

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD ON THURSDAY 19 JULY 2018 AT 6.00 PM

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Present:

Lorraine Hillier (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, Charles Bailey, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, Nigel Champken-Woods, Steve Connel, Sue Cooper, John Cotton, Pat Dawe, Anthony Dearlove, David Dodds, Elizabeth Gillespie, Elaine Hornsby, Mocky Khan, Sue Lawson, Lynn Lloyd, Imran Lokhon, Jeannette Matelot, Jane Murphy, Toby Newman, David Nimmo-Smith, Bill Service, Robert Simister, Ian Snowdon, Alan Thompson, David Turner, John Walsh and Ian White

Apologies:

Stefan Gawrysiak, Tony Harbour, Paul Harrison and Caroline Newton tendered apologies.

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Mark Stone, Margaret Reed and David Wilde

10 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2018 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

11 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

12 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

On behalf of the Council the chairman welcomed Councillor Sue Cooper to the council following her election at the recent Benson & Crowmarsh by election.

On behalf of the Council she confirmed she would pass on good wishes to Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak for a speedy recovery and an early return to the council.

13 Public participation

The chairman advised that Mr Hewerdine and Mr Harris had registered to address Council on motion A of agenda item 11.

14 Petitions

None.

15 Review of political balance following the Benson & Crowmarsh by election

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic on the review of the political balance following the Benson & Crowmarsh by election.

Council agreed the allocation of seats to each political group as set out in the schedule attached to the report including the allocation of one of the Conservative Group's seats on the Planning Committee to the Opposition Forum Group.

No councillor voted against these proposals.

RESOLVED: to

1. appoint the committees, joint committees and panels set out below and to appoint the membership and substitutes, as indicated, to sit on them;
2. allocate one of the Conservative Group seats on the Planning Committee to the Opposition Forum Group;
3. authorise the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to any vacant committee or panel seat and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Names	Planning Committee, 11 Members
Conservative (9)	Opposition Forum Group (2)
Joan Bland	Mocky Khan
Anthony Dearlove (Vice Chair)	David Turner
Lorraine Hillier	
Elaine Hornsby	
Jeannette Matelot	
David Nimmo-Smith	
Toby Newman (Chairman)	
Ian Snowdon	
Ian White	

PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (9)	Opposition Forum Group (2)
Nigel Champken-Woods	Sue Cooper
Steve Connel	Stefan Gawrysiak
Elizabeth Gillespie	
Sue Lawson	
John Cotton	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

Names	Scrutiny Committee, 9 Members
Conservative (8)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Anthony Dearlove	David Turner (Chairman)
Will Hall (Vice Chair)	
Elaine Hornsby	
Jeannette Matelot	
David Nimmo-Smith	
Ian Snowdon	
John Walsh	
Ian White	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (8)	Opposition Forum Group (3)
Charles Bailey	Sue Cooper
Steve Connel	Stefan Gawrysiak
Pat Dawe	Mocky Khan
Lorraine Hillier	
Sue Lawson	
Toby Newman	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

Names	Joint Scrutiny Committee, 5 Members
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Sue Lawson	David Turner (Co-Chair)
David Nimmo-Smith	
John Walsh	
Ian White	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (3)
Pat Dawe	Sue Cooper
Imran Lokhon	Stefan Gawrysiak
Toby Newman	Mocky Khan
John Cotton	

Names	Joint Audit and Governance Committee, 4 Members
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (0)
Toby Newman	
Alan Thompson	
John Walsh	
Ian White (Co-Chair)	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (0)
Joan Bland	
David Nimmo-Smith	
Robert Simister	
Vacancy	

Names	Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee, 6 Members
Conservative (5)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Steve Connel (Chairman)	Mocky Khan
Anthony Dearlove	

Will Hall	
Tony Harbour	
Ian White (Vice Chair)	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (5)	Opposition Forum Group (3)
Joan Bland	Sue Cooper
Toby Newman	Stefan Gawrysiak
John Walsh	David Turner
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

Names	Joint Staff Committee, 3 Members
Conservative (3)	Opposition Forum Group (0)
Jane Murphy	
David Nimmo-Smith	
Anthony Nash	
SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative	Opposition Forum Group (0)
The Leader may be substituted by another Cabinet member. Other members of the Committee may be substituted by any other member of the council (Cabinet or non-Cabinet).	

