

# Council



Listening Learning Leading

Contact Officer: Steven Corrigan

Tel: 07717 274704

E-mail: [steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk)

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Website: [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk)

## **Summons to attend the annual meeting of Council**

to be held on

**THURSDAY 19 MAY 2022 AT 6.00 PM**

at

**135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, OX14 4SB**

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

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

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# Agenda

## 1 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

## 2 Election of chair

To elect a chair of Council for the municipal year 2022/23.

## 3 Appointment of vice-chair

To appoint a vice-chair of Council for the municipal year 2022/23.

## 4 Minutes (Pages 7 - 17)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022.

## 5 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

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

## 6 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.

## 7 Public participation

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

## 8 Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

## 9 Appointments to committees, panels and joint committees for 2022/23 (Pages 18 - 25)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic on the appointment to those committees required to be politically balanced together with the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, Licensing Acts Committee, Community Grants Panel and joint committees and to agree any consequential changes to the constitution attached.

## **10 Adoption of Oxfordshire Code of Conduct for Councillors** (Pages 26 - 43)

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 29 March 2022, considered the report of the councils' monitoring officer on a draft model Code of Conduct.

The committee agreed to recommend the adoption of the Code to both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

The report of the monitoring officer, which the committee considered on 29 March, is **attached**.

**RECOMMENDATION:** to approve the Oxfordshire Code of Conduct, appended to the report of the monitoring officer to the meeting of the Joint Audit and Governance Committee held on 29 March 2022.

## **11 Appointment of Independent Persons** (Pages 44 - 47)

To consider the report of the monitoring officer on the appointment of independent persons to assist with code of conduct matters – **attached**.

## **12 Report of the leader of the council**

To receive the report of the leader of the council.

## **13 Questions on notice**

No questions have been by councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 33.

## **14 Motions on notice**

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

- A. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Ken Arlett, seconded by Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak:

Councillors have the ability to call in a planning application within 28 days of the start of the statutory consultation period. This is an exception to the general delegation to the Head of Planning who has authority to deal with planning applications.

Currently, there is no ability for a councillor to call in a planning application that has been amended after the 28 day period comes to an end.

It may well be the case that the majority of councillors are unaware that amended planning applications cannot be called in after the 28 day period has elapsed, yet there is no provision in the Constitution to resolve this.

Council resolves that:

The Constitution Review Group is asked to consider the delegations to the Head of Planning as part of its review of the Constitution and in particular whether the call in exception should be extended to allow for a councillor to call in an amended planning application notwithstanding the 28 day period has elapsed.

B. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Sue Roberts, seconder to be notified:

This Council Notes:

The Russia-Ukraine war has newly highlighted our dependence on dirty oil and gas from rogue states. A third of our people are expected to be plunged into poverty by October, as domestic fuel prices rise. We lack fuel-security.

In October 2021, Council noted the need to retrofit, wrote to Government, and provided a report on the retrofit landscape.

Since then, the situation has greatly worsened. The response to fuel scarcity by the Government has been to focus on increasing supply of oil and gas, rather than reducing demand. The climate crisis has worsened; and protection of our populace from the ravages of global heating has come further into focus.

We need excellent insulation, not only to keep us warm in winter, but to keep homes cool in the summer. In 2003, 70,000 Europeans died over a few days from the heat; such summers are set to become the norm.

Government has no plan for mass-retrofitting of homes with insulation, airtightness, mechanical ventilation, and renewable energy generation.

In South Oxfordshire, we aim to be zero carbon by 2030, but we have few means to make that happen. Almost a third of our greenhouse gas emissions are from homes. A Government mass-retrofit scheme could reduce this wastefulness of our precious fuel.

In October, there will be further fuel price-rises, and winter will be coming. To retrofit as many homes as possible by then, Government should go on a war-footing in response to the collateral damage to our people from the Russia-Ukraine war. But builders and materials are in short supply, even for newbuild. Government could enable the requisition of builders and materials for this task.

Inevitably, this would *reduce* resources for new housing development, and Local Authorities (LAs) might be unable to fulfil development targets. Rules that punish LAs such as the 5-year housing supply rule should be relaxed to enable resources to be directed toward retrofit.

A secure long-term strategy with certain investment would enable mass retrofit to boost the economy and GDP; providing good, local work. Our country is rightly proud of its world-leading managerial excellence. In mass-retrofitting we could have a new export, of systems-expertise for this complex task.

Council resolves:

1. To ask the Leader to write to relevant Government departments (once again) to request that a high level strategy be created for mass retrofitting of homes for the reasons given above, and specifically that:

- Local Authorities (LAs) be the delivery vehicles for mass-retrofit
- LAs are provided with constant and long-term funding to maintain retrofit units
- A structured strategy for mass-retrofit be mandated by Government
- Resources be diverted from newbuild for mass-retrofit as necessary
- LAs be relieved of regulations requiring them to keep up a high supply of new housing

2. To respond immediately to fuel-poverty; ask Cabinet to ensure that the council:

- has an advice-line on what to do if you cannot afford your fuel bills
- make this advice-line prominent - top position - on our website
- can provide good advice on retrofitting from a position of expertise in buildings fabric and renewables

C. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Sue Roberts, seconder to be notified:

#### Council Notes

At its referendum on 5 of May, 2022, Bristol City choose to ditch the Mayoral and Cabinet system in favour of a committee system to run the Council.

Democracy in England is best served by high representation at the local level. Currently in Europe, England has one of the lowest number of councillors per head of population. Constant reorganisations of local government by successive governments have weakened local democracy.

The Cabinet system introduced by Tony Blair's Government concentrates power in the hands of the few. Council is effectively powerless to direct affairs, and can act only as advisors to Cabinet, which has the final say in matters.

The consequence of having only one Cabinet member directing a whole department is that those Cabinet members are then extremely reliant on officers. Who else can they fully bounce ideas off? Whilst officers are of course experts in their relevant areas, full political discourse can take place only through the committee system. Otherwise there is a danger of the council being officer-led rather than led by its elected leaders.

In the quite dangerous current state of the world, with war, pestilence, and extreme weather, it is imperative that we pull together in national unity. Where better to start than at council level, ensuring that all voices that the electorate have voted for, have equal standing?

Liberal Democrats and Greens are staunch upholders of democracy and both declare support for a committee-style of governance in councils. The administration has loosely considered moving onto a committee-basis, since May 2019 when I first proposed suggested it in Cabinet. But it is often argues that it is never the 'right time'.

The right time surely must be whilst these parties are certainly still in the administration at South Oxfordshire; and therefore, before the elections of May 2023.

Council Resolves

to ask the Leader and Chief Executive to consider the governance arrangements at the Council with a view to moving to a committee system of governance.



Patrick Arran  
Head of Legal and Democratic