

Council Agenda



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Date: 16 March 2021

Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 7.00 pm
as a virtual meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Reed".

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic

To watch this virtual meeting, follow this link to the council's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

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Agenda

Open to the public including the press

1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

(Pages 9 - 31)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021 – attached.

3. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

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

4. Urgent business and chair's announcements

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

5. Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

6. Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

7. A Joint Local Plan

(Pages 32 - 59)

At its meeting on 17 March 2021 Cabinet will consider a report on the case for preparing a Joint Local Plan, instead of separate local plans for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. The report of the head of planning which Cabinet will consider on 17 March is attached.

The recommendations of Cabinet will be circulated to all councillors following the Cabinet meeting.

8. Further extension of term of office of independent persons for code of conduct matters

(Pages 60 - 62)

To consider 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 – attached.

9. Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of the leader of the council.

10. Update on Oxfordshire Growth Board

To receive an update on the Oxfordshire Growth Board from Councillor Fawcett, Cabinet member for strategic partnerships and place.

11. Questions on notice

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

A. Question from Councillor Gascoigne to Councillor Helen Pighills, Cabinet member for healthy communities

In light of the disappearance and tragic death of Sarah Everard, women have taken to social media to share their experiences and talk about the many ways in which they have all felt unsafe when just trying to go about their lives. What assurances can the council give that it is doing what it can to protect women and vulnerable people in the district to go about their lives?

B. Question from Councillor Medley to Councillor Roberts, Cabinet member for development and infrastructure

Councillor Gascoigne and I can confirm first-hand that during the past year of the pandemic and the various lockdowns, having access to green open spaces on the Great Western Park (GWP) development has been a lifeline for many residents.

With the hope of lockdown restrictions lifting in the coming months, it would be fantastic if residents of GWP are able to finally access and use the full range of community facilities this summer. Please can the Cabinet member provide an update on the following key items of infrastructure on Great Western Park:

1. District Community Centre: when will this be open to the public and available for bookings, how will it be run and will the GWP Community Support Group be able to run their Community larder from there?
2. The Skate Park, Tennis Courts, Multi-Use Games Area and Healthcare Site: when will these be transferred to the Vale?

12. Motions on notice

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

A. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Gascoigne, seconded by Councillor Medley

Council notes:

- As specified in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 2, the district council has committed to provide 22,760 new homes in the period 2011-2031.
- Residents across the Vale regularly contact members about the existing pressure on local health services and concerns about additional homes increasing demand.
- The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group is responsible for ensuring health provision for our growing population is provided.
- If section 106 contributions from developers agreed by the District Council are not used by the CCG within a set time, the money can be paid back to the developer, which would result in an under-provision of health care in our communities.
- Despite significant effort by council officers and local health professionals, the current system is preventing us from providing the health services that local people need and deserve.
- Our planning service and planning committee are therefore under pressure to approve new housing without plans for healthcare in place.

Council believes:

- This council has an important role in improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.
- Primary health provision should be planned based on population growth and vision for health care provision in the district.
- That sufficient infrastructure such as transport, health and education should be provided alongside, and preferably ahead of new housing development.
- The current national system for ensuring health infrastructure is provided, through Clinical Commissioning Groups, is not working.

Council requests:

1. Officers continue to work with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group contacts to ensure sufficient provision is made for primary care services for key strategic housing sites such as Valley Park, Great Western Park and North Abingdon.
2. The leader of the council write to Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) requesting a meeting to discuss:
 - Better working relationship between the two organisations.

- Ensuring OCCG take a more pro-active approach to our planning process and respond to planning application consultations in a timely and ongoing basis to support the work of our planning department and our Infrastructure and development team.
- How the OCCG can engage more proactively with the planning authority to better plan healthcare for strategic sites housing sites in the Vale linked to the council's corporate plan theme of "building healthy communities".
- To understand how OCCG uses population forecasts to plan primary healthcare and what its plans are for Oxfordshire
- To discuss particular case studies where there is a potential for section 106 monies to be lost

3. The Council Leader write to the Ministers for Health and MHCLG to:

- explain the difficulties local planning authorities have to obtain information and commitment to deliver health services from OCCG.
- provide specific case studies about where health provision negotiated as part of section 106 is at risk of being lost.
- press the need for whatever structure replaces Clinical Commissioning groups as part of the health reform has working with local planning authorities and its heart.
- ask what government are doing to increase the number of GPs and other health staff and funding to keep up with number of homes.

B. Motion Proposed by Councillor de la Harpe, seconded by Councillor Fawcett

Council notes that:

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has a Cycling Design Standards document which provides best practice for roundabout junction design.

- It states in the introduction "We need to ensure we create the right conditions for everyone to choose to cycle, whether they are young or old, male or female, or disabled. We want to make cycling a preferred choice for everyone."
- And in section 3.3.5 "Roundabouts can be particularly daunting for some cycle users, especially large multi-lane roundabouts. Approaches, exits and the geometry of roundabouts should aim to cause traffic to slow down to use the roundabout and therefore reduce the risk to cycle users - roundabout entry should be radial, not tangential, in order to slow traffic."

A recent Oxford Brookes survey of Abingdon workplaces that was commissioned by Abingdon Liveable Streets showed that most residents who could walk to work do so but a significant proportion of residents who would like to cycle to work are put off by safety fears.

Roundabouts are particularly hazardous for cyclists and there have been several

accidents involving cyclists on roundabouts in the Vale.

Council notes, with regret, that in the Vale of White Horse and on routes where bicycles are not segregated from the traffic, new roundabouts designs, and the layout of refurbished ones continue to include tangential entries, also known as high speed or flared geometry designs.

Council believes that:

- the aims of the Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards document are good and should be treated as central to planning new settlements well.
- we are moving towards a society where use of a personal vehicle for every journey (both local and longer distance) will be less common, and people will want to have the opportunity to cycle and walk to more local destinations where appropriate.
- Encouraging active travel is part of this council's corporate plan as it has many benefits. For the person themselves, they are likely to feel the physical and mental benefits. And for the environment, there is less traffic on the roads, and therefore less air pollution.
- Having declared a climate emergency, it is the duty of this Council to do what it can and working with partners, to make it easier for residents to choose to cycle for leisure, to school and to work (this applies especially on routes to the larger employment centres in and around our District such as Culham, Harwell Campus and Milton Park).

Council requests that the leader of the council write a letter to the OCC Cabinet Member for the Environment calling on her to:

1. Ensure that the OCC Cycling Design Standards are adhered to and, in particular, for all new roundabout designs and refurbishments in the Vale of White Horse to be based on those Design Standards.
2. Ensure that the Vale of White Horse Design Guide Principle DG31 for streets as social spaces is considered when reviewing junction design. i.e. "Streets should be designed as social spaces with the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users put above the needs of the motorist."
3. Ensure that When developers consult planning and highways officers on potential road design, officers are proactive in promoting the priorities of local councils and are encouraged to design accordingly.
4. Create a culture of pro-actively striving for the best possible street and junction design when highways officers are advising developers about what is expected locally, ensuring that people walking, cycling and using public transport are prioritised.
5. Note that when highway design proposals are put forward that fall below the County Council's Design Standards, and/or do not further the County Council's policy objectives, we would expect the County Council as technical consultee on highways to oppose them.

References:

Oxfordshire County Council Cycling Standards:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/cyclingstandards.pdf>

Oxford Brookes Study of Abingdon Workplaces

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12YfdQeZO_FmltChpUGa9fQLxIS0C2qKAtNu9ndPrZcQ/

Map of accidents involving cyclists

<https://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search>

13. Exclusion of the public

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items 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:

- (i) they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 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.

14. Covid-19 leisure support package

(Pages 63 - 93)

At its meeting on 17 March 2021 Cabinet will consider a confidential report on the impact of Covid-19 on leisure facilities in the district.

The confidential report of the acting deputy chief executive – place which Cabinet will consider on 17 March is attached.

The recommendations of Cabinet will be circulated to all councillors following the Cabinet meeting.

15. Oxfordshire Community Land Trust: affordable housing funding

(Pages 94 - 107)

At its meeting on 17 March 2021 Cabinet will consider a report on a proposal for funding through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and S106 affordable housing commuted sums to support the development of an affordable housing scheme.

The confidential report of the acting deputy chief executive - place which Cabinet will consider on 17 March is attached.

The recommendations of Cabinet will be circulated to all councillors following the Cabinet meeting.



Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council

held on Wednesday, 10 February 2021 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, Margaret Crick, Eric de la Harpe, Amos Duveen, Neil Fawcett, Andy Foulsham, Hayleigh Gascoigne, David Grant, 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: Steven Corrigan, Steve Culliford, Simon Hewings, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

Co.135 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Hallett.

Co.136 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 as a correct record and agree that the chair sign them as such.

Co.137 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

Co.138 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The chair provided general housekeeping information.

She advised she had agreed to take one item of urgent business in respect of a section 106 request from Shrivenham Sports Pavilion.

Co.139 Public participation

A. Richard Bartle, Chair of Shrivenham Parish Council, addressed Council on the Tuckmill Meadow SSSI. He expressed concern regarding the condition of the site

which had been handed back to Vale of White Horse District Council in late 2019 from the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust with a number of recommendations to preserve and enhance the area which, to date, had not been actioned. He stated that the council had a statutory duty to preserve the site and urged the council to halt the decline and return it to its previous condition. He referred to local farmers who would be willing to graze their cattle on the site and volunteers who would be willing to assist with the necessary clearance work.

- B. Jane Hanna, Oxfordshire County Councillor for the Grove & Wantage division, addressed Council on Motion C of agenda item 18. She welcomed and was encouraged by the motion to seek ways support the funding of leisure facilities in Grove and Wantage and the surrounding areas to meet the needs of a growing population. Such facilities were needed and would address the well-being of residents.
- C. Emma Brookes addressed council on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. She stressed the importance of the Bill to address climate change and in support of the main elements of it to oblige the UK government to reduce greenhouse emissions at a rate that would limit global heating to 1.5 degrees C, oblige the government to protect and restore the ecosystems in the UK and to involve the citizens of the UK in a citizens' assembly to inform decisions on how to achieve those aims. She welcomed the submission of the motion on the Council agenda and hoped it would be adopted.
- D. Alderman Joyce Hutchinson asked the following question to Councillor Helen Pighills, Cabinet member for healthy communities
 - 1) When is Vale of White Horse District Council's new Leisure Strategy to be published?
 - 2) Can you confirm that the S106 and the CIL money reserved for leisure facilities for Wantage and Grove will be spent within walking distance of Wantage and Grove, so that the local community will obtain full use of all facilities?

In response Councillor Helen Pighills stated that the council's Corporate Plan committed the council to work with partners on the production of a leisure strategy. It was hoped this would be available by the end of March but was dependent on the availability of staff resources which had been assisting with the council's response to the Covid pandemic.

She confirmed that S106 funds previously allocated to the Wessex Leisure Centre project were being reviewed to determine how they could be re-allocated to alternative projects in the areas which generated the funds and what projects could be funded. She confirmed that there was no CIL money available for leisure projects in Grove and Wantage.

