

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.00PM ON 13 DECEMBER 2012

AT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Mrs D Brown (Vice- Chairman in the chair)

Mrs A Badcock, Mr R Bell, Ms J Bland, Mr F Bloomfield, Mr D Bretherton, Mrs C Collett, MBE, Mr S Connel, Mr B Cooper, Ms K Crabbe, Mrs M Davies, Mrs P Dawe, Mr L Docherty, Mr D Dodds, Mrs E A Ducker, MBE, Mrs E Gillespie, Mr M Gray, Mrs E Hards, Mr M Harris, Mr N Harris, Mr P Harrison, Mr S Harrod, Dr C Hood, Mr M Leonard, Ms L Lloyd, Mrs D Macdonald, Mrs A Midwinter, Mrs J Nimmo-Smith, Rev'd A Paterson, Ms A Purse, Mr C Quinton, Mr A Rooke, Mrs P Slatter, Mr D Turner, Mrs M Turner and Mrs J Wood.

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mrs J Carr, Mr J Cotton, Mr M Hiles, Mr I Lokhon, Mr B Service and Ms R Wallis

Officers:

Mr S Bishop, Mr D Buckle, Mr S Corrigan, Mr I Moutel, Mr M Thompson, Mr M Prosser, Mrs M Reed and Mrs A Robinson

24. Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2012 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

25. Chairman's announcements

The Vice-Chairman welcomed Mrs D Macdonald to the council following her election as a councillor for the Didcot All Saints ward. She reminded councillors of the forthcoming Swing Time Concert on 12 January 2013 and the Chairman's Charity Dinner in April 2013.

26. Adoption of South Oxfordshire Core Strategy

Mrs E Hards declared that she lived close to a site designated for development within the core strategy in North East Didcot. She advised that should Council discuss this site she would leave the meeting.

Mr P Harrison and Mrs J Wood declared that they lived close to designated sites.

Mr Stu Darby, a local resident representing the views of residents of north and west Wallingford, addressed Council on this item.

He referred to the fact that South Oxfordshire District Council had previously identified two potential sites for development in Wallingford - Site B in west Wallingford, adjacent to Wantage Road (now recommended as the preferred site), and Site E at Winterbrook to the south of the town. In the Inspector's draft conclusions in November 2011 the inspector concluded that Site B was not a sound location for a strategic allocation because it had no interconnection with the town's road network, with a new access needing to be built onto the bypass which would encourage car usage; and that the proposed pedestrian access routes are unattractive alleyways, serve private garages, and do not have natural surveillance. Although no significant changes were proposed to address these issues, Council was now recommended to approve the allocation of 550 houses on Site B previously referred to as unsound.

He then referred to the designation of Winterbrook as a Conservation Area. This decision was taken during the core strategy process following the inspector's interim decision that Site E Winterbrook was a sound location. He questioned the decision to only proceed with the Winterbrook element of the Wallingford Conservation Area, the timing of this work and the impact the designation had on the inspector's final decision.

In response to questions Rev'd A Paterson provided the following responses:

- consultation was currently ongoing on the site allocations for the larger villages which would include possible adjustments to the methodology for allocating numbers to each village;
- the Winterbrook Conservation Area work began in 2006 and was undertaken within existing resources and was not rushed.

Some councillors spoke opposing the adoption of the core strategy because of the following:

- the lack of housing provision for Wheatley
- reservations about the handling and timing of the designation of Winterbrook as a Conservation Area
- the allocation of sites in Didcot and Wallingford that would create remote developments not integrated within the existing communities
- inadequate provision for infrastructure.

However, the majority of councillors supported the plan which would enable the council to meet housing land supply and have plan-led growth, enable sustainable planning for the future with high quality new development, new affordable and private housing, economic growth and protection of the most valued environmental assets.

Council thanked officers in the planning policy team for their work on reaching this stage with the core strategy.

RESOLVED: to

1. adopt the submitted core strategy, amended to include all of the main modifications recommended by the Inspector and other minor modifications as attached to the report of the Head of Planning to Cabinet on 6 December 2012 and as available on the council's website;
2. authorise the Head of Planning to make minor modifications to the text and plans;
3. adopt the Adopted Policies Map as attached to the report of the Head of Planning to Cabinet on 6 December 2012 and as available on the council's website.

27. Council tax reduction scheme

Mr A Rooke declared an interest and did not take part in the discussion or voting on this item.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 December 2012, on the adoption and implementation of a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the financial year 2013/14.

RESOLVED:

1. to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2013/14 outlined in paragraph 8 of the report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2012;
2. to authorise the Head of Finance to finalise the scheme for 2013/14;
3. that Oxfordshire authorities continue to work together to develop and introduce a uniform Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2014/15.

28. Council tax discounts and exemptions

Mr M Harris declared that he had an unoccupied property and did not take part in the discussion or voting on this item.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 December 2012, on the level of council tax discount to apply to second homes, unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings, and dwellings undergoing or requiring structural repair, and the level of premium to apply to long-term empty dwellings.

In response to questions Mr D Dodds, Cabinet member for finance, provided the following information:

- 540 properties were empty across the district;
- Properties in probate would be exempt from the proposals;
- MOD properties would be exempt from the proposals.

