

Council



Listening Learning Leading

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Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on

THURSDAY 16 JULY 2020 AT 6.00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Joining instructions for members of the public: To watch the virtual meeting, you must copy the following link to your internet browser:

<https://tinyurl.com/y7fh6b53>

When your web browser opens, select “Watch on the Web instead” button and then when the “Welcome to the live event!” window opens select “join anonymously”.

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio cassette or CD, and email. For this or any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Reed".

MARGARET REED
Head of Legal and Democratic

Note: Please remember to sign the attendance register.

Agenda

1 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2 Minutes (Pages 8 - 25)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 20 February 2020 – 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 chairman's announcements

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

5 Chief Executive's update

To receive any updates from the chief executive.

6 Public participation

To receive any written questions or written statements from members of the public.

7 Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

8 Progress on approved Council motions (Pages 26 - 41)

To note progress on the approved Council motions – report attached.

9 Virtual meeting procedure rules and scheme of delegation (Pages 42 - 51)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic – attached.

10 Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of the leader of the council.

11 Questions on notice

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

A. Question from Councillor David Bartholomew to Cabinet Member for planning, Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson

This Council must respond to Reading's Transport Consultation by the end of August. Three key elements that impact on South Oxfordshire are: 1) Third Thames Crossing; 2) North Reading Orbital (going through South Oxfordshire); 3) Three 'Park & Rides' to serve Reading but located in South Oxfordshire. The Cabinet's position on 1) is already agreed as a result of a Full Council decision last year, but what position is being taken with regard to items 2) and 3)?

B. Question from Councillor David Bartholomew to Cabinet Member for finance, Councillor Leigh Rawlins

Now that we are moving out of lockdown, what is the timetable for recovering unspent funds from the Councillor COVID-19 Grant Scheme (March 2020)?

C. Question from Councillor Caroline Newton to the Cabinet Member for planning, Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson

Given that the independent inspector's decision on the Local Plan 2034 is not anticipated much before the end of the year, could the Cabinet member for planning please clarify the timing of the stages of work towards a formal decision on Home England's application to develop Chalgrove Airfield, including the closing date for public consultation?

D. Question from Councillor Caroline Newton to the Cabinet Member for housing and environment, Councillor David Rouane

At what point during the budget-setting process did the proposal of increasing charges for dog bins arise, and what consideration was given to the disproportionate financial impact this might have on smaller, rural parish councils?

E. Question from Councillor Mocky Khan to the Leader of the council, Councillor Sue Cooper

The ruling group and the Leader have spoken many times that the council should be inclusive, decisions made collectively, and information shared. Can the Leader explain why despite numerous requests, Group Leaders have not been permitted to attend Cabinet Briefings? What are the reasons for the exclusions?

F. Question from Councillor Mocky Khan to the Cabinet Member for housing and environment, Councillor David Rouane

This council passed a motion regards Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in July 2018. What progress has been made since? In addition, when is the feasibility study that was due for publication in January going to be released and what reassurance can be given to inform residents that CPE is high on the agenda?

G. Question from Councillor Mocky Khan to the Cabinet Member for Didcot Garden Town, Councillor David Rouane

On 25 June, I read about the Didcot Gateway Project being withdrawn/amended in the Oxford Mail. Can the Cabinet member explain why South Oxfordshire District Councillors, Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board or the Didcot Town Council were not informed and had to read the article to find out? Also, what reassurance can the Cabinet member give to ensure key stakeholders will be consulted before future decisions are made in regard to Didcot Garden Town?

12 Motions on notice

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

A. Motion to be proposed by Councillor David Bartholomew, seconded by Councillor Jane Murphy

Currently, two individual councillors not members of a recognised party can declare themselves to be a Political Group, with one being the Leader and the other Deputy Leader. This confers a number of advantages on these councillors, including the right to attend Political Group Leader meetings and receive Political Group Leader briefings. These councillors are thus put in a position of advantage over other councillors without a genuine mandate from a real political group.

This Council asks that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State requesting that the relevant legislation is amended to state that a Political Group should constitute a minimum of three councillors unless the two councillors are part of a nationally recognised party such as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green.

B. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jane Murphy, seconded by Councillor Ian White

Council notes that since early March the Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on our communities. Loved ones have lost their lives and many have been seriously ill; some are still fighting the virus as patients or as clinical staff.

Council recognises the huge effort of our officers during the period. Adjusting to working remotely, volunteering to go beyond the day job to help support shielded people and those isolating, and working long hours to keep vital council services running. Council also recognises that the Towns and Parishes and the community groups and their members and members of the public responded enthusiastically and rapidly to the challenges that we all faced and continue to face.