Whilst the council could not commit to ensure the leisure facilities would be in walking distance, the council was committed to ensure the funds would be used in the areas that generated them and to reduce reliance on cars to access facilities.

The Chair thanked the members of the public for their contribution to the meeting.

Co.140 Petitions

No petitions were submitted to Council.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

Co.141 Urgent item - S106 Request - Shrivenham Sports Pavilion

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 5 February 2021, in respect of a request by Shrivenham Parish Council for section 106 funding towards a new sports pavilion in the village.

Cabinet agreed to support the project and recommend that Council create the budget to fund it.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve funding to Shrivenham Parish Council on behalf of Viscountess Barrington Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground Trust in its capacity as the sole trustee of the Trust towards a new sports pavilion to be erected by the Trust on the Recreation Ground owned by the Trust and to create a budget of £378,537.80;
2. authorise the interim head of development and regeneration in consultation with the head of legal and democratic to:
 - agree a funding agreement with Shrivenham Parish Council in its capacity as the sole trustee of the Trust to govern the terms of use of the S106 funding; the instalments in which the funding is paid; the timing of instalments; the conditions subject to which instalments are paid and to otherwise protect the interests of Vale of White Horse District Council as the provider of the funding;
 - include Shrivenham Parish Council as a party to the funding agreement in its own right where necessary or desirable to facilitate the carrying out and completion of the new sports pavilion project by the Trust;
 - approve the payment to Shrivenham Parish Council of £361,423.96 towards the new sports pavilion project subject to and in accordance with the funding agreement; and
 - approve the payment to Shrivenham Parish Council of the portion of £17,113.84 recovered (minus legal costs) on completion of a Deed of Variation to repurpose a Changing Rooms Contribution received under Agreement 16V52 subject to and in accordance with the terms of the funding agreement;
3. approve the payment of instalments three and four of the Sports and Leisure Contribution (Shrivenham recreation ground pavilion) as defined in clause 1.1.33 of S106 Agreement 16V30 and the Cricket Facilities Contribution, as defined in clause one of the Second Schedule of S106 Agreement 17V14 to the Shrivenham Sports Pavilion project:
 - to Shrivenham Parish Council when received by the council subject to and in accordance with the funding agreement to whichever value is the lower of the amount received by the council and the value of forward funding that Shrivenham Parish Council has not recovered by any other means;
 - to Shrivenham Parish Council subject to and in accordance with the funding agreement, on creation of a budget to the value stated above, with no requirement for a further S106 Application, report and decision.

Co.142 Treasury management and investment strategy 2021/22

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 5 February 2021, on the council's treasury management and investment strategy for 2021/22.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 26 January 2021 and had not recommended any adjustments to the strategy and resolved to recommend Cabinet to approve the treasury management strategy, the prudential indicators and limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24 and the annual investment strategy 2021/22 as set out in the report. Cabinet agreed to recommend Council approve the strategy.

In introducing Cabinet's recommendations, the Cabinet member for finance reported that there were no significant changes to the strategy. However, the report did reflect a significant fall in projections of investment income due to low interest rates that are likely to prevail for some time. As capacity permits, the council would be looking to progress a more proactive treasury management strategy during the coming year to address the budget shortfall.

RESOLVED to:

1. approve the treasury management strategy 2021/22, as set out in appendix A to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 5 February 2021;
2. approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24, as set out in appendix A to that report; and
3. approve the annual investment strategy 2021/22 set out in appendix A, and the lending criteria detailed in table 6 to that report.

Co.143 Capital strategy 2021/22 to 2030/31

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 5 February 2021, on the council's capital strategy for 2021/22 to 2030/31.

The Cabinet member for finance highlighted that this year's strategy included within it a strategy for the flexible use of capital receipts to fund transformation activity as agreed in last year's budget. Depending on progress in developing this, the capital strategy may require review during the year.

RESOLVED to:

1. approve the capital strategy 2021/22 to 2030/31, contained in appendix one of the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 5 February 2021; and
2. agree the strategy for flexible use of capital receipts, contained as appendix 1 of the capital strategy.

Co.144 Revenue budget 2021/22 and capital programme to 2025/26

The chair referred to regulations that require councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the budget,

including amendments, and the council tax. In accordance with the regulations she would call for a named vote on each of these matters at this meeting.

The chair reminded councillors that they were not entitled to vote on any issue affecting the level or administration of the council tax or other decisions which might affect the making of any such calculation such as the budget, if they were over two months in arrears with their council tax payments. Where such circumstances applied, councillors were under a statutory obligation to disclose the restriction placed on them and refrain from voting at the relevant meeting. No councillor made any such declaration.

Council noted the report of the chief finance officer on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting held on 5 February 2021 on the revenue budget for 2021/22 and the capital programme to 2025/26. Scrutiny Committee had considered the report of the interim head of finance on 8 February and had made no recommendations.

Councillor Crawford, Cabinet member for finance, presented Cabinet's proposals for the revenue budget and capital programme. He moved and Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council, seconded a motion to approve Cabinet's recommendations as follows:

1. to set the revenue budget for 2021/22, as set out in appendix A.1 to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 5 February 2021;
2. to approve the capital programme for 2021/22 to 2025/26 as set out in appendix D.1 to that report, together with the capital programme changes as set out in appendix D.2 to that report;
3. to set the council's prudential limits, as listed in appendix E to that report;
4. to approve the medium-term financial plan to 2025/26, as set out in appendix F to that report.

In introducing the budget, the Cabinet member highlighted that the budget would result in an increase in council tax of £5 for a Band D property for 2021/22 - the maximum increase allowed under the draft referendum rules outlined in the government's provisional settlement.

Coronavirus had played a central part in the budget and the council was likely to continue to see additional costs and income losses in the new financial year. The figures included in the budget for these were estimates only, as no-one could predict the future course of the pandemic. The government had provided support for some, but not all, council losses. The council was likely to achieve lower investment income for some time to come.

The prioritisation of staff resources had meant that, in this budget, Cabinet had not been able to bring forward additional budget proposals to support priorities in the new corporate plan. However, officers have identified where existing budgets could fund corporate plan delivery activity. Deliverability of those activities would be dependent on council resources being available to progress them.

The budget report also included the medium-term financial plan for the next five years. This continued to show an increasing draw on reserves over the period, based on current estimates of future local government funding. This increasing use of reserves was unsustainable, and officers and Cabinet would continue to review

budgets in the context of the corporate plan priorities to identify ways to improve the council's financial position.

The majority of councillors supported the budget recognising the challenging environment caused by the pandemic. The view was expressed that the council could not continue to rely on reserves to support a budget deficit. Those who spoke against the budget expressed the view that the projected budget deficit over the next five years was not sustainable and expressed concern regarding the potential measures, sale of council assets, to address this.

In accordance with regulations requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the budget the chair called for a recorded vote which was carried with the voting being as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Jerry Avery	Matthew Barber	
Paul Barrow	Eric Batts	
Ron Batstone	Nathan Boyd	
Samantha Bowring	Simon Howell	
Cheryl Briggs	Janet Shelley	
Andy Cooke	Elaine Ware	
Andrew Crawford		
Margaret Crick		
Eric de la Harpe		
Neil Fawcett		
Andy Foulsham		
Hayleigh Gascoigne		
David Grant		
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: 29	Total: 6	Total: 0

RESOLVED: to

1. set the revenue budget for 2021/22, as set out in appendix A.1 to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 5 February 2021;

2. approve the capital programme for 2021/22 to 2025/26 as set out in appendix D.1 to that report, together with the capital programme changes as set out in appendix D.2 to that report;
3. set the council's prudential limits, as listed in appendix E to that report;
4. approve the medium-term financial plan to 2025/26, as set out in appendix F to that report.

Co.145 Council tax 2021/22

Council considered the report of the interim head of finance on the setting of the Council Tax for the 2021/22 financial year.

In accordance with regulations requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the council tax the chair called for a recorded vote which was carried with the voting being as follows:

For	Against	Abstentions
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Jerry Avery		
Matthew Barber		
Paul Barrow		
Ron Batstone		
Eric Batts		
Samantha Bowring		
Nathan Boyd		
Cheryl Briggs		
Andy Cooke		
Andrew Crawford		
Margaret Crick		
Eric de la Harpe		
Amos Duveen		
Neil Fawcett		
Andy Foulsham		
Hayleigh Gascoigne		
David Grant		
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		

For	Against	Abstentions
Elaine Ware		
Catherine Webber		
Richard Webber		
Total: 36	Total: 0	Total: 0

RESOLVED:

1. To note that at its meeting on 9 December 2020 the council calculated the council tax base 2021/22:
 - (a) for the whole council area as 53,919.1 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)]; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in column 1 of appendix 1.
2. That the council tax requirement for the council’s own purposes for 2021/22 (excluding parish precepts) is £7,639,797
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £79,262,477 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils.
 - (b) £67,166,194 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £12,096,283 being the amount by which the aggregate at (3)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (3)(b) above, calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B) of the Act).
 - (d) £224.34 being the amount at (3)(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31(B) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts).
 - (e) £4,456,486 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act, as set out in column 2 of appendix 1.
 - (f) £141.69 being the amount at (3)(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (3)(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates.
4. To note that for the year 2021/22 Oxfordshire County Council has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£1,048.74
Band B	£1,223.53
Band C	£1,398.32
Band D	£1,573.11
Band E	£1,922.69
Band F	£2,272.27
Band G	£2,621.85
Band H	£3,146.22

5. To note that for the year 2021/22 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£154.19
Band B	£179.88
Band C	£205.58
Band D	£231.28
Band E	£282.68
Band F	£334.07
Band G	£385.47
Band H	£462.56

6. That the council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in appendix 3 as the amounts of council tax for 2021/22 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown in appendix 3.
7. To determine that the council's basic amount of council tax for 2021/22 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Co.146 Review of Joint Statement of Licensing Policy

Council considered the recommendations of the Licensing Acts Committee, made at its meeting on 28 January 2021, on a proposed a statement of licensing policy, jointly developed with South Oxfordshire District Council.

Councillor Jenner, Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee introduced the recommendations. She explained that under the Licensing Act 2003 there is statutory duty to review the statement of licensing policy every five years, and a draft policy is the response to this review. The amendments to the current policy set out in Appendix B, show that no significant changes have been proposed. The amendments align the policy with current guidance and clarify requirements for applicants and licence holders. In addition, the format of the policy has been amended to separate out different types of applications to assist applicants when reading the policy. No suggested amendments were proposed that would place additional burdens or restrictions on licence holders or applicants.

A public consultation took place from 23 November to 17 December 2020 and included consultation with the responsible authorities under the Licensing Act as well as our neighbouring authorities, district councillors, local town and parish councils and the relevant trade organisations. Whilst only a small number of responses were received, these have been incorporated into the draft policy at appendix C.

RESOLVED: to

1. authorise the Head of Housing and Environment to make minor editorial changes to the Joint Statement of Licensing Policy, and
2. adopt the proposed Joint Statement of Licensing Policy with effect from 12 February 2021.