Names	General Licensing Committee, 12 Members
Conservative (11)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Joan Bland	Stefan Gawrysiak
Nigel Champken-Woods	
Pat Dawe (Chairman)	
David Dodds	
Paul Harrison	
Lorraine Hillier	
Imran Lokhon	
Anthony Nash	
David Nimmo-Smith (Vice Chair)	
Alan Thompson	

Ian White	
NO SUBSTITUTES	

Names	Licensing Acts Committee, 12 Members
Conservative (11)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Joan Bland	Stefan Gawrysiak
Nigel Champken-Woods	
Pat Dawe (Chairman)	
David Dodds	
Paul Harrison	
Lorraine Hillier	
Imran Lokhon	
Anthony Nash	
David Nimmo-Smith (Vice Chair)	
Alan Thompson	
Ian White	
NO SUBSTITUTES	

Names	Appeals Panel (NNDR and Housing), 5 Members
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Nigel Champken-Woods	Sue Cooper
Elaine Hornsby	
Anthony Nash	
Bill Service	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (4)	Opposition Forum Group (3)
Joan Bland	Stefan Gawrysiak
Kevin Bulmer	Mocky Khan
Sue Lawson	David Turner
Alan Thompson	

Names	Community Grants Panel, 9 Members
Conservative (8)	Opposition Forum Group (1)
Joan Bland (Vice Chair)	Stefan Gawrysiak
Pat Dawe	
Elizabeth Gillespie	
Jeannette Matelot	
Anthony Nash	
Ian Snowdon (Chairman)	
Alan Thompson	
Elaine Hornsby	
PREFERRED SUBSTITUTES	
Conservative (8)	Opposition Forum Group (3)
Nigel Champken-Woods	Sue Cooper
Steve Connel	Mocky Khan
Vacancy	David Turner
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

16 Report of the leader of the council

Councillor Jane Murphy, Leader of the council, provided the following update to Council.

“I am pleased to be able to update you all on the progress of the site review work which officers are undertaking to support the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

Officers wrote an initial letter to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 24 May, which is published on our website, and have maintained a dialogue with them over the last few weeks regarding the review process.

I am grateful for the support extended to the council from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and the Planning Inspectorate about the methodology and process of undergoing a site assessment process at this stage of the Local Plan development and their ongoing positive feedback. Notwithstanding this, in line with the democratic process, all sites under review will continue to be potential sites until a decision is made by Council.

The work which officers have undertaken with the support from both the Planning Inspectorate and the PAS causes me to believe that we are on track to deliver the milestones set out in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, something I will confirm to partners at the next meeting of the Growth Board.

We recognise that the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework is imminent and may impact on the work that our planning team are undertaking and could necessitate additional work to support our Local Plan. If anything should change or impact upon our timetable, we may need to revisit the question set out in the Council resolution of 15 May 2018 and I will confirm as soon as possible to members if that is the case.

Notwithstanding the above, I have asked that officers bring an updated version of the Local Plan timetable to Cabinet in August.

Officers remain in positive and regular communication with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and councillors will continue to be updated on the progress of the Local Plan through the Round Table Sessions. Our chief executive and other officers continues to liaise closely with our partner authorities across Oxfordshire regarding the Growth Deal linked aspects of this matter.

I would also like to update councillors on the current position in relation to the council's ongoing contract with Capita. The chief executive and his team have continued to keep me apprised of the latest developments in relation to the '5 Councils' Contract. As all members will be aware, we recently approved a renegotiation of the contract and I am pleased to say that the insourcing of services from VINCI and the establishment of a direct relationship with Indigo for our parking service delivery has gone exceptionally well. Whilst we all too often take it for granted, I would like to pay tribute to the staff involved in this process, they have actioned our decision quickly, with a strong focus on residents and have done so without fuss or drama.

In relation to the elements of the contract that remain with Capita, our officers continue to work in a positive manner with Capita to reshape the services they provide. I am pleased that Capita have committed to work with us to achieve this and that they support the benefits of the positive and truthful approach our officers have taken as confirmed via their recent email to our Scrutiny Committee, which I have asked to be copied to all members.

Financially, I am now advised that our 'best case' scenario under a full cost model of assessment is that the contract, over its life time, will 'break even at best'. I have held many meetings with officers regarding this matter, as I am aware it is a significant shift from the savings that members were originally advised of.

I am content that the chief executive and his team have not only secured the best possible renegotiation of the contract, but that the straightforward and pragmatic approach that they have taken has increased transparency and contributed to a significant increase in member understanding of the contract. This work is ongoing and I am sure all councillors would agree that we should offer our support to the officers involved in this. I would be happy to meet with any councillor, the chief executive and our section 151 officer to expand on this area, much of which remains commercially sensitive at this time.

