

Council Agenda



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Date: 30 November 2021

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Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 7.00 pm
First floor, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Arran".

Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic

To watch this 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 10 - 25)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the extraordinary Council meeting held on 21 September 2021 and the Council meeting held on 6 October 2021.

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and any conflicts of interest 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. Review of Joint Gambling policy

(Pages 26 - 63)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 3 December 2021, will consider a report on the review of the Joint Gambling Policy following statutory consultation.

The report of the head of health and housing, which Cabinet will consider on 3 December, is **attached**.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all councillors.

8. Treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2021/22

(Pages 64 - 78)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 3 December 2021, will consider a monitoring report on the treasury management activities for the first six months of 2021/22 and an update on the current economic conditions with a view to the remainder of the year.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee will consider the report at its meeting on 30 November 2021.

The report of the head of finance, which Cabinet will consider on 3 December 2021, is **attached**.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all councillors.

9. Council tax base 2022/23

(Pages 79 - 83)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 3 December 2021, will consider a report on the council tax base for 2022/23.

The report of the head of finance, which Cabinet will consider on 3 December, is **attached**.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all councillors.

10. War and War Widow(er)s Pension Disregard top up in Housing Benefit

(Pages 84 - 86)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 3 December 2021, will consider a report on the War Pensions and War Widow(er)s Pension in calculating Housing Benefit entitlement.

The report of the head of finance, which Cabinet will consider on 3 December 2021, is **attached**.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all councillors.

11. Constitution Review Task Group

Council is invited to agree the establishment of a joint Constitution Review Task Group with South Oxfordshire District Council to undertake a review of the constitution and make recommendations to Council.

Officers propose that the task group comprises 6 councillors with three from South Oxfordshire and three from Vale of White Horse.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council

1. establishes a joint Constitution Review Task Group with South Oxfordshire District Council comprising three councillors from each council;
2. agrees that any councillors on the council may substitute for this council's appointed representatives;
3. authorises the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the task group in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

12. Arrangements for investigating allegations under the member code of conduct

(Pages 87 - 116)

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 30 November 2021, will consider a report on draft arrangements for dealing with complaints under the code of conduct.

The report of the monitoring officer, which the committee will consider on 30 November, is **attached**.

The committee's recommendations will be circulated to all councillors.

13. Councillors' Parental Leave Policy

(Pages 117 - 122)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic on the adoption of a Parental Leave Policy for councillors – attached.

14. Progress on approved Council motions

To note progress on the approved Council motions – **to follow**.

15. Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of the Leader of the council, Councillor Emily Smith.

16. Questions on notice

No questions were submitted from councillors under Council procedure rule 33.

17. Motions on notice

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

Motion 1: For the establishment of a long-term sustainable programme of Domestic Retrofitting

Motion to be proposed by Councillor David Grant, seconded by Councillor Andy Cooke

Council notes that:

- The Climate Emergency is a clear and present issue globally, and nationally we have committed to reaching net carbon zero by 2050. Locally, the Vale of White Horse District Council has set its ambition to reduce the whole district's carbon emissions by 75% by 2030 and for them to reach net carbon zero by 2045.
- Home energy demand accounts for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions nationally. To reduce these the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) has stated that there are 26 million homes in the UK that need retrofitting between now and 2050 – at a rate of nearly 1 million homes per year.
- In Oxfordshire, around 25% of greenhouse gas emissions are residential. Following consultation with local retrofit expert organisations, educational establishments and relevant business groups, a Task and Finish Group of the Joint Scrutiny Committee between this council and South Oxfordshire District Council has published a report which concluded that to achieve our 2030 target, 2,250 properties would have to be deep retrofitted every year. The cost of such retrofitting, although it significantly reduces energy bills, requires one-off up-front capital investment and is therefore beyond the reach of most homeowners.
- The recent government subsidy announced of £5,000 for households to switch to heat pumps only covers 90,000 homes over three years, representing small fraction of housing stock, and does not account for the whole cost of transition. Previously, the Green Homes Grant was made available for 6 months but was difficult to claim, accreditation times were long and complex, and the amount wholly inadequate for the task and withdrawn quickly.

Council believes that:

- This issue should be given a high priority and that government support nationally needs to be long term, reliable and as simple as possible.
- A coordinated whole house retrofit approach or one-off deep retrofitting, as made clear by the IET, is required to get homes ready for net carbon zero, rather than sporadic one-off upgrades.
- There is an ongoing lack of funding support for householders to carry out these retrofits and that Nationally, there is a lack of relevant skills, which is reflected locally, and there is a need for upskilling and training to fill this gap.

Council resolves to request:

- The Leader of the Council writes to government to urge them to set up a long-term national funding programme for retrofitting homes that would support a rate of deep retrofits to at least 2,250 homes per year for the Vale of White Horse (and a million homes per year nationwide), and that this programme to be simple and straightforward to administer and claim.

- Write to the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, the Minister of State for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and the president of COP26, Rt Hon Alok Sharma, urging them to:
 - address this issue as a priority, recognising its importance in achieving our national and international carbon emission targets;
 - suggest that ministers use the Construction Leadership Council's Retrofit Strategy as a basis for a government policy and plan;
 - include adequate funding for all Local Authorities in any retrofit strategy as they are perfectly placed to lead local Retrofit partnerships and strategies alongside LEPs;
 - develop long term support for householders including changes in relevant laws, guidance and tax regulations and to encourage businesses and skills development in this area;
 - recognise the benefits to society in better health and wellbeing from energy efficient homes;
 - recognise the industrial and employment opportunities that a countrywide retrofit plan could present to the British economy
- Officers investigate membership of the Construction Leadership Council.
- Officers work with local partners through the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the Environment Sub-Group to seek to establish a way to progress an Oxfordshire wide approach to retrofitting.