Council thanks our residents for their commitment and support. This includes the members of our councils and their staff, the First Responders, the organisers and members of the Good Neighbours' Schemes and Street Volunteers and similar organisations, the people who volunteer or knit or sew and give their time and also those who 'do nothing!' We know that they do nothing because they tell us; how often, when thanked, have you heard people say 'oh, it was nothing!' And we must not forget those who, just by being there, to listen, or step in in an emergency, help

to reduce the stress and worry.

Council thanks everyone for the heroic part they have played, and will continue to play, helping residents in need of support through this dangerous and uncertain time.

C. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jane Murphy, seconded by Councillor Ian Snowdon

Council recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown both the national and local economy into a state of turmoil and crisis. The impact on our local businesses and our local communities will only grow in the coming months and requires an immediate response.

This Council will urgently set up a new committee called the Local Economy Resilience Advisory Committee, to guide this council's response to this crisis. Following the model of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, this new committee will be advisory to the Cabinet and should be made up of 12 members in total based on political balance (the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the committee seats and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader). The term of reference for the new committee should be drawn up by the Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Place, in consultation with the Cabinet member for development and regeneration and group leaders. It will operate alongside and have equal weight to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, to ensure this council works cross party and does everything it can to help local business, the high streets of our market towns and villages, and our communities survive this economic shock.

D. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Ian White, seconded by Councillor Jane Murphy

Changes to the Council's Constitution have been made by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, as documented in the CEO's Decision Notice of the 18 May 2020.

These include the removal of the automatic referral of planning applications to the Planning Committee where Parish or Town Councils views are at odds with officer recommendations. This is an unnecessary removal of transparency, an affront to the natural democratic process, is disproportionate and inappropriate.

Additionally, a requirement has been introduced that where a Ward Councillor refers an application to the Planning Committee it has to be subject to the agreement of two other Councillors, being the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. This effectively creates a 'right of Veto' over a fellow Councillor, thus establishing an arbitrary two-tier system of Councillors where one Councillor effectively holds power over another, with no mechanism for appeal. Again, this is undemocratic and inappropriate.

For these reasons, this Council instructs that the changes referred to should be rescinded immediately, thereby restoring democratic control.

E. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Jane Murphy, seconded Caroline Newton

This Council recognises the excellent work of all local government staff across Oxfordshire during the COVID-19 crisis. Councils have worked together in difficult times, showing that organisational barriers to joint working can be overcome.

All Councils have gone the extra mile in delivering services to our residents that prioritise the most vulnerable. This has inevitably incurred additional costs – c. £90 million across all tiers. All Councils acknowledge the additional Government funding to date, but we have a duty to respond to the national financial challenge ahead and to be open with residents.

All Councils across Oxfordshire are now considering how they can balance budgets and protect frontline services. No Councillor nor party wants to see drastic cuts to vital Council services. We, as a group of democratically elected leaders, should take the opportunity provided by the devolution white paper to ensure that we provide the best possible public services for our residents.

Further to the motion passed at the December 2019 Council meeting, and reflecting that much has changed since, that Council calls on the Leader to write to the Secretary of State requesting that we re-open and actively pursue consideration of a Unitary Authority for Oxfordshire and re-start a wide-ranging conversation with our local authority partners, residents and stakeholders to explore all options for a new future for Oxfordshire. Our aims are clear: safeguard public services in the future, support a vibrant local democracy and ensure a strong economy.

F. Motion proposed by Councillor Jo Robb, seconded by Councillor Andrea Powell.

Council notes the growing popularity of wild swimming, paddling, kayaking and paddle boarding in the River Thames and its tributaries and, more importantly, the intrinsic value of clean water and healthy, biodiverse rivers.

The UK's water companies are permitted to release raw sewage into waterways in specific circumstances, under licence from the Environment Agency. Regulators rely on self-reporting on the part of the water companies and there is no way for river users to know in real time when these Controlled Sewage Overflows (CSOs) happen.

Hundreds of beaches around the UK have Bathing Quality Water status – this ensures the Environment Agency monitors and reports on water quality throughout the bathing season.

Only a handful of inland lakes in the UK – *and no rivers* – have Bathing Quality Water status.

Recognising the intrinsic importance of the River Thames as a natural asset of national significance and its value to our communities, this Council:

1. Asks officers to work with appropriate partners such as the Environment Agency, The Rivers Trust and Surfers Against Sewage to begin the process

- of applying for Bathing Quality Water status for the River Thames in South Oxfordshire;
2. Calls on Thames Water to draft and implement an action plan for the elimination of Controlled Sewage Overflows (CSOs) across its sewage treatment network;
 3. Calls on Thames Water to provide accurate, real-time and publicly available information about Controlled Sewage Overflows into the Thames and its tributaries;
 4. Asks the Leader of the Council to write to the leaders of neighbouring Councils along the river inviting them to appoint Thames Champions to work together to enhance the safety, cleanliness and biodiversity of the river and make the River Thames “Safe for All.”

MARGARET REED

Head of Legal and Democratic