

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD ON THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2020 AT 6.00 PM

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Present:

David Bretherton (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bartholomew, Robin Bennett, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Peter Dragonetti, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Elizabeth Gillespie, Kate Gregory, Victoria Haval, Simon Hewerdine, Lorraine Hillier, Alexandrine Kantor, Mocky Khan, George Levy, Lynn Lloyd, Axel Macdonald, Jane Murphy, Caroline Newton, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, Sue Roberts, David Rouane, Anne-Marie Simpson, Alan Thompson, David Turner, Ian White and Celia Wilson

Apologies:

Ken Arlett, Stefan Gawrysiak, Sarah Gray, Kellie Hinton, Jo Robb and Ian Snowdon tendered apologies.

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Adrian Duffield, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

77 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

Councillor Kantor made a statement that she is employed at UKAEA Culham and Councillor David Turner made a statement that he is a member of the Culham Local Liaison Committee – a potential housing site in the Local Plan.

78 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

Councillor David Bretherton, Chairman, provided housekeeping information. He advised that he had recently attended the National Kebab Awards in London at which a kebab van operating in Thame had retained its crown for kebab van of the year.

79 Public participation

The chairman advised that a number of members of the public had registered to address Council on agenda item 5 – South Oxfordshire Local Plan. Council agreed to extend the public speaking time to allow each member of the public who had registered to speak for three minutes to make their address.

80 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034: options to progress

Councillor Bretherton, Chairman of the council, invited Mark Stone, Chief Executive, to address Council. The chief executive advised that following discussions between council representatives and officials from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), in a letter dated 3 March 2020, the Secretary of State wrote to Councillor Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, in which he stated he is using government powers in Section 27 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directing the council to progress the plan through examination to be adopted by December this year, and for senior council officers to report monthly to MHCLG officials on progress of the plan. Councillors could therefore not consider the options set out in the officer's report published with the meeting agenda due to the Secretary of State's new Direction and members of the public should confine points to the progress of the Local Plan.

Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and Chair of the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board addressed Council. He welcomed Cabinet's recommendations. The recommendations offered a pragmatic way forward to protect residents from speculative development, to deliver the required infrastructure and a green plan to support cyclepaths and public transport.

Sarah Webb, a local resident addressed council. She welcomed the action of the council to address the climate emergency. She regretted the action of the Secretary of State to force the council to adopt an out of date plan and urged Council to withdraw the Local Plan and respect the outcome of the 2019 district elections.

Caroline Baird, representing Save Culham Green Belt, addressed Council. She expressed the view that the action of the Secretary of State was a violation of democracy and that the Local Plan included measures in direct conflict with the 2019 Conservative parliamentary election manifesto. The plan provided for excessive housing numbers based on a flawed evidence base. The site at Culham would become a car reliant site. The plan had no regard to the climate emergency or flooding issues.

Richard Harding, representing Campaign to Protect Rural England Oxfordshire, addressed Council. He expressed the view that the Secretary of State's new Direction was a sad day for democracy. He stated that the proposed Local Plan was flawed based on out of date assumptions, that the high numbers of houses would be undeliverable, that it did not address the climate emergency and would damage both the countryside and environment. He urged Council to resist the Direction issued by the Secretary of State and evaluate the legal options open to the council to challenge it.

David Pryor, a local resident, addressed Council. He spoke in support of the Local Plan which would provide much needed infrastructure for Didcot. He also spoke in support of a

merger between South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils and the Didcot Garden Town project.

Marie Holmes, a local resident, addressed Council. She expressed the view that she felt betrayed by the Secretary of State's Direction against a democratically elected administration. The Local Plan will destroy the Green Belt and open spaces and result in Garsington becoming a suburb of Oxford. She urged Council to challenge the Direction of the Secretary of State by means of a judicial review.

John Seymour, a local resident, addressed Council. She expressed the view that the Local Plan was unsound and required changes to progress through examination. The Local Plan would destroy the character of Garsington and destroy the Green Belt in an attempt to meet the unmet housing need of Oxford City. She urged the council to withdraw co-operation with the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

Councillor Leigh Rawlins, Cabinet member for planning, moved and Councillor Robin Bennett, Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration, seconded Cabinet's recommendations as follows:

To:

1. note the terms of the Direction to the council from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
2. acknowledge the decision of the Secretary of State to allow South Oxfordshire District Council to progress the submitted Local Plan 2034;
3. request the head of planning to prepare a timetable and ensure that adequate staff resources are in place in order to meet the requirements of the Direction;
4. continue to acknowledge the critical importance of long-overdue infrastructure to support housing already delivered and to be delivered through the Local Plan and request the Secretary of State to confirm his commitment to the funding provided through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund;
5. ask the chief executive to ensure that sufficient budget provision and staff resource is made available to fully explore all opportunities to address through the local planning process and any other means the council's concerns including but not limited to:
 - (i) addressing the council's declared climate emergency;
 - (ii) enhancing planning policies for environmental standards, including improved site master-planning to achieve high quality sustainable settlements; and
 - (iii) early delivery of appropriate regeneration and housing delivery activity to meet local needs.