Motion 2: On concerns raised about Thames Water's proposed Reservoir South of Abingdon

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Andy Cooke, seconded by Councillor Richard Webber

Council notes:

- That Thames Water is once again submitting their plans for a large reservoir to be built on an area of farmland and woodland in the Vale of White Horse, south of Abingdon, and continues to receive public funds to press for this reservoir.
- Further, that the environmental impact information that was originally supplied by Thames Water on the proposed reservoir under the RAPID Gate 1 process was heavily redacted and was thus not available with sufficient time for proper scrutiny.
- That the environmental impact of this reservoir would be significant. Including the substantial carbon cost during construction and embodied carbon, as well as, during operation, significant methane outgassing from drowned vegetation, made worse with repeated drawdowns, and that the carbon impact claimed by Thames Water is not currently supported by any openly presented calculations.
- As a consequence, that the figures for carbon impact presented by Thames Water would seriously jeopardise, or make impossible, this Council's target for the district's greenhouse gas emissions to be cut by 75% by 2030.
- That alternative water sources, including the Severn-Thames Transfer link, that would bring new water into the water-stressed South East, and would avoid much of the environmental impact and huge local disruption, are now under active consideration.

Council therefore resolves:

- To reaffirm its position from the previous public enquiry that it opposes the reservoir proposal at least or until, the case for need for this specific solution (over and above the other potential cheaper, less disruptive, and less environmentally impactful solutions) has been clearly tested, demonstrated and agreed by independent scientific experts.
- To recommend to OFWAT that a detailed and independently scrutinised carbon calculation be made, including all sources of embedded carbon, carbon used during construction, and ongoing carbon including methane outgassing. This should include more detailed carbon calculations as to the proposed mitigations, including the timescale on which these intended mitigations would be reached.
- That failing the need being demonstrated as requested above or an independently scrutinised carbon calculation produced, the ongoing waste of public funds given to Thames Water for continued attempts to push for their reservoir should be questioned, and that we make representations to the Water Resources South East Plan and then share these with the Environment Agency and the Member of Parliament for the area.

Motion 3: To Support the Principles of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Bethia Thomas, seconder to be notified

Vale of White Horse District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 recognising the human cause of irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world.

At the same time humans have caused an ecological crisis with significant proportions of species currently threatened with extinction. The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world with more than one in seven of our plants and animals facing extinction and more than 40% in decline.

The council sees the ecological emergency as intrinsically linked to the climate emergency. We recognise that the UK needs a legally-enforceable nature target so that by 2030 nature is visibly and measurably on the path of recovery, and we acknowledge the role of a national Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill in making this happen.

Council notes that:

- Parliament declared an Environment and Climate Emergency in May 2019, and that since then the CEE Bill has been tabled, which, if it became law, would require the government to develop a strategy to address the emergency that would ensure:
 - The Ecological Emergency is tackled alongside the Climate Crisis in a joined-up approach;
 - The Paris Agreement is enshrined into law to ensure that UK does its real fair share to limit global temperature rise to the most stringent end of the Paris agreement -1.5°C.
- Our council has a role to play in reducing the impact we have on our ecosystems locally, protecting wildlife and improving the ecology of the natural environment and that this work goes hand in hand with our work on the climate emergency

- under the climate action work programme.
- That the final wording of the COP26 Declaration para. 55 specifically recognises the role of “...local and regional governments... in contributing to progress towards the objective of the Convention and the goals of the Paris Agreement”
- Local Government budgets are strained and that we could take faster action if government allowed great policy flexibility and funding to address the climate and ecological emergencies.

Council resolves to:

- Ask the Leader to write to all our Oxfordshire MPs urging them to support the principles of CEE Bill as a matter of urgency, to encourage their colleagues of all parties to do the same and to amplify our calls for national government to provide sufficient resources to local councils to support our efforts.
- To show support for local groups who are campaigning for the principles of the CEE Bill including Zero Hour Oxford.

Motion 4: Becoming a trans inclusive Council

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Sarah Medley, seconded by Councillor Amos Duveen

Council notes that:

1. Transgender and non-binary people face significant disadvantage in society, being highly vulnerable to violence, homelessness, and lack of access to suitable healthcare provision.
2. There is currently a concerning rise in transphobia in the UK, from individuals, politicians and the media.
3. Transphobia has a hugely detrimental impact on the mental health and well-being of trans individuals.

Council believes that:

1. All UK law should clearly recognise that trans men are men, trans women are women, and non-binary people are non-binary.
2. Transgender and non-binary people deserve respect and autonomy.
3. It is therefore our duty as community leaders who seek to create an open and tolerant society to speak out against transphobia and discrimination in all its forms.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. State publicly that trans rights are human rights and affirm the legal rights of all protected groups under the 2010 Equality Act.
2. Consult with local trans support organisations when developing the Vale of White Horse District Council's new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, to ensure services, forms and buildings this council has control of are inclusive of the trans community.
3. Work with LGBTQ+ groups to provide training for councillors to raise awareness of the difficulties transgender and non-binary people face.
4. Include International Trans Day of Visibility (March 31st) and Trans Day of Remembrance (November 20th) in our Council's Corporate and Diversity Calendar.
5. Encourage an informal network of LGBTQ+ allies across the council.

6. Continue working with partner organisations to ensure transgender and non-binary people are not discriminated against whilst accessing services such as domestic violence and homelessness support.

18. Exclusion of the public

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

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 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.

19. Minutes

(Page 123)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the confidential minutes of the Council meeting held on 6 October 2021.