I have specifically sought out assurance from the chief executive and our section 151 officer regarding the original decision making process and the information that was made available to members and staff.

I think all councillors will agree that we are fortunate that our current officers call a spade a spade and have committed themselves to resolving the challenges we face. I believe we are better informed regarding the detail and implications of the 5Cs contract now than at any other time. Following conversations with the chief executive and section 151 officer, based on the information that was available to us at the time of letting the contract, I do not believe members made a decision that was illogical, inappropriate or unreasonable. Furthermore, I believe that is the view of our chief executive. If required, I am sure he would confirm that to you all tonight.

My belief in the knowledge and ability of our current officers is supported by the fact that all the councils involved in the 5Cs contract sought agreement that our chief executive should lead the most recent renegotiation, something he undertook in addition to his demanding day job. This renegotiation, approved by full council, has provided the platform we are now seeking to further enhance. I have asked that a paper on the outcome of our current discussions with Capita is brought forward to full Council as soon as practicable. I have specifically requested that this focuses on the issues that impact South Oxfordshire District Council, rather than other partners to the contract, who may be impacted differently.

I am clear and wish to confirm my full support for the view that our officers' primary duty is to our council, but I have asked that they attempt to deliver our requirements in a way that is as inclusive and mindful of the needs and views of our partner councils as they are able to. I am content this is the case and will ensure that the paper I mentioned above is brought before full Council as soon as possible.

I also wish to update Council on a separate matter, which is not directly related to the 5 Councils contract renegotiation. I regret to inform Council that our external auditors have confirmed that their audit of our accounts will not be completed in line with the statutory deadline, which as members may be aware is two months earlier than in previous years. I am very disappointed by this, but I am assured by the chief executive and our section 151 officer that they are not aware of any issues of financial concern or fraud relating to this decision by our external auditors. Regrettably, it appears that EY believe that Capita, who provide our accountancy service, and our officers have failed to provide our auditors with all the information and detail they require in a timely enough fashion. This has been made clear by our officers at the recent Joint Audit and Governance Committee. I, along with the Cabinet member for finance and our Joint Audit and Governance co-chair have been explicit with the chief executive that we are seeking a full explanation of the reasons for this issue and a meeting is already scheduled with our external auditors EY, to achieve this. I would wish to emphasise that I respect and welcome the role of our external auditors and support the work they and our chief executive and section 151 officer are undertaking to address this issue, but it must not be repeated and we all need to be appraised of the reasons for the delay we have experienced.

Another aspect of our external auditor's role is to assess our Value For Money in the use of public funds. This area was not fully supported by our auditors last year, due predominately to capacity and knowledge issues across our senior structure. It is possible that the difference between our initially hoped for 5Cs savings and the current position may lead to a further qualification of our Value For Money assessment this year. However, I remain hopeful that the open and honest approach our officers are taking to addressing this issue, and its limited impact on our long term financial planning, will mean that this is not the case. That said, the delay in the completion of the audit work by EY means I cannot be sure of this at this time.

I, and my Cabinet, are of the view that officers are doing all they can to make progress across this complex and challenging agenda. I would ask that all members support them in this and that you accept my assurance that as soon as I am able, I will ask the chief executive to bring a paper to full Council that expands and clarifies the above”.

17 Community Governance Review - review of the parish boundary between Harpsden and Henley-on-Thames parishes

At its meeting on 16 July 2018 the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee made a final decision in respect of its community governance review of the boundary between Harpsden parish and Henley-on-Thames parish, south of Greys Road. The committee agreed the changes as recommended in the report and recommended Council to authorise the head of legal and democratic to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to change district wards and county divisions to reflect the changes made to the parish boundary.

RESOLVED:

To authorise the head of legal and democratic to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to change district wards and county divisions to reflect the changes made to the parish boundary.

18 Questions on notice

Question from Councillor Sue Cooper to Councillor Caroline Newton Cabinet member for Housing and Environment

Is the Cabinet member happy with the bin emptying service currently being provided by Biffa?

Councillor Murphy responded on behalf of Councillor Newton who had submitted an apology for absence.

