision-makers at all levels, including calling meetings with Vale and County Council officers and the local county councillor, and we are pleased to see that the roundabout design is now being reviewed. However, this is just one of many aspects of the Valley Park proposals which are less than optimal with regards to sustainability and active travel. Can we be assured that the Valley Park development will be built to safely accommodate and encourage cyclists, and that it will follow the garden principles that guide the development of Didcot?

Written answer

The current outline planning application is being assessed by officers in accordance with the recently adopted Local Plan 2031, in particular Core Policies; 15 (Spatial Strategy for SE Vale sub-area), 16b (Didcot Garden Town), 35 (Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking), 37 (Design and Local distinctiveness) and 38 (Design Strategies for Strategic and Major development sites). These policies guide new development and so reflects the garden town principles and connecting places. In addition, officers have been liaising with and continue to liaise with the developers, OCC highways officers and the Ward Members on these matters and I am pleased to see that some reviews have taken place. The application will be considered and determined by the planning committee.

C. From Councillor Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Development and Infrastructure

If the changes to the current planning system that were proposed in the government consultation of that name get adopted, what effect would that have on Vale of White Horse District Council's ability to deliver affordable housing?

Written answer

The government consultation 'Planning for the Future' suggests that: *the new [Infrastructure] Levy will raise more revenue.....and deliver at least as much – if not more – on-site affordable housing as at present (P.22)*. This is despite the proposals that suggest the removal of legal agreements to secure affordable housing in the long term for future occupiers, the temporary lifting of the small sites threshold, up to 40 or 50 units, below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing and that 25% of affordable housing is proposed to be First Homes (up to 30% discount off market house price to first time purchasers). Officers suggest at this early stage of the proposed planning reforms, the council is unlikely to secure similar numbers of

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affordable housing as it has in the past due to the absence of a legally binding S.106 agreement as well as the raising of the small sites threshold. It is also currently unclear how the council will secure the type and quality of the affordable homes it needs. These points will be highlighted in the council's response to the government consultation.

D. From Councillor Amos Duveen to Councillor Andy Crawford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Assets

Given the disturbing reporting of human rights violations in various supply chains around the world, especially (but not limited to) the forced labour camps in Xinjiang, China, where Uyghur Muslims are being detained, can Councillor Crawford please confirm that the procurement policy he is developing will have an ethical dimension so that Vale residents can be assured that in future, so far as is possible, their council tax will not be spent on the products of such gross abuses?

Written answer

I can confirm that officers are working on a procurement policy for the council and we are targeting February 2021 for Cabinet and Council consideration and adoption. I expect that the policy will adopt "responsible procurement" as one of the council's procurement core values to ensure that the impact of purchasing decisions is considered right at the beginning of the process.

I am aware that Local Authorities in the UK do not on the whole have an enviable record when it comes to the ethical dimension of their procurement policies. There are, however, some beacon authorities and in drafting our procurement policy we should be aiming to at least match their policies, whilst also drawing on the work of other organisations including, for example, Unison, Amnesty International, the Workers' Rights Consortium and Electronics Watch.

It would be easy to conclude that, as a very small purchaser in the overall scheme of things, our policies will have only a negligible impact on global outcomes. In that respect one may draw an analogy with Climate Change initiatives where the actions of many players – however small – can have a beneficial cumulative impact. I am minded also to reflect upon the apartheid regime in South Africa. It fell as a result of the cumulative effects of many upon its economy. We can choose either to acknowledge the problems created by non-ethical purchasing and seek to be part of the solution or ignore them and be part of the problem. When brought forward our procurement policy will aim to be the former and not the latter.

Supplementary question

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Crawford responded that, where possible, the policy would seek to eliminate goods and services that result from slave or endangered labour and that third party service providers would be required to abide by the policy.

Co.114 Motions on notice

Councillor Alison Jenner moved, and Councillor Paul Barrow seconded the motion as set out in the agenda at agenda item 21

Whilst the majority of councillors supported the motion, the view was expressed that the changes would retain a role for local authorities and that the proposed infrastructure levy would benefit smaller developers.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 67, which provides for a recorded vote if three members request one, the chair called for a recorded vote on the motion which was declared carried with the voting as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Jerry Avery	Matthew Barber	
Paul Barrow	Nathan Boyd	
Ron Batstone	Simon Howell	
Samantha Bowring	Janet Shelley	
Cheryl Briggs		
Andy Cooke		
Andrew Crawford		
Margaret Crick		
Eric de la Harpe		
Amos Duveen		
Neil Fawcett		
Andy Foulsham		
Hayleigh Gascoigne		
David Grant		
Debby Hallett		
Jenny Hannaby		
Alison Jenner		
Bob Johnston		
Diana Lugova		
Robert Maddison		
Sarah Medley		
Patrick O'Leary		
Helen Pighills		
Mike Pighills		
Judy Roberts		
Val Shaw		
Emily Smith		
Bethia Thomas		
Max Thompson		
Catherine Webber		
Richard Webber		
Total: 31	Total: 4	Total: 0

RESOLVED:

That Council notes:

The publication by Government of the White Paper, 'Planning for the Future' on 6 August 2020, which set out proposals on reforms to the planning process for the future, falsely frames the problem in housing supply as an issue resulting from council limitations.

- That the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by local authority planning committees, with permission granted to around 9 out of 10 applications.
- That research by the Local Government Association has said that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started.
- As of the 1 April 2020 there is permission for 10,843 (or full permission for 5,055 number) homes in the Vale that have not yet been built. Construction has only started on site for 40% of these (or equivalent 85% for those with full permission).

That this Council is concerned that the proposals in the White Paper seek to:

- Reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications near them.
- Grant automatic rights for developers to build on land identified as 'for growth'.
- Remove section 106 payments for infrastructure and their replacement with a national levy.

That this Council further notes:

- The Royal Institute for British Architects called the proposals 'shameful and which will do almost nothing to guarantee delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes'. RIBA also said that proposals could lead to the next generation of slum housing.
- The Local Government Association and District Councils Network are both working on responses to reflect the serious concerns raised by their member councils from across the country.

That this Council believes:

- That existing planning procedures, as currently administered by our own team in Vale of White Horse, allow for local democratic control over future development, and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them.
- That proposals for automatic rights to build in 'growth' areas, and increased permitted development rights, risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities.
- That local communities must be in the driving seat on shaping the future of their communities, and local determination of the planning framework and planning applications play an important part in this process.

Resolves to:

1. Take part in the consultation in the planning proposals, and to make representations against the proposals in the areas outlined in this motion.
2. Write to both of our Members of Parliament explaining the position of Council on these proposals, urging them to support the intentions of this motion by objecting, where necessary to those proposals, and for any reply from them to be placed on the council's website.
3. Highlight its concerns over these proposals with the public and local residents.

Co.115 Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

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Co.17

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Co.116 Impact of Covid-19 on leisure facilities

At its meeting on 2 October 2020 Cabinet considered the confidential report of the interim head of development and regeneration on the impact of Covid-19 on leisure facilities. Cabinet made no recommendation to Council at this time.

Councillor Helen Pighills, Cabinet member for healthy communities, provided a verbal update to Council.

Co.117 Budget 2020/21

Council noted the revised confidential appendix 1, circulated following the Cabinet meeting on 2 October 2020, and confidential appendix 2 to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 2 October 2020.

The meeting closed at 9:40pm