Co.147 Pay policy statement 2021/22

Council considered the report of the interim head of corporate services on the adoption of a pay policy statement to meet the requirements of the Localism Act.

RESOLVED: to approve the pay policy statement for 2021/22 attached to the report of the interim head of corporate services to Council on 10 February 2021.

Co.148 Councillors' allowances scheme

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic and the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel on a revised councillors' allowances scheme to run from 1 April 2021.

Councillor Smith moved and Councillor Thompson seconded the following motion:

That Council:

1. thanks the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work and its report;
2. retains for the financial year 2021/22 the existing councillors' allowances scheme agreed by Council at its meeting on 17 May 2017 subject to
 - a. the continuation of an increase in basic and special responsibility allowances from 1 April 2021 at the same rate as that applied to staff salaries;
 - b. the inclusion of a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee at the same rate as the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee backdated to 1 April 2020;
3. defers consideration of the independent remuneration panel's other recommendations until later in 2021 but ahead of the budget setting process for 2022/23.

Councillor Howell moved and Councillor Boyd seconded the following amendment – deleted words shown by strikethrough and additional words shown in bold.

That Council:

1. thanks the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work and its report;
2. retains for the financial year 2021/22 the existing councillors' allowances scheme agreed by Council at its meeting on 17 May 2017 subject to
 - a. the continuation of an increase in basic and special responsibility allowances from 1 April 2021 at the same rate as that applied to staff salaries;
 - b. ~~the inclusion of a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee at the same rate as the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee backdated to 1 April 2020;~~

3. defers consideration of the independent remuneration panel's other recommendations until later in 2021 but ahead of the budget setting process for 2022/23.

Those who supported the amendment expressed the view that a back dated allowance for the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was inappropriate for the level of responsibility and the number of committee meetings held. However, other councillors expressed the view that the Chair of CEAC had undertaken a responsible role during the past year which should be recognised.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

The majority of councillors supported the continuation of the current scheme of allowances and deferral of consideration of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel's report and recommendations until later in the year and ahead of the budget setting process for 2022/23.

On being put to the vote the original motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED: to

1. thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work and its report;
2. retain for the financial year 2021/22 the existing councillors' allowances scheme agreed by Council at its meeting on 17 May 2017 subject to
 - a. the continuation of an increase in basic and special responsibility allowances from 1 April 2021 at the same rate as that applied to staff salaries;
 - b. the inclusion of a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee at the same rate as the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee backdated to 1 April 2020;
3. defers consideration of the independent remuneration panel's other recommendations until later in 2021 but ahead of the budget setting process for 2022/23.

Co.149 Progress on approved council motions

Council received and noted a progress report on motions approved by Council since May 2019.

Co.150 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 what the Oxfordshire Growth Board could do to action the delivery of low carbon affordable homes in Oxfordshire, Councillor Fawcett responded that the webinar, held by the Growth Board, was part of a process to achieve some developments being delivered on a zero carbon basis. It provided an opportunity for the Oxfordshire councils collectively to meet with developers to see how zero carbon houses could be progressed and an opportunity to provide those

companies who attended with the confidence that there is a market for such houses.

Co.151 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 an urgent decision taken by Councillor Bethia Thomas, Cabinet member for community engagement, to approve Vale of White Horse District Council's Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme – Round 2.

Co.152 Questions on notice

1. Question from Councillor Eric Batts to Councillor Catherine Webber, Cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Environment.

Whilst I am sure the cabinet member for Climate Emergency and the Environment will agree with me that the suspension of the garden collection service beyond the usual Christmas period due to staff sickness has been very unfortunate, we wish all the Biffa staff a speedy recovery. However, this a significant inconvenience to the residents of the Vale who avail themselves and may I add, pay for this service. Could the Cabinet member please advise how many households pay for this service and are impacted by the suspension, and what the income from this service has been for the first three quarters of the current financial year?

ANSWER

25,050 Vale households are signed up for the garden waste service and the income for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 equated to £1,153,406.

The decision to delay the restart of the garden waste collection service after the usual Christmas break was taken as a result of some staff sickness due to Covid-19 and others having to self-isolate. This allows the remaining staff to work on the core household waste services (food, recycling and rubbish).

Officers are working closely with Biffa and review the staffing levels weekly, last week there were 29 staff self-isolating and therefore they were not able to restart the service.

Households who choose to pay for the garden waste services are entitled to 20 collections a year. We are normally able to offer more collections than this with our extra-large garden waste collections in the Spring and Autumn, and don't envisage this year being any different, so nobody should be out of pocket.

I realise that this may cause inconvenience and we are genuinely sorry for this. However, the safety of our crews and residents must always be our number one priority.

In addition to her written response, Councillor Catherine Webber stated that the garden collection service will resume on 15 February 2021.

Supplementary question and answer

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Catherine Webber responded that Christmas Trees and outstanding green waste will be collected in the next cycle commencing 15 February. She confirmed that households purchased 20 collections per year but received in excess of this number.

2. Question from Councillor Nathan Boyd to Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council

We note with interest the flurry of letter writing to government and various local bodies to try and influence policies and represent our residents. With the push for transparency and the Corporate Plan focus on this matter, could the Leader please check and confirm by listing out these letters over the last three months to ensure that we have been made aware of all letters of influence and requests that have been sent by this administration either as Leader, Deputy Leader or by our Chief Executive on behalf of the Council that we should be aware of, and any responses received?

ANSWER

We have created a [page](https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/about-the-council/official-correspondence/) on the council's website for capturing official letters sent on behalf of the council and any subsequent responses received. This will be maintained on a rolling 12 month basis. The full url is <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/about-the-council/official-correspondence/>

In the last three months, we have sent and received the correspondence below – the highlighted ones were either published in a councillor update or as a news item on our website, which councillors should have received a notification of.

2 February thank you letter from Matt Hancock and Robert Jenrick

1 February letter to DfT re: Local EV charging infrastructure from Mark Stone

29 January letter from Robert Jenrick about support for councils covid response to our letter on 3 November

27 January letter from Baroness Vere of Norbiton re Taxi and PHV licensing

20 January letter to Thames Water about sewerage overflows

22 January letter to Greencore construction re green business park letter 11/1

19 January letter from Housing minister re Local Plans

15 January letter to government from council in response to their Covid-19 consultation

11 January letter to Robert Jenrick re May elections

11 January letter from Greencore construction re green business park

7 January letter from Baroness Vere of Norbiton re Taxi and PHV licensing

4 Jan letter to Baroness Vere of Norbiton re Taxi and PHV licensing

31 December letter from Gavin Williamson to Cllr Emily Smith and Mark Stone re schools

30 December letter from Kelly Tolhurst MHCLG re rough sleeping

18 December letter from Robert Jenrick re LG finance settlement and covid-19 allocations

17 December Letter from Christopher Pincher re New Homes Bonus

16 December handwritten letter from Robert Jenrick thanking LAs

15 December letter from Emily Smith to MHCLG about self and custom building

11 December letter from Baroness Vere of Norbiton regarding taxi licensing

8 December letter from Treasury in response to our letter on 5 Nov

7 December letter from Kelly Tolhurst MHCLG re caravan park closures this winter

2 December letter from MHCLG re extended retail opening hours

2 December letter from Councillor Emily Smith to OCCG re North Abingdon development

27 November letter from Robert Jenrick re local government spending review

20 November letter from Robert Jenrick re new enforcement powers

18 November letter from North Kesteven DC on 18 Nov re environment strategy

15 November letter from Friends of Abingdon in response to letter 29.10.2020

13 November letter from Thames Water with an update to council leaders

11 November letter from Unite regarding professional drivers concerns

5 November letter to Rishi Sunak about providing support for businesses

5 November letter from Kelly Tolhurst re rough sleeping

3 November joint letter to Robert Jenrick about support for financial help re covid support

3 November letter to Robert Jenrick from council as part of consultation response to object to proposed reforms to current planning system

2 November letter to Cllr Emily Smith from Layla Moran MP re in support of our covid response

November (no date given) open letter to Vale councillors about Old Abbey House

Supplementary question and answer

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Smith confirmed that she agreed that it would be important and necessary for all political parties and candidates to adhere to the Covid guidance in place at the time for the elections in May.

3. Question from Councillor Matthew Barber to Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council

Given the recent press coverage of the proposed merger of the Vale of White Horse with South Oxfordshire district councils, can the Leader confirm whether she supports such a move and if so how she considers such a merger would improve the financial position of the councils in Southern Oxfordshire?"

ANSWER

I am not aware of the press coverage Councillor Barber refers to, so cannot comment on the specific reports. Merging the councils has been suggested by officers as a possible way to reduce duplication of officer tasks to improve delivery to residents even further. I am open to exploring any ideas that will improve this council's financial situation and officer capacity. However, before supporting or opposing any merger I, and all councillors, would need more information about the cost savings, service improvements and other implications for this Council and Vale residents. Previously, officials from the MHCLG have indicated that any request to seek a merger with another district or wider structural change would not be supported until the Recovery and Devolution white paper is published. Without confirmation of Government support, this issue is not a priority for the administration at this time. Given the uncertainty regarding the timing of the white paper, our chief executive has made enquires of MHCLG officials as to what their current views would be on a potential merger of Vale with another district council but is yet to receive a reply.

In addition to her written response, Councillor Smith advised that the chief executive had received a verbal update from civil servants on the issue. The Government's position is that it is happy to receive merger proposals where they are locally led with wide stakeholder involvement. However, she reiterated that it was not currently a priority for the administration.

Supplementary question and answer

Councillor Barber asked whether the leader of council agreed that the only significant benefit of a merger would be to take advantage of a legal loophole which would allow a new authority to set a higher council tax without the need for a referendum. He asked whether she would rule out a merger in such circumstances.

Councillor Smith responded that she would not rule out anything and would need to assess the pros and cons of a merger at the appropriate time. Such a decision would be a matter for Council and was not currently a priority.

4. Question from Councillor Andy Foulsham, to Councillor Helen Pighills, Cabinet member for Healthy Communities

Following the governments' mishandling of Free School Meals for children over Christmas, and then the national coverage of poor-quality Free Schools Meals being provided during lockdown, our communities, town and parish councils have responded generously. But what is being done by this council to ensure children and their families in the Vale of White Horse have enough food as the Covid pandemic continues?

ANSWER

The council continues its own work to ensure that all residents and businesses are supported through the pandemic. Our community hub, working closely with Oxfordshire County Council and the other district councils, takes a system wide approach to ensure that all residents, particularly households with children, are fed and warm over this winter period by making the best use of government funds available.