Answer

Councillor Murphy responded that there are areas of improvement required for some aspects of the service and officers are working with Biffa management to address these. Biffa are responding positively in respect of the areas where officers are seeking improvement. Generally, the bin emptying service is good when you consider Biffa are only missing 0.11 per cent of a potential 13 million bin collections each year across the two districts, but Biffa recognise that they need to improve still further and are working with their crews to do so. As part of this approach, officers will be working with them to identify whether any additional communication messages to residents would be helpful.

Councillor Murphy referred specifically to the emptying of litter bins in Crowmarsh and particularly in the vicinity of the open air pool. She confirmed that Biffa had increased the number of collections.

Supplementary

In response to a supplementary question regarding the promised improved litter bin emptying service in Crowmarsh, particularly to address the increase in visitor numbers to the swimming pool, Councillor Murphy confirmed that she was satisfied that Biffa's promised improvements had resulted in extra collections including over the weekends.

19 Motions on notice

A. With the agreement of Council, Councillor David Turner moved an altered motion from that set out in the agenda, seconded by Councillor Mocky Khan, to take account of a proposed amendment. Additional words are shown in bold with deleted words shown by a strikethrough:

Council recognises that:

- Thames Valley Police are stretched to capacity, and that parking enforcement is one of their lowest priorities.
- members are regularly contacted by residents about inconvenient, illegal and dangerous parking violations that aren't being enforced.
- we have the power to ~~introduce~~ **request the county council to delegate** civil parking enforcement, as neighbouring councils have done. ~~at no additional cost to their tax payers.~~

This Council agrees in principle to introduce a civil parking enforcement scheme across the area covered by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Council **requests** ~~instructs~~ officers to produce a Business Case (to include financial costs and income, delivery options and timescales) to be considered as part of next year's budget.

Mr Hewardine addressed council on this motion. He referred to the fact that the issue of civil parking enforcement had been on the Cabinet work programme in December 2013 and was the subject of questions at Cabinet 9 October 2014 at which officers were asked to gather more detail on the extent of illegal on street parking and work on financial feasibility studies. He therefore concluded that much of the information requested in the motion should exist and allow for rapid progress. He stated that the towns of the district supported civil parking enforcement. In Didcot a petition signed by hundreds of signatures was debated by Didcot Town Council. The streets are blighted with the cars of rail users and traders on The Broadway are losing footfall and sales due to people parking all day in restricted parking areas.

Mr Harris addressed Council on the motion. He supported the motion and spoke of the inconsiderate and inappropriate parking in Didcot both on yellow lines and on pavements, the latter of which has implications for the visually impaired. He spoke of the need to introduce a range of measures alongside civil parking enforcement, including the provision of car parks.

The majority of councillors supported the motion noting that it was an issue in both the towns and villages of the district. A number of councillors spoke of problems arising from

commuters parking all day in villages close to commuter rail or bus routes hampering the free flow of traffic and causing congestion. This was repeated in towns such as Henley and Didcot where commuters avoided the car park fees by parking on the streets and in residential areas.

Councillors referred to the number of complaints received from constituents on the issue. Councillors noted that due to other competing priorities the police are unable to fully resource parking enforcement. It was therefore time to introduce civil parking enforcement to manage the road network safely and to ensure the smooth flow of traffic.

RESOLVED:

That Council recognises that:

- Thames Valley Police are stretched to capacity, and that parking enforcement is one of their lowest priorities.
- members are regularly contacted by residents about inconvenient, illegal and dangerous parking violations that aren't being enforced.
- we have the power to request the county council to delegate civil parking enforcement, as neighbouring councils have done.

This Council agrees in principle to introduce a civil parking enforcement scheme across the area covered by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Council requests officers to produce a Business Case (to include financial costs and income, delivery options and timescales) to be considered as part of next year's budget.

B. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Sue Cooper, seconded by Councillor David Turner:

“That all new housing planning permissions with car parking spaces in South Oxfordshire include the provision of an electric vehicle charging point”.

Whilst some councillors referred to the lack of electric vehicle ownership in the country and lack of knowledge regarding the likely growth in ownership, the majority of councillors supported the motion. A move to electric vehicles will help address air quality issues. Offering charging points at home, whilst acknowledging that provision would be difficult for those with remote or off-street parking spaces or flat owners, would provide a convenient alternative to public charging points and provide an incentive to electric vehicle ownership.

On the advice of the head of legal and democratic, and with the consent of the mover and seconder of the motion and Council, additional words were added to the motion to provide for officers to bring forward any necessary planning policies to achieve the terms of the motion.

