

Appendix 5

**Wallingford Bridge Petition
Minutes of Council Meeting – 20 July 2017**

Diane Wyatt, the petition organiser, spoke on behalf of nearly 1700 petitioners from Wallingford or the neighbouring area. They were petitioning Council not to close the bridge, even for a trial period. They believed that it would simply divert traffic to other areas and displace the air quality problems. It would damage local businesses in Wallingford. Other options should be considered, including better traffic light phasing and more environmentally friendly buses.

Tony Harbour, the Cabinet member, responded to the address and moved a motion to refer the petition to the General Licensing Committee for consideration as the appropriate body, together with any views expressed by councillors at the Council meeting. Councillor David Dodds, Chairman of the General Licensing Committee, seconded the motion.

Councillor Harbour thanked Diane Wyatt and the people of Wallingford for the petition. He explained that the Environment Act 1995 placed a statutory duty on councils to address issues of air quality. The council adopted an air quality action plan in February 2015, which included a Low Emissions Strategy. The only modelled solution which improved air quality in Wallingford involved closing the bridge for a few hours per day and would only be done on a trial basis. The trial would assess air quality, traffic and the impact on local businesses. Public safety and public transport would not be compromised. Other options were considered but were either not viable, or would not bring about significant improvements to air quality.

Councillors debated this motion. There was concern that the public would not have full access to information, as the Low Emissions Strategy would only be finalised at the General Licensing Committee after which councillors and the public would wish to debate this strategy.

The committee considered that the issues involved were significant and that further consideration needed to be given to all of the options and issues, including: enforcing the weight limit on the bridge; modelling the effect of closures on the wider road network; the issues of damaging business; isolating Crowmarsh from Wallingford, and the provision of more rapid electric vehicle charging points.

Although the district council had responsibility for the air quality, the county council was responsible for highways, and issues were being debated between these councils, and other bodies in respect of air quality in Wallingford, Watlington and Henley.

An amendment was proposed, and seconded, that recommendations from the General Licensing Committee should come back to full Council for further debate and ratification.

Some councillors also considered that the General Licensing Committee was the right and proper place to consider all of the issues and would include expert opinion and be open to all councillors and to the public. The matter would come back to Council or Cabinet (as appropriate) if there were budgetary implications to be considered.

Council debated the amendment.

A full debate would be had in General Licensing Committee, and it would be premature to suggest that it needs to come back to Council at this point. The General Licensing Committee was provided with powers and controls to take issues forward.

However, other members felt that this was a political discussion and should be held in full Council.

The mover and seconder of the main motion accepted the amendment. Councillor Harbour stated that he remained concerned that it would undermine the work of the General Licensing Committee. He reminded members that the district council could only make decisions on recommendations which concerned public highways as Oxfordshire County Council were the highways authority. He also confirmed that a briefing session would be held before the General Licensing Committee.

RESOLVED

1. *To refer the petition to the General Licensing Committee for consideration, together with councillor views expressed at this meeting.*
 2. *That the General Licensing Committee make recommendations to Council on the Low Emissions Strategy for final approval.*
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1. The committee is requested to consider the petition