In moving the recommendations, the Cabinet member for planning believed that the concerns expressed about the Local Plan presented genuine challenges that needed to be addressed, including the housing numbers required, Green Belt issues, climate change, and the need to reduce long distance commuting. However, the council must move forward, recognise the Direction issued by the Secretary of State and allow the submitted Local Plan 2034 to progress following five months of delay. This option offered a

pragmatic and reasonable approach to address Oxford City’s unmet housing need and ensure continued support for infrastructure funding. Cabinet’s recommendations asked officers to explore all opportunities to address through the local planning process the climate emergency, enhanced policies for environmental standards to achieve high quality sustainable settlements, and the early delivery of appropriate regeneration and housing delivery to meet local needs.

The majority of councillors supported Cabinet’s proposals. They noted the Direction that had been given to them by the Secretary of State and acknowledged it would allow the council to progress the submitted Local Plan 2034, rather than others being asked to do so. The recommendations offered a pragmatic approach for the council to regain control, move forward, work with other councils, and focus on what was achievable. They noted that the recommendations asked the Chief Executive, Mark Stone, to ensure that sufficient budget provision and staff resource is made available to fully explore all opportunities to address the council’s concerns and aspirations, particularly in relation to the delivery of regeneration and housing delivery to meet local needs, enhanced environmental policies, including developing new planning policies that seek to ensure new buildings and developments in the district are genuinely sustainable, meet high-quality environmental standards, and the council’s declared climate emergency.

A number of councillors, whilst supporting Cabinet’s recommendations, expressed concern regarding the intervention of the Secretary of State which undermined local democracy, the delay caused by the previous temporary Direction, the deliverability of the plan, the impact of the plan on the Green Belt and the failure of measures to address the climate emergency.

A minority of councillors considered that the development of a new plan offered the best option. The Secretary of State’s Direction would force through a democratically rejected plan. The plan would result in unnecessary and undeliverable housing numbers which would lead to speculative housing development applications.

An amendment, moved by Councillor Hewardine and seconded by Councillor Gillespie, to replace ‘ask the chief executive’ with ‘direct the chief executive’ in 5 of the Cabinet recommendations was lost on being put to the vote.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 67, which provides for a recorded vote if three members request one, the Chairman called for a recorded vote on the motion which was declared carried with the voting as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Anna Badcock	Elizabeth Gillespie	
Pieter-Paul Barker	Simon Hewardine	
David Bartholomew		
Robin Bennett		

For	Against	Abstain
David Bretherton		
Sam Casey-Rerhaye		
Sue Cooper		
Peter Dragonetti		
Maggie Filipova-Rivers		
Kate Gregory		
Victoria Haval		
Lorraine Hillier		
Alexandrine Kantor		
Mocky Khan		
George Levy		
Lynn Lloyd		
Axel Macdonald		
Jane Murphy		
Caroline Newton		
Andrea Powell		
Leigh Rawlins		
Sue Roberts		
David Rouane		
Anne-Marie Simpson		
Alan Thompson		
David Turner		
Ian White		
Celia Wilson		

For	Against	Abstain
28	2	0

RESOLVED: to

1. note the terms of the Direction to the council from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
2. acknowledge the decision of the Secretary of State to allow South Oxfordshire District Council to progress the submitted Local Plan 2034;
3. request the head of planning to prepare a timetable and ensure that adequate staff resources are in place in order to meet the requirements of the Direction;
4. continue to acknowledge the critical importance of long-overdue infrastructure to support housing already delivered and to be delivered through the Local Plan and request the Secretary of State to confirm his commitment to the funding provided through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund;
5. ask the chief executive to ensure that sufficient budget provision and staff resource is made available to fully explore all opportunities to address through the local planning process and any other means the council's concerns including but not limited to:
 - (i) addressing the council's declared climate emergency;
 - (ii) enhancing planning policies for environmental standards, including improved site master-planning to achieve high quality sustainable settlements; and
 - (iii) early delivery of appropriate regeneration and housing delivery activity to meet local needs.

The meeting closed at 7:10pm

Chairman

Date