The assistance made available by the council at present is as follows:

- A. The Winter Support Grant which launched in early January assists families to buy food and stay warm. Funds are being distributed through Citizens Advice and Wantage Independent Advice Centre who are offering a package of advice and support alongside the provision of supermarket vouchers, top up fuel vouchers or direct payment of fuel bills up to the value of £350 for families. Up to £73,430 is available between now and the end of March. We expect funds to be fully allocated and continue to encourage families to get in touch with our advice centres as soon as possible.
- B. As part of a system wide approach, the county council allocated a significant portion of the winter support grant to ensure that free school meals provision continues over the school holidays. We pushed for the county to ensure that this would be administered by the schools, who know the families best and that vouchers rather than food parcels would be distributed. Any child eligible for free school meals is entitled to a £15 voucher per week of the Christmas break, February half term and the Easter holidays. This is being administered by the county council through our schools and we remain in close contact with our schools.
- C. We continue to work closely with our community groups, food banks and larders to understand the overall picture of food poverty across our district and to support their work directly.
- D. Our community connectors and logistics team continue to be available from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday to support any resident who is struggling due to the pandemic. They can assist by listening and then connecting the resident with the best form of help available, whether that's a food bank, advice agency or local support group. In circumstances where no other help is available, our community hub can arrange for the delivery of an emergency food parcel.

5. Question from Councillor David Grant to Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Development and Infrastructure

As a councillor in the Western Vale, I am aware of the consequences of the promises made by the previous administration to allocate S106 monies to the now defunct Wessex Leisure Centre Scheme. Funds that were generated from major developments in Faringdon, Great Coxwell, and other areas close by, were directed to help construct a facility in Grove that our residents would never realistically use.

Now we know there was never enough money to build the grandiose £18.8 million Wessex Leisure Centre at Grove proposed by the previous administration, what reassurance can the Cabinet member give to the town and parish councils in the Faringdon area that appropriate funds previously earmarked for the Wessex project will now be used for community infrastructure in the Faringdon area? And will ward Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

members and key local stakeholders be consulted about what projects would benefit local communities best, giving them the facilities that they deserve?

ANSWER

I appreciate the frustration of residents in your area that funds generated by developments in your community were allocated to a large and undeliverable project many miles away. I am very pleased that the S106 funds currently allocated to the Wessex Leisure Centre Scheme are now being reviewed to determine how they can be reallocated to alternative projects that will better serve the areas that generated them.

An independent review of leisure needs across the Wantage, Grove and Faringdon areas is underway to identify exactly what these alternative projects could be and the level of funding required to bring them forward.

To accelerate this process, engagement will be held with a variety of stakeholders and ward members, to inform the review, which is due to be completed by the end of March 2021. I can assure you that we want to see these funds spent in the areas that generated them and on facilities that the local communities want.

6. Question from Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Catherine Webber, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and the Environment

The Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill being proposed by cross Party Members of Parliament and supported by many Vale residents reminds us that as well as a climate crisis we also face an ecological crisis. Could the Cabinet member explain what action this council is taking to protect our local wildlife and increase biodiversity around the Vale? And how can we work with our neighbouring authorities and MPs to make sure that CEE Bill is supported and results in more urgent action at every level of government?

ANSWER

1) What action is being taken to protect our local wildlife and increase biodiversity around the Vale?

- A draft Nature Recovery Network map has been produced for Oxfordshire by a partnership of organisations including Officers from all Oxfordshire Local Authorities, wildlife charities and statutory bodies.
- A feasibility study into the potential for the Vale to get involved in Habitat Banking is underway.
- Officers are actively involved in ongoing work to re-establish a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire.
- A Tree Opportunities Map is being prepared (joint funded by Vale and all Oxfordshire LPA's). This will be a resource available to all to help identify suitable tree planting opportunities. The project will develop maps showing not only where trees might be established but also where they would have the highest impact. They will cover the placement of trees in both rural and urban areas and in the widest variety of forms - as trees in or outside of woodlands; hedgerows; orchards; agroforestry; parks; and gardens.

- The Vale is delivering biodiversity net gain for all major developments. Each application is assessed for its impacts on biodiversity which are measured using a metric. All development proposals are then required to deliver more biodiversity than is lost when planning permission is granted.
- Work is underway to develop projects to be funded from s.106 money from the Grove Airfield development. This is being developed in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust.
- *A Guide to Planting Trees for Community Groups* has been produced and is available on the Council's web site.
- The Council has a District Licence for Great Crested Newts which has delivered 14 new ponds and 74 Ha of high-quality terrestrial habitats in the last year.
- The Vale works in partnership with other Oxfordshire Councils on the Local Wildlife Sites project. The project aims to protect and enhance our most important wildlife habitats by working with the landowners, providing advice and practical help.
- The Council is working with the Letcombe Brook Project and the Environment Agency to deliver biodiversity enhancements at Willow Walk in Wantage.

2) In addition, over the next 5 years the Council is planning to:

- The Strategic Property Review will consider all the Vale's landholdings and will link in with the production of an Open Spaces Strategy to determine where there are opportunities for biodiversity enhancements and tree planting.
- The Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership will be formally established. The LNP will seek to:
 - Develop a Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire
 - Develop a biodiversity net gain targeting strategy.
- Develop and deliver a Tree Planting Programme on Council owned land to enhance biodiversity and sequester carbon

3) And how can we work with our neighbouring authorities and MPs to make sure that CEE Bill is supported and results in more urgent action at every level of government?

If the Council was to formally confirm its support for the CEE Bill it could undertake the following steps:

The Council could lobby HM Government and its local representatives to support the CEE Bill when it comes before Parliament. To this end, a letter could be sent by the leader of the Council to the following (requesting that they vote for this measure):

- The Rt Hon. George Eustice, M.P. – Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Layla Moran, M.P. – Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon (please note that Ms Moran is already a declared supporter of this Bill)
- David Johnston OBE, M.P. – Member of Parliament for Wantage

In addition, the leader of Vale of White Horse District Council could write, on behalf of the Council, to the leaders (and climate leads) of neighbouring local authorities (Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire

Council, Swindon Borough Council and Cotswold District Council) to suggest that they contact the Secretary of State and their Members of Parliament to support this Bill.

7. Question from Councillor Richard Webber to Councillor Andy Crawford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Assets

The budget before us tonight shows a further reduction in projected government financial support to this council accumulating to more than £14.5 million over the five years of our Medium Term Financial Plan, a fall of 62%. The Council is only allowed by Government to increase Council Tax by 2% per annum which if taken in full will see council tax revenue increase by only approximately £400,000 per annum over the five years.

Vale of White Horse District Council is clearly far from unique in finding itself in this financial quandary. What steps is this Council taking to explain to Government the consequences of their policy decisions and persuade them to both adequately and fairly fund local councils who not only deliver vital services all year round but which have played a major part in assisting the Government in dealing with the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic?

ANSWER

Councillor Webber is right to raise this issue. Firstly, he identifies the reduction in government funding shown in the MTFP. These are estimates. And they are estimates because government has still not given any clarity over future local government funding. That means we have no clarity on:

- How the business rates retention scheme will work
- How we will be affected by the fair funding review
- What new homes bonus will look like going forward

Whilst we hope that government funding will be more generous than the numbers shown here, it may be less generous, not forgetting that this year we will be receiving less in core government funding than last year.

We continue to lobby via many routes. For example, through responding to government consultations on government funding, via letters from the Leader to Government Ministers and through on ongoing support and membership of the LGA, for clarity on future funding levels, and for those funding levels to be sufficient, not just for our council, but for all councils, so that they can continue to provide their key services and to support residents and businesses through the pandemic and beyond.

We also lobby for the freedom to set our own council tax levels. Government assumes that we will set our council tax at the maximum increase allowed. For Vale or 2021/22 this amounts to a £5 increase. But Vale, with the 15th lowest Band D council tax of all English shire districts in 2020/21, is subject to the same rules on council tax increases as all other shire districts. In 2020/21 the average Band D council tax for a shire district was over £190. More freedom to set a higher council tax would be fairer, and would allow us to provide even better services for our residents, and is something we will continue to lobby for as we do not believe it is in our residents interests that it is effectively determined for us in London.

It is particularly ironic that, whilst we battle to finance the delivery of our statutory services, constrained as we are by Government rules and their total absence of future clarity, Thames Valley Police are, by contrast, given carte blanche to increase their

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

charge by an inflation busting 7% with scant regard to any local democratic input. We have amongst our members the unelected Conservative Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, the District Councillor for Steventon and the Hanneys. Perhaps he should like to explain why he and his political masters treat the undoubtedly vital services of the Police so differently to those of this Authority.

8. Question from Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of the council

In July 2020, after the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, this council resolved to “ask the Chair of the Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee of Oxfordshire County Council to convene a meeting with the aim of setting up a rapid and transparent Task Force to analyse and ascertain the reasons for the observed excess deaths and infection rates in Oxfordshire’s care homes during the previous three months”. What was the response to the Leader’s letter on our behalf and what action has been taken in response to our request?

ANSWER

In accordance with the motion agreed by Full Council in July 2020, I did write a letter to the Chair of the Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee on 5 August 2020. A follow up letter was sent on 19 October 2020 asking for a response, and to date I am still waiting for a response.

Co.153 Motions on notice

Prior to consideration of this item, and prior to the expiry of two and a half hours, Council agreed, in accordance with council procedure rule 12, to extend the meeting by half an hour.

A. Councillor Nathan Boyd moved, and Councillor Elaine Ware seconded the motion as set out in the agenda at agenda item 18.

Amendment

Councillor Neil Fawcett moved and Councillor Bob Johnston seconded an amendment with additional words in bold and deleted words shown by a strikethrough

“This Council notes:

1. The recent endorsement of the "Twenty is Plenty" campaign by Oxfordshire County Council in its role as Highways Authority which means all new residential roads ~~will~~ **should** have a 20 mph speed limit.
2. The evidence that introduction of 20mph limits even without formal enforcement results in much safer speed profiles and this is particularly beneficial in the vicinity of schools, community hubs and care facilities.

This Council believes that as the Local Planning Authority we could look to facilitate the campaign by designing in a 20 mph speed limit policy for new developments via the ~~emerging~~ **next** Local Plan.

The Council further believes that there may be a role for a "best practice guide" and case studies for parish Councils to help them facilitate 20mph limits where there is local demand.

Council asks the Leader to write to the County Council in support of swift implementation of the "Twenty is Plenty" campaign, asking the County Council to provide a "best practice guide" to help facilitate 20mph limits where there is local demand, asking that County Council officers promote 20mph limits in discussions with developers, that County Council officers base their responses to planning applications on this policy and asking for any further advice or guidance the County Council can provide to the Vale in how it can help support the implementation of this policy.

~~Council requests officers to prepare a report for the Scrutiny Committee on the practical implications.~~

Council would welcome any request by Scrutiny Committee to invite the County Council to discuss how this initiative is being implemented".

With the agreement of Council, the mover and seconder of the original motion accepted the amendment.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED: That Council notes;

1. The recent endorsement of the "Twenty is Plenty" campaign by Oxfordshire County Council in its role as Highways Authority which means all new residential roads should have a 20 mph speed limit.

2. The evidence that introduction of 20mph limits even without formal enforcement results in much safer speed profiles and this is particularly beneficial in the vicinity of schools, community hubs and care facilities.

This Council believes that as the Local Planning Authority we could look to facilitate the campaign by designing in a 20 mph speed limit policy for new developments via the next Local Plan.

