

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.05 PM ON THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER 2016

**THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK,
CROWMARSH GIFFORD**

Present:

Paul Harrison (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, Nigel Champken-Woods, Steve Connel, John Cotton, Margaret Davies, Pat Dawe, David Dodds, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Lorraine Hillier, Elaine Hornsby, Sue Lawson, Lynn Lloyd, Imran Lokhon, Jeannette Matelot, Jane Murphy, Anthony Nash, Toby Newman, David Nimmo-Smith, Richard Pullen, Bill Service, Robert Simister, Alan Thompson, David Turner, John Walsh and Ian White

Apologies:

Charles Bailey, Anthony Dearlove, Tony Harbour, Stephen Harrod and Margaret Turner tendered apologies.

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Susan Harbour and Margaret Reed

37 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

38 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

39 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman provided housekeeping information. He wished councillors and officers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Council agreed to suspend council procedure rule 80 insofar as it requires councillors to stand when speaking at Council meetings.

40 Questions from the public and public participation

The Chairman advised that Mr Neville Harris had registered to address Council on the urgent motion set out in the supplementary agenda. He would invite Mr Harris to address Council at the item.

41 Questions under Council procedure rule 34

None.

42 Motions under Council procedure rule 41

A. Motion moved by Stefan Gawrysiak and seconded by David Turner:

“Council urges Cabinet, as part of its budget proposals, to increase the community grants budget to £1.5 million for 2017/18”.

A number of councillors spoke in support of the motion. They expressed the view that an increase in the budget would allow the council to reinstate the third round of grant applications and fund more projects. However, the majority of councillors did not support the motion. The current grants budget is very generous and supported many community projects since 1997 to a value of £17 million. The current level of grant budget ensured there is a competitive bidding process for council funds which would be diminished if the budget were increased. In addition the consideration of this proposal was premature and should be considered as part of the council’s budget setting process.

On being put the motion was declared lost.

B. Motion moved by Stefan Gawrysiak and seconded by Margaret Davies:

“Council urges Cabinet, as part of its budget proposals, to make budget provision of £0.5 million to implement the practical measures within the council’s Low Emission Strategy”.

A number of councillors spoke in support of the motion. The council is currently consulting on a new low emission strategy and whilst there is budget provision for air quality monitoring there is no budget provision to support practical measures to relieve the current air quality issues in South Oxfordshire to reduce the detrimental health impacts, particularly on children and the elderly, of air pollution in the district’s towns. Budget provision of £0.5 million would allow for the employment of a full time officer and support measures which may be identified in the low emission strategy.

However, the majority of councillors did not support the motion. The proposal was premature and should be considered as part of the council’s budget setting process. The district council should work with partners, Oxfordshire County Council and the towns, to implement measures to reduce air pollution – including 20mph zones, a reduction in HGVs travelling through the towns and increased provision and use of public transport and electric cars.

On being put the motion was declared lost.

C. The Chairman advised that he had agreed to take the following motion as an urgent item to allow Council to consider it prior to the next Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting, responding to a request from the Local Enterprise Partnership and other partners that the council is able to do so in order to be in a position to better engage with Government to address issues arising from the Local Growth Fund submission.

Motion moved by John Cotton and seconded by Will Hall:

“This Council endorses the work of Oxfordshire's Local Authority Leaders and the Local Enterprise Partnership through the Oxfordshire Growth Board to explore the opportunity for transformational changes in service delivery across a range of areas including, but not exclusively: infrastructure, skills, economic development, strategic spatial planning, public assets, business rates, health and social care.

In order to support the achievement of significant improvement in the provision of local services, this Council confirms its support for a review of the future functions of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, which should include an assessment of the merits of establishing a mayoral combined authority for Oxfordshire”.

Mr Neville Harris, a local resident, addressed Council on the motion. He spoke in support of a single unitary council for Oxfordshire. He objected to the lack of involvement of councillors at both district and county council level in discussions on both the reorganisation of local government and devolution proposals. He called for a referendum on the issue of local government reorganisation which would allow the arguments for and against to be discussed and the electorate to express its view on the issue.

In moving the motion John Cotton, Leader of the council, stated that the government wanted to see devolution deals with collective governance arrangements, preferably elected mayors. A firm commitment from the Oxfordshire local authorities to such an arrangement was more likely to bring about a deal and therefore achieve investment for Oxfordshire. Those areas that had secured devolution deals had been successful in recent Local Growth Fund allocations whilst Oxfordshire received a disappointing allocation - £25 million from a £300 million bid. The issue was discussed at a recent meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which suggested that each council in Oxfordshire demonstrate its commitment to a devolution deal in Oxfordshire.

The majority of councillors supported the motion as a means of indicating support for a direction of travel. This would enable work to progress on a devolution bid to government to secure investment in the infrastructure essential for the economic growth of the county. Oxfordshire is a net contributor to the exchequer and needed to access funding to support major strategic projects.

A number of councillors expressed concern regarding the lack of detail of how a combined authority would operate and at the lack of democratic accountability of both the LEP and Oxfordshire Growth Board.

RESOLVED: to endorse the work of Oxfordshire's Local Authority Leaders and the Local Enterprise Partnership through the Oxfordshire Growth Board to explore the opportunity for transformational changes in service delivery across a range of areas including, but not exclusively: infrastructure, skills, economic development, strategic spatial planning, public assets, business rates, health and social care.

In order to support the achievement of significant improvement in the provision of local services, this Council confirms its support for a review of the future functions of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, which should include an assessment of the merits of establishing a mayoral combined authority for Oxfordshire.

43 Council Tax Base 2017/18

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 1 December 2016, on the council tax base for 2017/18.

RESOLVED:

1. to approve the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2017/18;
2. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District Council as its council tax base for the year 2017/18 be 55,557.2; and
3. that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District Council as the council tax base for the year 2017/18 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 1 of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 1 December 2016.

44 Review of the council's constitution

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services and monitoring officer on proposed changes to the council's constitution.

Mr Ian White moved and Mr Toby Newman seconded the recommendations in the report. In moving the recommendations they thanked officers and members of the review group for the effective work undertaken to produce the revised constitution.

RESOLVED: to

1. note the considerable work done by the Joint Constitution Review Group in bringing a revised constitution for consideration by Council;
2. note that, for completeness, the entire constitution has been brought before Council for consideration, but that some sections have already been approved by Council; areas of substantive change are listed within the report, under key changes;
3. note the ongoing overall approach of the review group to develop a single constitution with Vale of White Horse District Council with separate sections where necessary;
4. note the overall approach to streamline the constitution, avoiding unhelpful repetition and confusion;
5. note the overall approach to make sections self-contained, especially those relating to specific committees;

6. note the more consistent approach given to the general governance of meetings, including: quorum, time limits and public speaking; the rules aim to promote robust democracy and effective running of council meetings;
7. approve the constitution attached as appendix one to the report of the head of legal and democratic services and monitoring officer to the Council meeting held on 15 December 2016 for implementation on 1 March 2017 (except for the section on the community grants panel, which is for implementation on 16 December 2016);
8. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to update the constitution to reflect any changes in staff responsibilities;
9. authorises the head of legal and democratic services to make any minor or consequential amendments to the constitution for consistency and to reflect the councils' style guide.

45 Report of the Leader of the council

The Leader of the council advised that details of the government's financial settlement for the council were emerging and would be analysed by officers.

He reported that Oxfordshire County Council had approached him regarding the possibility of sharing office accommodation.

He wished councillors and officers a happy Christmas.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Chairman

Date