

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 10.30 AM ON THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER 2015

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK,
CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Margaret Turner (Chairman)

Paul Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Anna Badcock, Charles Bailey, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, Nigel Champken-Woods, John Cotton, Margaret Davies, Pat Dawe, David Dodds, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Tony Harbour, Lorraine Hillier, Elaine Hornsby, Sue Lawson, Lynn Lloyd, Imran Lokhon, Jeannette Matelot Green, Jane Murphy, Anthony Nash, Toby Newman, David Nimmo-Smith, Richard Pullen, Robert Simister, Alan Thompson, David Turner, John Walsh and Ian White

Apologies:

Stephen Harrod and Bill Service tendered apologies.

Officers:

David Buckle, Steve Bishop, Steven Corrigan, Margaret Reed and Anna Robinson

16 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

17 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2015 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

18 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman welcomed councillors to the meeting and gave housekeeping announcements.

She welcomed Sue Lawson and Will Hall to the council following their election at the recent by elections in Sandford and the Wittenhams on 8 October and Sonning Common on 22 October respectively.

She thanked officers for their hard work throughout the year and wished them and councillors a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Council agreed as a trial to suspend council procedure rule 80 insofar as it requires councillors to stand when speaking at Council meetings.

The chairman invited John Cotton, Leader of the council, to provide the following updates on recent appointments:

- Will Hall had been appointed to the Cabinet with responsibility for the Corporate Plan
- Toby Newman had been appointed as the council's Armed Forces Champion to ensure the council met its commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant.

19 Questions from the public and public participation

None.

20 Questions under Council procedure rule 11

None.

21 Joint Statement of Licensing Policy

Council considered the Licensing Acts Committee's recommendations, made at its meeting on 24 November 2015, on a statement of licensing policy jointly developed with Vale of White Horse District Council.

In moving the recommendations David Dodds, Chairman of the Licensing Acts Committee, advised that there had been substantial legislative change affecting the Licensing Act 2003 and the current policy was out of date in a number of key areas. The changes were statutory in nature and had already been enacted. The new statement of licensing policy was far less structured than the previous format. This was to ensure that the policy remained relevant in the light of further proposed changes to the Licensing Act 2003 and its associated legislation and regulations.

In seconding the recommendations Jane Murphy, Cabinet member responsible for licensing, thanked the Licensing Acts Committee for its work on reviewing the policy.

RESOLVED: to

1. adopt the Joint Statement of Licensing Policy as attached to the Council agenda for the meeting held on 17 December 2015;
2. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make minor editorial changes to the Joint Statement of Licensing Policy;
3. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to publish the Joint Statement of Licensing Policy in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003.

22 Joint Gambling Policy

Kevin Bulmer made a statement that he was a shareholder in a company which was the landlord of a bookmakers' premises in the district.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 3 December 2015, on a statement of licensing policy jointly developed with Vale of White Horse District Council.

In moving the recommendations Jane Murphy, Cabinet member responsible for licensing, thanked the Licensing Acts Committee for its work on reviewing the policy.

In seconding the recommendations David Dodds, Chairman of the Licensing Acts Committee, advised that there were only two changes to the policy both of which will be legal requirements in 2016. There were no other significant changes to the policy other than some very minor wording changes as a result of comments made during the consultation.

RESOLVED: to

1. adopt the proposed Joint Gambling Policy as attached to the Council agenda for the meeting held on 17 December 2015;
2. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make minor editorial changes to the Joint Gambling Policy; and
3. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to publish the Joint Gambling Policy in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement)(England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

23 Council tax reduction scheme grant for town and parish councils

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 3 December 2015, on the council tax reduction scheme grant to towns and parishes for 2016/17.

Some councillors opposed Cabinet's recommendations which, in their view, would leave town and parish councils in a position where they had to set their precepts in December or January without knowing what grant they might receive from the district council. Without this money parishes could struggle to fund additional duties and, if the government introduced a cap on council tax increases in town and parish council precepts for 2016/17, could risk a shortage of funds. The proposal to introduce a further grant funding stream was not necessary because the council already operated a generous scheme which was underspent. Council should reject the recommendations and request Cabinet to prepare a more detailed plan in 2016.

However, the majority of councillors supported the recommendations. The current scheme had not achieved its original intention to mitigate the impact of the council tax reduction scheme on town and parish councils with less than 28 per cent all town and parish councils using the grant as part of their budget setting process to issue a precept lower than might have been the case had they taken into account the amount of grant they received. The proposed grant scheme would simplify the process, offer a better way of distributing funds and target funding towards visible projects.

RESOLVED: to

1. bring forward a new scheme of distributing the grant for consideration during 2016;
2. cease with immediate effect the current methodology for distributing the council tax reduction scheme; and
3. make £152,000 available for the new grant scheme when Council sets its revenue budget for 2016/17.

24 Council Tax Base 2016/17

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 3 December 2015, on the council tax base for 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

1. to approve the report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 3 December 2015 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2016/17;
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 2016/17 be 54,965.0; and
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 2016/17 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix 1 of the report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 3 December 2015.

25 Review of political balance following Sandford and the Wittenhams and Sonning Common by-elections

Council reviewed the political balance following the recent by-elections in Sandford and the Wittenhams and Sonning Common. At the by-elections held on Thursday 8 October and Thursday 22 October 2015 Mrs Sue Lawson was elected as a councillor for the Sandford and the Wittenhams Ward and Mr William Hall was elected to the Sonning Common Ward. Both councillors had formally joined the Conservative Group.

RESOLVED: to

1. allocate the vacant seats on the General Licensing Committee, Housing Appeals Panel, Joint Scrutiny Committee, Licensing Acts Committee, Planning Committee and Scrutiny Committee to the Conservative Group;
2. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make appointments to the above and vacant substitute places in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group Leader.

26 Councillors' allowances scheme

The councillors' allowances scheme allows for the allowances payable under the scheme to be increased by the same percentage as the annual staff pay increase

and for travel and subsistence to be increased to the maximum rates payable to officers subject to a Council decision.

John Cotton moved and Jane Murphy seconded a motion to increase both the basic allowance and the special responsibility allowances for 2016/17 in line with any staff pay award and to set the travel and subsistence allowances at the same level as those payable to officers.

RESOLVED: to

1. increase the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances by the same percentage as the annual staff pay increase for 2016/17;
2. set the travel and subsistence allowances to the maximum rates payable to officers.

27 Review of the council's constitution

Council considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on proposed amendments to the council's constitution.

RESOLVED: to

1. note the work done by the Joint Constitution Review Group and the intention to bring forward wholesale revisions of the council's constitution for consideration by Council;
2. note the overall approach of the review group to develop "mirror" constitutions with Vale of White Horse District Council and commonality of wording where possible;
3. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic services to make the necessary amendments to the constitution to amend the scrutiny call-in procedures and the definition of key decisions;
4. approve the amendments of the officer employment procedure rules for inclusion in the constitution as attached to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to Council on 17 December 2015;
5. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services or a deputy monitoring officer to appoint a panel of independent persons drawn from the independent persons appointed by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils under the Localism Act 2011;
6. authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic services to make any minor or consequential amendments to the constitution.

28 Motions under Council procedure rule 41

None.

The meeting closed at 11.00am

Chairman

Date