The Council further believes that there may be a role for a "best practice guide" and case studies for parish Councils to help them facilitate 20mph limits where there is local demand.

Council asks the Leader to write to the County Council in support of swift implementation of the "Twenty is Plenty" campaign, asking the County Council to provide a "best practice guide" to help facilitate 20mph limits where there is local demand, asking that County Council officers promote 20mph limits in discussions with developers, that County Council officers base their responses to planning applications on this policy and asking for any further advice or guidance the County Council can provide to the Vale in how it can help support the implementation of this policy.

Council would welcome any request by Scrutiny Committee to invite the County Council to discuss how this initiative is being implemented.

B. Councillor Paul Barrow moved, and Councillor Richard Webber seconded the motion as set out in the agenda at agenda item 18

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Council minutes

RESOLVED:

That the flooding in Oxfordshire over Christmas served as yet another reminder of the importance of flood defences and effective road-side drainage as climate change makes flood events more common and more extreme. As well as planning policy needed to take increasing flood risk seriously, it is vital that the Environment Agency are properly funded to help them protect communities and the local economy from the devastating impact of flooding.

Council notes:

- The excellent partnership work between this council, the Environment Agency and other partners on the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme which will protect South Hinksey, Kennington and North Hinksey as well as Oxford City once built.
- There is a Flood Alleviation Scheme designed to protect parts of Abingdon around the River Ock that the Environment Agency believe will protect the Town. This scheme is unfunded.
- That the likelihood and severity of flooding on the scale of what Abingdon experienced in 2007 and South Hinksey experienced in 2014 is increasingly likely.
- The impact of flooding on our communities can be devastating – for residents personally affected, financially in the damage caused to property, and the impact on our electricity and transport infrastructure which has a knock-on impact for businesses and the local economy.
- The financial constraints that limit infrastructure maintenance by Oxfordshire County Council, such as clearing gullies once every three years and adopting a reactive approach to flooding.

Council asks the Leader to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for DEFRA and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury asking for the Environment Agency funding for flood alleviation schemes to be increased significantly and for the Abingdon Flood Alleviation Scheme specifically to be funded as part of the government's next budget round.
- Continue to work through our partnerships, such as the Growth Board and OxLEP, to highlight the importance of flood alleviation in our district and action to protect residents and businesses.
- Write to Oxfordshire County Council to encourage the development of a rational, comprehensive and cost-effective management plan for maintenance of roadside gullies and drainage, liaising with landowners to clear important drainage ditches and involving increased funding.

C. Councillor Jenny Hannaby moved, and Councillor Ron Batstone seconded the motion as set out in the agenda at agenda item 18

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council notes that the Wessex Leisure Centre project was put on hold in October 2018 at a point when it was clear that the total of Section 106 Developer contributions already collected and those to be received in the future fell very significantly short of the amount required to fund the project. Council is also aware that the current restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic and the unknown potential implications of the need to maintain social distancing and other measures may impact

the nature of leisure facilities for the foreseeable future. However, recognising that earmarked funds are and will become available this Council:

1. Asks officers to initiate early engagement with residents and stakeholders in the Grove and Wantage area to inform the best use of the S106 leisure funds generated locally that were previously allocated to the ill-fated Wessex Leisure Centre.
2. As part of this work, asks officers in its infrastructure, policy and legal teams to disentangle these S106 agreements and in doing so acknowledge that it may then be necessary to consult further with other local communities about what recreation and leisure facilities are required in the areas that generated some of those S106 contributions.
3. Notes that the new and more flexible CIL Spending Strategy adopted by Cabinet reinforces this Council's intention to use CIL developer contributions to pay for community infrastructure, including for leisure provision, in a way that assists the delivery of larger projects to the benefit of the whole community.
4. Enthusiastically supports the recent changes to the Vale's CIL Charging Strategy which will see a near doubling of CIL infrastructure funding to this District over the life of the Local Plan.
5. Supports the prioritisation work on the Vale's Active Communities Strategy to inform how best to use S106, CIL and other funding to provide recreation facilities and opportunities for communities across the district.

Co.154 Revenue budget 2021/22 and capital programme to 2025/26

Council noted the confidential appendix A6 to the interim head of finance's report to Cabinet on 5 February 2021.

The meeting closed at 9.58pm

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Planning

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To: CABINET

Date: 17 March 2021

A Joint Local Plan

Recommendations

To recommend Council to:

- (a) agree, subject to the agreement of South Oxfordshire District Council, the preparation and production of a Joint Local Plan with South Oxfordshire District Council.
- (b) approve the Joint Local Development Scheme (March 2021) attached at Appendix 1; and delegate any updates to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Transformation.
- (c) agree the principle of governance to prepare and produce a Joint Local Plan under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and to delegate the detailed arrangements to the Head of Legal and Democratic, in consultation with the Head of Planning and the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services and Transformation and Democratic Services.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the case for preparing a Joint Local Plan, instead of separate local plans for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. During plan-preparation the current adopted Local Plans would continue to be in force as the development plan against which planning decisions are made, but the next plan would be prepared as a joint plan over the next 3 to 4 years. Upon adoption, the new Joint Local Plan would replace the separately adopted Local Plans for South and Vale.

2. The Appendix to this report provides a Joint Local Development Scheme (LDS), which contains a project plan for the proposed Joint Local Plan. The recommendations to Council seek a delegation to the relevant head of service in consultation with the Cabinet Members regarding the scoping and agreement of the detailed governance arrangements and updates to the LDS.

Corporate Objectives

3. The preparation of a new Joint Local Plan will help support all of the new Corporate Plan 2020-2024 themes. These are as follows:

Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020-2024, adopted October 2020

- Providing the homes people need
- Tackling the climate emergency
- Building healthy communities
- Building stable finances
- Working in partnership
- Working in an open and inclusive way

South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2020-2024, adopted October 2020

- Protect and restore our natural world
- Openness and accountability
- Action on the climate emergency
- Improved economic and community well-being
- Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs
- Investment that rebuilds our financial viability

Background

4. Both councils have adopted local plans in place: Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 adopted December 2016, Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 adopted October 2019 and South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 adopted December 2020. However, planning policy does not stand still, and it takes several years to prepare, consult and go through an examination on a new plan, so work needs to start on the plan or plans that will replace the adopted plans. This is to ensure we have an up to date local plan, in line with government requirements.
5. There is a rare, and perhaps unique, opportunity to bring the plans together. The timing currently for the new plans align, and there is significant overlap and consensus in each council's new Corporate Plan (see paragraph 3 above).
6. Vale has an existing LDS adopted in February 2020 which sets out a timetable for preparing a new local plan for Vale, named the Vale Local Plan 2041. In 2020 work did not keep to timetable, because the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on staff resources, and in practical terms restricted the scope for consultations and events. During the summer of 2020 the Vale policy officers assisted with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan examination. In order for new policies and approaches to be developed, officers need to be guided by the Corporate Plan, which was adopted in October 2020. Although preliminary work has started on the evidence base for the new Vale local plan, such as

the Vale Call for Sites (issued in April 2020), this can be transferred directly into the Joint Local Plan evidence base; therefore no work will be wasted.

7. For South, the existing LDS was adopted in March 2020 containing the timetable for the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. This local plan was adopted in December 2020 and so this project has been completed. A decision on a new plan is needed, with a new LDS to project plan. On 18 July 2019 South's Council resolved to: "5. agree that as soon as practicable, alongside satisfactory progress being made on resolving issues in the emerging Local Plan, work on a subsequent Local Plan shall commence, strengthening climate change considerations." South also agreed its new Corporate Plan in October 2020.
8. There are several **advantages** to preparing a Joint Local Plan, including:
 - a) South and Vale both now have recently adopted local plans and for the first time, timetables align making a joint plan a possibility.
 - b) South and Vale have new Corporate Plans with a good degree of overlap and shared ambition. There is common ground, with numerous themes and issues in the Corporate Plans which are shared and can be addressed through common planning policy approaches, supported by a shared evidence base where necessary. Such an approach links to other policy areas where a joint approach is already in place, e.g. Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, economic development and leisure strategies.
 - c) Planning challenges are similar across southern Oxfordshire, including climate change and affordable housing.
 - d) Opportunity to have one shared planning policy approach for South and Vale.
 - e) Developing one set of consistent policies would be more efficient for processing planning applications, appeals and enforcement work including the planning Specialists Team, but also for Land Charges and those dealing with public enquiries, including councillors.
 - f) Simpler for service users e.g. common community groups and local agents working across both councils.
 - g) Supports the development of a Joint Design Guide and Joint Design Codes.
 - h) Opportunity to plan Didcot and Science Vale comprehensively in one plan instead of two plans. Opportunity to resolve other strategic issues e.g. infrastructure deficiencies.
 - i) Opportunity to deal with common matters arising from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, such as growth requirements directed to shared cross-boundary locations.
 - j) Significant potential cost savings (see separate section below at paragraphs 27-29).
 - k) Opportunities for maximising commitment to effective strategic planning, supporting more certainty for communities and those investing in economic development.
 - l) Stronger position for strategic influencing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 the Arc spatial framework and masterplanning – with the whole of southern Oxfordshire taking one approach.

m) Better able to engage with, and influence, developers at scale.

9. There are also a number of **disadvantages** to preparing a Joint Local Plan, including:
- a) A Joint Plan covers a larger area and could possibly be seen as less local (although we would continue to have a dedicated officer team supporting neighbourhood planning to provide fine-grained community-led planning).
 - b) Perception of being less democratic, with South or Vale Councillors effectively involved in influencing decisions on the other Council; political sovereignty.
 - c) Vale has already started the new Vale Local Plan 2041, there would be a period of transition to coordinate a Joint Local Plan and for South to catch up with initial new plan stages.
 - d) Possible lack of appetite following recent position with the South local plan adoption process and the subsequent submitted case for judicial review.
 - e) The Councils' democratic processes are separate, but this can be resolved by establishing appropriate joint governance arrangements that are sustainable over the plan period (3 to 4 years) and based on common objectives.

Why the Council needs to revise/ undertake a new local plan

10. Vale's Local Plan Part 1 was adopted in 2016 and Vale Local Plan Part 2 in 2019, South Oxfordshire's Local Plan was adopted in December 2020. Planning regulations require councils to review local plans at least once every 5 years from their adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. The National Planning Policy Framework states that policies in local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every 5 years. Having an up-to-date plan can assist the Councils in defending planning appeals and housing land supply.
11. Local Plans normally take at least 3 - 5 years to prepare, examine and adopt, with evidence gathering, statutory consultation stages and examination. To meet the 5-year timetable we should be preparing new or revised local plans for both councils now. It is usual for councils to follow this practice. Both councils took 3 to 6 years to undertake their current adopted plans (Vale's being in two parts at around 3.5 years each part so a total of 7 years, South's in one document taking 6 years).
12. The existing adopted Local Plans for South and Vale were based on the previous Corporate Plans. The context for the plans is changing, with the new Corporate Plans and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which is being prepared and is scheduled for adoption in just over 2 years (June 2023) and updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019).