RESOLVED: in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) and the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended)

- a. to reduce from ten per cent to nil the council tax discount to be applied on second homes (Classes A and B in the Regulations) from 1 April 2013;
- b. to apply council tax discount of 25 per cent for up to six months and zero per cent thereafter on unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings (Class C in the Regulations) (subject to (c) below) from 1 April 2013;
- c. to apply the discount of 50 per cent for up to 12 months and zero per cent thereafter where the unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling is requiring or undergoing structural repair (Class D in the Regulations) from 1 April 2013;
- d. to apply a premium of 50 per cent (on top of the 100 per cent currently payable) to long-term empty dwellings where they have been unoccupied and unfurnished continuously for at least two years (except those falling within Classes E and F in the Regulations where no premium will apply) from 1 April 2013.

29. Council tax base 2013/14

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 December 2012, on the council tax base for 2013/14.

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 2013/14;
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 2013/14 is 52,607.0;
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 2013/14 for each parish is the amount shown against the name of that parish in

appendix 1 of the report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2012.

30. Medium term financial strategy 2013/14 to 2017/18

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 December 2012, on the approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2013/14 – 2017/18.

RESOLVED: to approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2013/14 – 2017/18 as attached to the report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 6 December 2012.

31. Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's warding proposals for South Oxfordshire District Council

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive on the council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for South Oxfordshire District Council.

He reported that the Local Government Boundary Commission had not accepted the majority of the council's submitted proposals. Although the electoral review working group had agreed not to object to the commission's proposals for multi member wards it had agreed to object to a number of the other proposals. Officers had contacted those parish councils affected and those responses received were supportive of the district council's stance.

RESOLVED

1. to authorise the Chief Executive to prepare and submit the council's formal response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's warding proposal for South Oxfordshire reflecting the outline response set out in appendix A to the report of the Chief Executive to Council on 13 December 2012, having first consulted with the members of the electoral review working group
2. to authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with members of the electoral review working group to incorporate in the final submission minor changes to the proposals contained in the outline response where there is clear cross-party support for so doing

32. Budget and council tax setting 2013/14

Council considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, on the budget and council tax setting timetable, on the implications of new legislation on council tax setting and business rates pooling and on the late receipt of the local government grant settlement figures from central government.

She advised that, due to the consideration of an urgent item on the distribution of council tax reduction scheme grant (minute 33 refers), recommendation (d) in the report was no longer required.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree to waive the requirement in the budget and policy procedure rules for a six week consultation period for the 2013/14 budget setting process due to the delayed local government grant settlement this year;
2. authorise the strategic director (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to approve and submit the council's national non-domestic rates 1 form (NDR1) for 2013/2014;
3. authorise the strategic director (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance, to sign up to an Oxfordshire business rates pooling arrangement provided that on receipt of the local government grant settlement he is satisfied that it is in the council's interests to do so.

33. Urgent item – Distribution of council tax reduction scheme grant

The Chairman of Council agreed to take this item as an item of urgent business to allow Council to agree the methodology for the distribution of council tax reduction scheme to enable the Section 151 Officer to notify local precepting authorities of their share at the earliest opportunity, which in turn will enable those authorities to meet the council's deadline for receipt of precepts to avoid delays in setting the council tax and starting the billing process.

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance that set out the council's approach to distributing the grant attributable to local precepting authorities (town and parish councils) that it will receive from the Government to offset the impact of the new council tax reduction scheme.

RESOLVED: to

1. pay over the full council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) grant attributed to local precepting authorities, but should the total grant exceed local precepting authorities' requirements, payment will only be made up to the level of the total shortfall of each local precepting authority calculated as in Appendix 1 of the report of the Head of Finance to Council on 13 December 2012.
2. approve the methodology for distributing the CTRS grant attributed to local precepting authorities as set out in paragraphs 10 to 15 and exemplified in Table 2.
3. direct the Section 151 Officer, on receipts of the actual CTRS grant attributed to local precepting authorities, to calculate the grant due to each local precepting authority based on the methodology agreed in (b) above and notify

each local precepting authority of the amount they are to receive.

4. direct the Section 151 Officer to pay over the sums calculated as a consequence of (c) to local precepting authorities on 3 April 2013.

34. Councillors' allowances scheme

Mr D Dodds moved and Mrs E A Ducker seconded a motion to apply no increase to the councillors' basic and special responsibility allowances payable from 1 April 2013.

RESOLVED: to apply no increase to the councillors' basic and special responsibility allowances payable from 1 April 2013.

35. Didcot All Saints by-election – committee appointments

Council considered a proposal from the Conservative Group to make changes to its membership of the planning committee and general licensing committee following the election of Mrs D Macdonald.

RESOLVED: to

1. appoint Mrs D Macdonald as a member of the planning committee;
2. appoint Mr B Cooper as a member of the general licensing committee.

36. Questions under Council procedure rule 11

Mrs E Hards submitted the following questions to the Leader of Council:

- A. This question is not to be taken as referring to anyone currently employed by the Council.
What is the Leader's view of the proposed changes which would allow councillors meeting in full council to dismiss their chief executive "quick-smart" (in the words of Mr Pickles)?

In response Mrs Ducker stated that councils would still be required to follow the correct procedures and any early dismissal would attract a costly settlement. In response to a supplementary question asking whether she thought Mr Eric Pickles MP knew the difference between a local authority and a football club, she said she did not.

- B. At the recent Town and Parish Forum we were told that on November 15 one South Oxfordshire polling station had 10 voters over the course of the 15 hours of polling.
Could the leader tell us what was the approximate total cost to this council of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in terms of staff hours, building hire etc and will this cost be reimbursed by central government?

Minute Item 1

Mrs Ducker responded that the returning officer received £184,000 from the Home Office to cover the costs of the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. In response to a supplementary question she accepted that the PCC elections did not represent good value for money.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Chairman

Date