RESOLVED:

That Council agrees the principle that all new housing planning permissions with car parking spaces in South Oxfordshire should include the provision of an electric vehicle charging point and asks officers to bring forward any necessary planning policies to achieve this.

C. Motion proposed by Councillor Felix Bloomfield, seconded by Councillor Bill Service:

“Council is supportive of the objectives and purpose of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway which it is acknowledged will support economic growth along the corridor. At this stage, the Council preference is for Corridor C, including sub-option C1 to the west of Oxford (see map attached to this agenda).

Council ask that the leader of South Oxfordshire, Councillor Jane Murphy, write to the Rt Hon Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport, to note the Council preference for road corridor options to the north and to the west of Oxford, and also note that should a south of Oxford corridor route materialise, given the potential environmental harm to southern Oxfordshire, furthermore detailed engagement and consultation should be undertaken on route options within this corridor”.

Some councillors questioned the need for an Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The road is designed to support economic growth but was this required in the area? Consideration should be given to the economic growth of the more deprived areas of the country. The road would have few interchanges and would therefore not be of use to existing residents or alleviate the existing traffic problems. Priority should be given to the construction of the long awaited East-West rail link.

However, the majority of councillors supported the motion and the need for an Oxford-Cambridge expressway to improve the capacity and reliability of existing routes and support economic growth. The route to the north and west would align with the existing busy roads around Oxford, alleviate congestion on these roads, serve the growth areas and mirror the East-West rail link. Councillors expressed concern regarding the environmental impact of alternative routes which would have a detrimental impact on rural communities, the Green Belt and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their setting.

RESOLVED:

That Council is supportive of the objectives and purpose of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway which it is acknowledged will support economic growth along the corridor. At this stage, the Council preference is for Corridor C, including sub-option C1 to the west of Oxford (as shown on the map attached to the agenda for the Council meeting on 19 July 2018).

That Council ask that the leader of South Oxfordshire, Councillor Jane Murphy, write to the Rt Hon Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport, to note the Council preference for road corridor options to the north and to the west of Oxford, and also note that should a south of Oxford corridor route materialise, given the potential environmental harm to southern Oxfordshire, furthermore detailed engagement and consultation should be undertaken on route options within this corridor.

D. Motion to be proposed by Councillor Felix Bloomfield, seconded by Councillor Lynn Lloyd:

“This Council supports the Government in undertaking the review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We welcome the opportunity to be consulted upon the review and to feed into the process of review to assess the capability of the AONBs becoming National Park Authorities”.

In supporting the motion councillors expressed views that designation as a national park would offer greater protection for the districts Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty against development and expansion from neighbouring areas as well as serving to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

RESOLVED:

That Council supports the Government in undertaking the review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We welcome the opportunity to be consulted upon the review and to feed into the process of review to assess the capability of the AONBs becoming National Park Authorities.

E. Motion proposed by Councillor Felix Bloomfield, seconded by Councillor Toby Newman:

Council notes that South Oxfordshire is an area of exceptionally high property values relative to the rest of England and that the statutory definition of Affordable Housing, whether for rented or home ownership, is related directly to these values. Average local incomes have not kept pace with average house prices or rents and 'Affordable' housing is not, therefore, affordable to many households and individuals. Council asks Councillor Jane Murphy, Leader of the council, to write to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the council's concern. Council urges the Secretary of State to give consideration to the definition of Affordable Housing, taking into account the impact very high values have on the current definition of affordable housing and urges him to consider a national debate on affordability and the implementation of a regional based definition of "affordable housing" to be introduced to set a maximum price model for affordable housing.

Councillors supported the motion. Councillors noted that affordable rents and affordable home ownership is linked to local market house prices which are well above the national average. To meet the statutory definition of affordable can be far more expensive than many other parts of the country relative to local income, impacting on the ability to recruit key workers, allow people to get on the property ladder or find suitable accommodation.

RESOLVED:

That Council notes that South Oxfordshire is an area of exceptionally high property values relative to the rest of England and that the statutory definition of Affordable Housing, whether for rented or home ownership, is related directly to these values. Average local incomes have not kept pace with average house prices or rents and 'Affordable' housing is not, therefore, affordable to many households and individuals. Council asks Councillor Jane Murphy, Leader of the council, to write to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the council's concern. Council urges the Secretary of State to give consideration to the definition of Affordable Housing, taking into account the impact very high values have on the current definition of affordable housing and urges him to consider a national debate on affordability and the implementation of a regional based definition of "affordable housing" to be introduced to set a maximum price model for affordable housing.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Chairman

Date