How a Joint Local Plan could work

13. This will be long term planning for the 2030s-40s. Growth is already planned for Vale until 2031 and for South until 2035. Furthermore, both existing plans have strategic sites which will deliver beyond their current plan periods (1,883 homes for Vale beyond 2031 and 2,815 homes for South beyond 2035).

14. The evidence base for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will be used for any new local plans and its preparation is already in progress. This will need to be supplemented by some additional local plan evidence base studies that give more local detail or cover non-strategic policy areas not being dealt with by Oxfordshire Plan.
15. A Joint Local Plan would be flexible to accommodate differing needs across both districts, and potentially adaptable to accommodate the Government's planning reforms (whenever these are implemented).
16. A Joint Local Plan could incorporate district-specific elements as required. For example, it could have specific policies for separate spatial areas including South or Vale districts, Western Vale, Eastern Vale, the AONBs, etc. Policies could apply to both districts, or certain policies could apply to just one district, for example to achieve local distinctiveness or address a particular issue specific to one area or one district. The Joint Local Plan could have separate housing requirements for South and Vale, or for sub areas, which could be monitored against separately, in a (potentially joint) annual Authority Monitoring Report.
17. A Joint Local Plan would still provide a strong role for neighbourhood plans e.g. encouraging neighbourhood plans to contain land allocations, which is currently more common in South than Vale.

Timetable

18. The timetable for a Joint Local Plan is set out in the proposed Joint Local Development Scheme at Appendix 1. This Local Development Scheme contains the programme for planning policy work, including the Joint Local Plan, Community Infrastructure Levy updates, Statement of Community Involvement update, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
19. The timetable for the next local plan (whether separate or joint) must run in parallel with, but slightly behind, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as that will contain the strategic decisions on scale and broad locations for development.
20. In summary the timetable for the production of a joint plan is proposed as follows:

Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timetable		Joint Local Plan timetable	
Reg 18 (part 2)	June/Jul 2021	Scoping (inc evidence base commissioning)	Spring- Autumn 2021
Reg 19	Feb/Mar 2022	Reg 18	Summer 2022
Submission	Sep 2022		
Inspector's report	Feb 2023	Reg 19	Summer 2023
Adoption	June 2023	Submission	Winter 2023/24
		Adoption	Autumn 2024

- Governance influences resourcing
- Resource influences timetabling
- As does milestone being reached for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

- External factors – e.g. planning reforms may impact on timetable

Options

21. Options include preparing a Joint Local Plan for South and Vale, preparing two separate Local Plans, one for each council, or produce no plan at this stage.
22. A Joint Local Plan has advantages and disadvantages set out in paras 8-9 above. These are both planning advantages (e.g. more comprehensive planning for Didcot, simplicity for our service users) and also practical advantages (like cost savings and more efficient use of officer time).
23. Rejecting the joint plan recommendation and continuing with the status quo of preparing two separate Local Plans produces similar results (a new up-to-date plan) and reduces some risks of joint working but misses out on the cost savings and efficiencies and the opportunity for planning to be more joined up. Another option would be closer collaborative working on two local plans. For example commissioning joint evidence base studies (already doing this wherever possible) or a joint examination of two separate local plans.
24. If councillors choose not to do a Joint Local Plan, then officers would recommend we review our current Local Plan, as previously agreed by Council.
25. 'No plan' is an option but it is not recommended because it risks first Vale, and then later South, falling into a situation of having no up-to-date local plan and being exposed to the presumption in favour of sustainable development in line with the NPPF and penalties imposed by Government. There is theoretically an option to leave the review of our Local Plans entirely to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 process, but the Oxfordshire plan would then need to include all strategic policies and allocations, including allocations where neighbourhood plans do not allocate sufficiently. This approach is beginning to be used in some parts of the UK. However, covering both strategic and non-strategic matters is not the currently agreed scope of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and if it was, there would be significant delays because of the scale of work involved, impacting on the delivery of the Oxfordshire Plan and its funding, which all parties would have to agree.
26. With the Joint Local Plan option there are two governance options, for an informal arrangement under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, or a formal committee including the County Council under section 29 of the same Act. These are explored further in the paragraphs below (paras. 30 – 33).

Financial Implications

27. A new Joint Local Plan offers significant savings over preparing two separate local plans.
28. The savings from working together would include some savings on the evidence base (with shared rather than separate consultancy commissions, in particular halving the costs of Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment), and one set of public consultations not two. More significant savings would arise from the examination stage, with one Inspector, one programme officer, and one QC. The cost for the examination of a joint local plan would be similar to a single local plan, but costs would be split 50:50 between the councils.

29. Recent experience has shown it has cost approximately £1 million per local plan per year of plan preparation to deliver a plan found sound at examination. Officers anticipate the costs could be reduced with a joint plan by approximately one third in total, excluding staff costs.

Legal Implications

30. There are two principal governance options for the preparation and adoption of a Joint Local Plan, which are set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sections 28 and 29. More information is available at www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making.
31. Section 28 allows two or more local planning authorities to prepare joint local development documents (LDDs – which includes local plans). Although the relevant county council in two-tier areas can be part of the plan-preparation process (if invited by the Local Planning Authorities (LPA)), they cannot be part of the formal decision-making as this remains the responsibility of the individual LPAs. Under Section 28, the final, formal decisions at key local plan stages (consultations, publication, submission, adoption) are made either separately by each council or via a voluntary joint committee.
32. Section 29 was introduced in the 2004 Act to enable County Councils to continue to have a strategic planning role working with Districts. Section 29 of the Act allows for the decision-making on joint local development documents to be conferred on a joint committee through an order of the Secretary of State. In two-tier areas like Oxfordshire, county councils are a formal partner in the joint committee and therefore would have equal membership on a committee formed under Section 29.
33. Given the context of Development Plan making across Oxfordshire, with a strategic Plan underway already (the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan), and a shared management and policy team already in place for South and Vale, officers recommend that in principle a Joint Local Plan is prepared in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This would involve either formal decisions at key local plan stages (consultations, publication, submission, adoption) being made separately by each council or via a voluntary joint committee. Delegated authority is sought for the Head of Legal and Democratic, in consultation with the Head of Planning and Cabinet Members for Corporate Services and Transformation and Democratic Services, to establish the appropriate detailed governance arrangements.

Risks

34. All local plans, whether single or joint, have risks involved in their preparation. They take several years to prepare, and the context is ever changing. For example, there can be changes to external factors such as Government policy, or changes to the local plan system itself through planning reforms, or local government reorganisation. Changes to the council's priorities or administration can also bring need for revisions, which can be hard to deliver if a plan is at the post-submission stage. There can be risks if staff resources or budgets fall short. Many of these risks are the same whether a plan is separate or joint. We manage these risks by identifying them in a risk register, and preparing contingencies and mitigations to adapt to them if they materialise.
35. For a joint South and Vale local plan, some risks are set out in the disadvantages section at paragraph 9 above. There is a current application for a judicial review of the

South Oxfordshire Local Plan which could challenge priorities and resources for South on plan making. Local authority elections in May 2023 could also provide further challenges and thus a policy cross-party member steering group can help reduce the risks. The drive to make fast progress on a new plan is a stronger imperative for Vale than South due to the time that has passed since adoption. In summary the key additional risk, over and above the risks from preparing separate local plans, is delivering a joint plan which both councils can agree on during plan preparation stages and can adopt at the end. This can be managed through good practices in member involvement, and it can be monitored using the risk register to track emerging or diminishing risks over time.

Other implications

How a Joint Local Plan fits with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

36. Both South and Vale councils are already engaged in a joint plan – the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – which is being prepared jointly by all Oxfordshire's Districts and Oxford City Council. This will contain Oxfordshire-wide strategic policies. It will identify the scale of future growth to the year 2050 and set development principles, as well as showing some broad locations for accommodating that growth (at a high level) and elements like nature recovery. It currently will not contain detailed land-use allocations.
37. A Joint Local Plan would implement and identify sites for the numbers and broad locations for growth set out in the forthcoming Oxfordshire Plan 2050. It would, for example, allocate land for housing, employment, renewable energy, green and community uses, as well as setting the brief for neighbourhood plans.
38. Preparation of a Joint Local Plan would be aligned with and follow closely behind the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The aim would be for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to be examined first to establish the overall strategy for Oxfordshire before the Regulation 19 consultation stage (the last public engagement on the preferred plan) of the Joint Local Plan.
39. Preparing a Joint Local Plan would reduce duplication and increase the priority that the councils could give to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as it reaches important decision stages. It would also provide more scope for undertaking other important policy work in line with the Corporate Plans e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy updates, Infrastructure Delivery Plan updates, preparing Supplementary Planning Documents, and planning monitoring tasks.

Oxford - Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework

40. Following Government announcements in March 2020 and more recently on 18 February 2021, work is commencing, led by a specialist team at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), on a long-term spatial framework for the Ox-Cam Arc. Both South and Vale are within the geographic areas of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, which will cover the five counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The Spatial Framework will plan for growth in the Arc area, setting policies on the economy, the environment, transport, infrastructure and housing.
41. Once implemented, the Spatial Framework will have the status of national planning and transport policy, and therefore Local Planning Authorities will have to have regard to

the Spatial Framework when making planning decisions. We will need to engage with this and address how future work on the Arc can feed into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Joint Local Plan. The larger geography of a Joint Local Plan could provide more scope for influencing emerging Arc thinking and provide a more joined up way of addressing opportunities and threats.

How it fits with Planning Reforms

42. The Government's planning reforms envisage plan-making outputs being not so much a document but as data. This data would be map-based and machine readable. Government has proposed there would be no generic development management policies set locally, these would be set nationally.
43. The new Joint Local Plan could aim to either follow the existing plan-making system or be ready for the next system (e.g. mapping growth/ renewal/protection areas, working on Design Guides and/or Design Codes). This would be subject to what the Government propose as transitional arrangements, including at what stage we were in the plan making process.
44. It should be noted that at this time the Government proposals are just that, i.e. proposals only. The Government made clear in a [Ministerial Statement](#) on 19 January 2021 that local planning authorities should not hold up work on local plans to wait for the planning reforms.

Conclusion

45. Officers recommend that the advantages of a Joint Local Plan outweigh the disadvantages (see paragraphs 8-9) and that a Joint Local Plan is progressed for South and Vale. Officers recommend that the Joint Local Plan is, in principle, prepared using the provisions of Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, with key decisions being made separately by each council or via a voluntary joint committee. Officers are seeking a decision on the principle of a joint local plan, with the governance arrangements to be established using delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet member.

Background Papers

- Proposed Joint Local Development Scheme (Appendix 1)

Local Development Scheme



MARCH 2021

What is the Local Development Scheme?

- 1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires local planning authorities to prepare, maintain and publish a Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- 2 The LDS sets out the timetable to produce the Development Plan Documents (DPDs), including key production and public consultation stages. It must be made available publicly and be kept up to date. This enables the community, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers and other interested organisations to know which DPDs are to be prepared for the area and when they are able to participate in their preparation¹.
- 3 This LDS updates the previous Local Development Schemes published in March 2019 by South Oxfordshire District Council and in February 2020 by Vale of White Horse District Council and combines this information into a singular LDS. This is the first joint LDS that covers South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. It provides information about the Development Plans and other Planning Policy documents the Councils plan to prepare.
- 4 Authority Monitoring Reports produced by both Councils annually, monitors and reviews the implementation of the LDS.
- 5 Whilst not a formal requirement, for ease of reference the LDS also includes information about the main supporting and procedural documents that do or will accompany the Joint Local Plan.

Background to Local Planning Documents

- 6 The development plan for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse consists of a range of documents which guide development within the districts. The statutory Development Plan is the set of DPDs and Neighbourhood Development Plans that together form the statutory basis for determining planning applications for the Councils. Key elements of the **Development Plan** are:
 - **Local Plans** – Local Plans detail the planning strategies for development within the districts. This includes strategic and non-strategic policies to address the district's priorities for the development and use of land in its area, usually including the allocation of land for development, such as housing or employment and open spaces. These policies must be in general conformity with government guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

¹ Public consultations will continue to be advertised and stakeholders notified when important documents are published for public consultation, in accordance with our published **Statements of Community Involvement** which for SODC is available here: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-development-plan/community-involvement> and for VOWH is available here: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/statement-of-community-involvement/>

- **Minerals and Waste Local Plans** - in areas that have County and District Councils, the County Council has the responsibility for producing Minerals and Waste Local Plans - such as is the case for Oxfordshire.
- **Oxfordshire Plan 2050** - in Oxfordshire, there is an additional development plan in preparation: the [Oxfordshire Plan 2050](#). Through the [Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal](#), the Councils have committed to preparing this plan, which is a Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSSP) with the other Oxfordshire authorities. This document will become part of the Development Plan following its Examination in Public and once the Councils adopt it. In November 2020, a revised timetable for the Oxfordshire Plan was published, which set out the following future milestones:

Key Milestones for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050	
Consultation on Spatial Growth Options (Regulation 18 Part II)	<i>Summer 2021</i>
Consultation on Submission (Draft) Plan (Regulation 19)	<i>Spring 2022</i>
Submission of Oxfordshire Plan 2050	<i>September 2022</i>
Examination of Plan	<i>November/December 2022</i>
Publication of the Inspectors Report	<i>February/March 2023</i>
Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Adoption (subject to examination)	<i>May/June 2023</i>

- **Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)** are community-led plans for guiding future development and growth of a local area. Whilst they are not compulsory, once duly prepared and once they legally come into force, they become a statutory document that form part of the Development Plan. NDPs must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any Local Plan that covers their area. NDPs are prepared by qualifying bodies (parish or town councils in parished areas and neighbourhood forums in non-parished areas). They are prepared to a timescale that is set by the qualifying body, not the Councils, and therefore the timetable for their preparation is not contained within this LDS.
- 7 Although not part of the development plan, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework is currently in development which will become an important planning document regionally:
- **Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework** - a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – the area that spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, is currently in development led by a specialist team in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Spatial Framework will plan for growth in the Arc area, and in order to do so will set policies on the economy, the environment, transport, infrastructure and housing. Once implemented, the Spatial Framework will have the status

of national planning and transport policy, and therefore Local Planning Authorities such as ourselves will have to have regard to the Spatial Framework when making planning decisions.

Key Milestones for Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework	
Consultation on Spatial Framework vision	<i>Summer 2021</i>
Consultation on Spatial Framework options, entitled 'Towards a Spatial Framework'	<i>Spring 2022</i>
Consultation on draft Spatial Framework and evidence base	<i>Autumn 2022</i>
Publication and implementation of Spatial Framework	<i>Shortly after the draft Spatial Framework consultation</i>

The Statutory Development Plan – South Oxfordshire

8 The current Development Plan for South Oxfordshire comprises:

Name of DPD	Date Adopted	Under Review
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035	December 2020	Yes – the Joint Local Plan with Vale of White Horse District Council will eventually supersede this Plan
Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Core Strategy ²	September 2017	No – although Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations is currently being drafted. The timetable for the Minerals and Waste Local Plans is set by the County Council and can be obtained from their website ³
Saved policies from the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan	July 1996	Yes – this will eventually be replaced by the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan that is being prepared in two parts: Core Strategy and Site Allocations. The Core Strategy was adopted on 12 September 2017, and Part 2: Site Allocations is currently being drafted
The Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan	October 2018	No
Benson Neighbourhood Plan	August 2018	No
Berrick Salome Neighbourhood Plan	October 2019	No
Brightwell cum Sotwell Neighbourhood Development Plan	October 2017	No
Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan	December 2018	No
Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan	October 2017	Yes – the Plan has been reviewed and has been independently examined. The District Council has made the decision to progress the plan for referendum which will take place in Spring 2021
Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan	April 2019	No

² <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/minerals-and-waste-core-strategy>

³ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-policy/new-minerals-and-waste-plan#paragraph-638>

Dorchester on Thames Neighbourhood Development Plan	April 2018	No
East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan	April 2019	No
Goring Neighbourhood Plan	July 2019	No
Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan	April 2016	Yes – the parish council have now begun a review of the neighbourhood plan
Little Milton Neighbourhood Development Plan	December 2018	No
Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Development Plan	October 2017	Yes – the plan review is currently undergoing an independent examination. If successful at examination, it will and be put to a referendum due to the significant modifications proposed
Pyrton Neighbourhood Development Plan	April 2019	No
Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan	October 2016	Yes – the parish council have now begun a review of the neighbourhood plan
Thame Neighbourhood Plan	July 2013	Yes – the parish council have now begun a review of the neighbourhood plan
Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Plan	October 2018	No
Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan	August 2018	Yes – the parish council have now begun a review of the neighbourhood plan
Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan	May 2014	Yes – the parish council have now begun a review of the neighbourhood plan

9 Additionally, a number of **Neighbourhood Development Plans** are currently being prepared in South Oxfordshire. The following parish or town councils have all had their neighbourhood areas approved and are currently preparing their Neighbourhood Development Plans with their communities:

- Aston Rowant
- Beckley and Stowood

- Berinsfield
- Clifton Hampden
- Crowmarsh
- Cuddesdon and Denton*
- Culham
- Ewelme*
- Eye and Dunsden
- Garsington
- Horspath
- Kidmore End
- Lewknor
- Sandford-on-Thames
- Shiplake
- Stanton St John
- Sydenham*
- Tetsworth*
- Tiddington with Albury
- Towersey
- Wallingford*
- Wheatley*
- Whitchurch-on-Thames

*These Neighbourhood Development Plans are planned to go to referendum in Spring 2021.

10 Subject to them successfully completing the formal stages, some of these plans are expected to become part of the Development Plan this year.

The Statutory Development Plan – Vale of White Horse

11 The current Development Plan for Vale of White Horse comprises:

Name of DPD	Date Adopted	Under Review
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1	December 2016	Yes – the Joint Local Plan with South Oxfordshire District Council will eventually supersede this Plan
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2	October 2019	Yes – the Joint Local Plan with South Oxfordshire District Council will eventually supersede this Plan
Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Core Strategy	September 2017	No – although Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations is currently being drafted. The timetable for the Minerals and Waste Local Plans is set by the County Council and can be obtained from their website ⁴
Saved policies from the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan	July 1996	Yes – this will eventually be replaced by the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan that is being prepared in two parts: Core Strategy and Site Allocations. The Core Strategy was adopted on 12 September 2017, and Part 2: Site Allocations is currently being drafted
Drayton Neighbourhood Plan (made July 2015)	July 2015	No
Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Plan (made July 2015)	October 2020	Yes – The Parish Council undertook a minor (non-material) review and it was agreed at Council on 7 October 2020 that the revised neighbourhood plan would replace the version made in 2015. The parish council have now begun a more substantial review of the neighbourhood plan.
Longworth Neighbourhood Plan	October 2016	No
Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan	December 2016	No
Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan	December 2016	No
Radley Neighbourhood Plan	October 2018	No
Ashbury Neighbourhood Plan	July 2019	No

⁴ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-policy/new-minerals-and-waste-plan#paragraph-638>

Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan	July 2019	No
Wootton and St Helen Without Neighbourhood Plan	December 2019	No

12 A number of **Neighbourhood Development Plans** are currently being prepared in Vale of White Horse. The following parish or town councils have all had their neighbourhood areas approved and are currently preparing their Neighbourhood Development Plans with their communities:

- Appleton with Eaton
- Chilton
- Cumnor
- East Challow
- East Hanney
- North Hinksey*
- Shellingford
- Shrivenham*
- Stanford in the Vale
- Steventon
- Sunningwell
- Sutton Courtenay
- Wantage
- West Hanney

* These Neighbourhood Plans are planned to go to referendum in Spring 2021.

13 Subject to them successfully completing the formal stages, some of these plans are expected to become part of the Development Plan this year.

14 In addition to those listed above, the statutory Development Plan for both Councils will also include the following once adopted or made:

- Oxfordshire Plan 2050
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations
- Any other “made” (adopted) Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Programme for the Local Plan Review

- 15 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are commencing work on a Joint Local Plan and associated documents. The following tables describe the content, coverage and timetable for the Development Plan Document, which is also illustrated in **Figure 1**, in context with other planning policy work. Further documents will be added to the LDS programme as the need for them becomes apparent and resources allow.

Joint Local Plan 2041	
Role & Subject - This document will set out the overall development strategy for the period up to 2041. It will include strategic policies as well as local level policies on environment and any allocations for housing and employment with any associated infrastructure requirements.	
Coverage - District-wide (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts)	
Conformity - With the National Planning Policy Framework and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050	
Replaces – SODC Local Plan 2035 and VOWH Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2)	
Timetable - Key Stages	
Local Plan preparation and engagement	March 2021-July 2022
Public Consultation on Preferred Options/Draft Plan (Regulation 18)	July/August 2022
Public Consultation on Pre-Submission (Regulation 19)	July/August 2023
Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	January 2024
Examination in Public (Regulation 24)	June 2024
Inspector's report (Regulation 25)	September 2024
Adoption (Regulation 26)	October 2024
<i>(Regulation references taken from The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012)</i>	

Figure 1: Production timetable

	2021												2022												2023												2024											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	
Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework						P	P	P									P	P	P																													
Oxfordshire Plan 2050						P*	P*	P*	P*								P	P	P			C		S		E	E		R																			
Joint Local Plan 2041																					C	P	P																									

Key

Preparation, analysis and/or plan/framework development	
Cabinet or Full Council review and decision	C
Public Consultation on draft plan (regulation 18)	P
Public Consultation on 'Spatial Growth Options' (regulation 18 part II)	P*
Public Consultation prior to plan submission for examination (regulation 19)	P
Public Consultation on Main Modifications to Local Plan	P
Public Consultation on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc spatial framework vision	P
Public Consultation on the spatial framework options for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc	P
Public Consultation on the draft Oxford-Cambridge Arc spatial framework and evidence base	P
Submit plan and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination	S
Examination of the plan by an independent Planning Inspector	E
Receipt of Inspector's Report	R
Formal adoption and publication of the Plan	A
Expected publication and implementation of Oxford-Cambridge-Arc spatial framework	I

Related documents supporting the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035

- 16 The current South Oxfordshire Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted in 2016 and needs updating to align with the up to date Local Plan 2035. There will be a CIL Review in 2021, with consultation taking place on the draft Charging Schedule.

South Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (adopted February 2016)	
Role and Subject – This document will detail the types of development required to pay the Council a levy based on a cost per square metre of development. Collected funds will contribute to appropriate infrastructure to support new development.	
Coverage – South Oxfordshire district-wide	
Conformity – The Local Plan 2035, the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended)	
Timetable – Key Stages	
Public Consultation	Summer 2021
Submission	Autumn 2021
Examination in Public	Autumn/Winter 2021
Inspector's report	Winter 2021
Adoption	Early 2022

- 17 **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** (and their predecessors, Supplementary Planning Guidance) complement or expand upon local plan policies, for example, describing in more detail how an allocated site should be developed. An SPD cannot allocate new sites for development, nor contain new policies for the use or development of land, and they must not conflict with the adopted Development Plan. South Oxfordshire currently has a number of adopted SPDs/SPG. Some of these SPDs/SPG have now served their purpose. On publication of this LDS, SPDs/SPG comprise:

Name of SPD/SPG	Description of SPD	Date Adopted	Review Target Completion Date
Traditional Shopfront Design Guide	Provides practical advice for those involved in the design of traditional shop fronts in South Oxfordshire. It is used for assessing shop front designs when they are presented for planning or other consents.	November 1995	No review planned

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment SPG	A District-wide landscape assessment that sets out individual Character Areas, describing in detail their landscape and settlement character together with appropriate guidelines for landscape enhancement, planning and development.	July 2003	No review planned
Vauxhall Barracks Development Brief SPG	Informs the preparation and submission of Planning Applications on land known as Vauxhall Barracks, Didcot.	Feb 2004	No review planned
Affordable Housing SPG	Provides clear practical guidance on the delivery of affordable housing within the district.	Sept 2004	Plan to produce a district wide or potentially joint Affordable Housing SPD in the next year
Didcot Town Centre SPD	This document was adopted in May 2009 and provided planning guidance to aid the development of the Didcot Town Centre. It set out the Council's vision and strategic development principles for the expansion of the town centre. A new phase of Didcot Town Centre's Orchard Centre opened in 2018. New and updated policies for Didcot Garden Town are also included in the recently adopted South Oxfordshire Plan.	May 2009	No review planned
Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD	Provides guidance for negotiating planning obligations. Planning obligations enable a development's impact to be mitigated and are intended to make a development.	March 2016	The Council will prepare an update to the Developer Contributions SPD in tandem with an update to the CIL Charging Schedule. A draft SPD will be prepared in 2021

South Oxfordshire Design Guide SPD	Provides practical, clear and coherent design guidance based on best practice urban design values and urban design principles. In the context of the significant growth planned for, the guide will help to ensure that we attain high quality and inclusive design for all developments, including individual buildings, public and private spaces.	November 2016	Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils are currently preparing a Joint Design Guide SPD to replace the 2015 Design Guide. A draft Guide will be produced for consultation in 2021.
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Related documents supporting the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031

18 The Vale of White horse CIL was adopted in 2017 and needs updating to align with our up to date Local Plan 2031. There will be a CIL Review in 2021, with consultation taking place on the draft Charging Schedule.

Vale Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (adopted September 2017)	
Role and Subject – This document will detail the types of development required to pay the Council a levy based on a cost per square metre of development. Collected funds will contribute to appropriate infrastructure to support new development.	
Coverage – Vale of White Horse district-wide	
Conformity – The Local Plan 2031, the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended)	
Timetable – Key Stages	
Public Consultation	Completed (Jan-Feb 2021)
Submission	Spring 2021
Examination in Public	Summer 2021
Inspector's report	Summer/Autumn 2021
Adoption	Autumn 2021

19 Current and planned **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** for Vale of White Horse District Council are set out below:

Name of SPD	Description of SPD	Date Approved	Review Target Completion Date
Vale of White Horse Design Guide	Provides practical, clear and coherent design guidance based on best practice urban design values and urban design principles and will provide guidance to help with Climate Change.	March 2015	Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils are currently preparing a Joint Design Guide SPD to replace the 2015 Design Guide. A draft Guide will be produced for consultation in 2021.

Abbey Shopping Centre and Character Area	Provides a guide to detailed applications and possible future development options for the area	December 2011	No review planned
Botley Centre	Provides clear guidance on how development could come forward in this Local Service Centre.	January 2016	No review planned – development under construction
Developer Contributions SPD	Provides guidance for negotiating planning obligations. Planning obligations enable a development's impact to be mitigated and are intended to make a development acceptable when it would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.	June 2017	Autumn 2021 The Council is preparing an update to the Developer Contributions SPD in tandem with an update to the CIL Charging Schedule. A draft SPD was consulted upon in early 2021.
Dalton Barracks	It will set out a strong vision for a new mixed-use development that is highly accessible, incorporating sustainable transport initiatives and being sensitive to Cothill Fen Special Area of Conservation through provision of parkland. It will provide further detail on how development will need to consider the landscape, ecology, pollution, transport, historic environment, facilities capacity, phasing of development and how Garden Village Principles will be delivered to achieve the exemplar design.	N/A	Autumn/Winter 2021
Affordable Housing SPD	This would provide clear practical guidance on the delivery of affordable housing within the district.	N/A	Plan to produce a district wide or potentially joint Affordable Housing SPD in the next year

- 20 **Local Development Orders (LDO)** are policy instruments that extend permitted development rights for certain forms of development that the local authority considers to be suitable, either in general or limited to defined areas. LDOs are intended to simplify the process for development. Development that conforms to an LDO would not require planning permission. An LDO was adopted for Milton (Business) Park in 2012 and committed to undertaking a review every 5 years. As part of preparing the next local plan, a review of the LDO will be undertaken. Local Plan 2031 Part 2 proposes that an LDO for Harwell Campus will be prepared to facilitate the effective and accelerated planning of proposals coming forward on the campus. LDO's may also be produced to support Didcot Garden Town. An LDO for Didcot Technology Park is currently in preparation.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 21 The South Oxfordshire **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** was adopted on 15 June 2017. The Vale of White Horse **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** was adopted in September 2020.
- 22 The SCI is a code of practice that shows how and when the Councils will involve different groups, organisations and communities in the production of planning documents, including the Local Plan. It also sets out how the Councils will involve people when assessing and deciding on planning applications for development. It describes the Council's overall approach to community engagement and people's involvement in the planning process, as well as how people can become involved with planning applications.
- 23 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will be preparing a joint SCI. Information is provided in the table below:

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2021	
Role & Subject - This document will set out the ways in which local residents, businesses, organisations and statutory consultees can be involved in our planning processes. This covers both the preparation and production of planning policy documents and how the community will be involved in decisions relating to planning applications.	
Coverage - District-wide (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils)	
Conformity - With the National Planning Policy Framework (2019)	
Timetable - Key Stages/Milestones	
Public Consultation	Summer 2021
Adoption	Autumn 2021

Monitoring and Review

24 The Councils are required to monitor annually how effective their policies and proposals are. An Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will be published by the Councils each year to inform LDS reviews and will be made public.

25 As part of the monitoring process, the Councils will assess:

- whether they are meeting, or are on target to meet, the milestones set out in the LDS and, if not, what the reasons are
- what impact Local Development Documents are having on other national and locally set targets
- whether any policies need to be reviewed, or replaced to meet sustainable development objectives
- what action needs to be taken if policies need to be replaced.

26 As a result of the monitoring, the Councils will consider what changes, if any, need to be made. If changes are appropriate these will be brought forward through the review of the LDS.

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Council



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer

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To: COUNCIL

DATE: 24 March 2021

Further extension of term of office of independent persons for code of conduct matters

Recommendations:

That Council:

- (1) authorises 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 2022;
- (2) authorises the Monitoring Officer to carry out a recruitment exercise for new independent persons and bring recommendations on appointments to Council prior to that date.

Purpose of Report

1. This report asks Council 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 May 2022 when Council will be asked to consider proposals for a new code of conduct and any new statutory requirements for the appointment of independent persons.

Strategic Objectives

2. High standards of conduct underpin all the council's work and the achievement of all its strategic objectives. The proposal ensures a continued independent person advisory service to the council on code of conduct cases.

Background

3. The Localism Act 2011 requires the appointment of independent persons who the Monitoring Officer must consult at various stages of the process when dealing with allegations of misconduct by district or parish councillors.
4. At its meeting on 7 October 2020, Council agreed a further extension of the terms of office of the independent persons until May 2021 whilst awaiting the publication of a Local Government Association (LGA) model code of conduct and the government's response to the recommendations on the Committee on Standards in Public Life report. Since that meeting the LGA has published a model code but has not yet indicated when its guidance on the model code will be issued.
5. A recent meeting of Oxfordshire monitoring officers, and a representative of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, discussed the best way to achieve a common code in Oxfordshire which has worked well to date. The meeting discussed the timing and content of the model code. Authorities have the option to adopt the model Code in full, adopt an adapted version or to continue as present. The meeting agreed that the LGA supplementary guidance may well inform any final decisions.
6. In terms of timing, the meeting considered that with elections coming up, there is a case for earlier adoption ahead of the elections to enable councils with local elections to begin the new council year with a new code. However, with COVID causing additional workloads generally, and as particularly regards the elections themselves, and with time needed for a fuller discussion by monitoring officers as well as councillors, it was agreed that there is a case for a longer lead-in. The meeting therefore agreed to bring a single code for Oxfordshire to each Council by May 2022, and that the Monitoring Officers' group would work up a revised draft for each authority to consider.
7. The Committee on Standards in Public Life report made recommendations on the term of office of independent persons, but the government has not yet published its response to that report or indicated whether it intends to introduce new legislation in response the recommendations in the report. It would be helpful to have that information before starting a recruitment exercise for new independent persons. It is therefore recommended that Council extends the terms of office of the existing independent persons for a further year and authorises the Monitoring Officer to conduct a recruitment exercise once any new requirements are known.
8. Chris Smith and Martin Wright have been consulted about their terms of office and have both confirmed their willingness to continue working in this role.

Financial Implications

9. The cost of implementing the code of conduct arrangements, training independent persons and meeting their expenses is met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

10. The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

Risks

11. None.

Other Implications

12. None.

Conclusion

12. This report recommends Council 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, to 31 May 2022 and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to carry out a recruitment exercise for new independent persons and bring recommendations on appointments to Council prior to that date.

Background Papers

- Report to and minutes of the Council meeting on 18 July 2012
- Report to and minutes of the Council meeting on 17 May 2017
- Report and minutes of the Council meeting on 9 October 2019
- Report and minutes of the Council meeting on 7 October 2020

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item 15

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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