

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

# Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON THURSDAY 14 APRIL 2016

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK,  
CROWMARSH GIFFORD

## Present:

Margaret Turner (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, Charles Bailey, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, Steve Connel, John Cotton, Pat Dawe, David Dodds, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Tony Harbour, Paul Harrison, Lorraine Hillier, Elaine Hornsby, Sue Lawson, Lynn Lloyd, Jeannette Matelot, Jane Murphy, Anthony Nash, Toby Newman, David Nimmo-Smith, Richard Pullen, Robert Simister, Alan Thompson, David Turner and John Walsh

## Apologies:

Nigel Champken-Woods, Margaret Davies, Anthony Dearlove, Stephen Harrod, Imran Lokhon, Bill Service and Ian White tendered apologies.

**Officers:** Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Charlotte Colver, Steven Corrigan, Andrew Down and Margaret Reed

## 46 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

## 47 Minutes of the previous meeting

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

## 48 Chairman's announcements

The chairman provided housekeeping information.

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

## 49 Questions from the public and public participation

Two members of the public had registered to ask a question of Mr Cotton, Leader of the council.

- A. Mrs Charlie Payne expressed concern that no statement had been made about whether children's centres would be funded under the proposed Southern Oxfordshire Unitary Authority. Despite the valuable preventative and safeguarding work children's centres do, Oxfordshire County Council could not afford to fund these centres. She noted that according to Oxfordshire County Council figures, 47 percent of children under five use the children's centres. The centres work to safeguard children, support families and pick up problems before they require more costly interventions. She referred to a briefing paper, circulated to all councillors, which outlines the current evidence-base on children's centres and drew attention in particular to the impacts of closing children's centres set out in the paper.

She noted that the proposed Southern Oxfordshire Unitary Authority is intended to provide better local services and improved value for money. In conclusion she asked for a statement on whether there would be funding for children's centres under this new arrangement.

In response Mr Cotton, Leader of the council, stated that decisions on such funding would be a matter for the new unitary authority. The creation of a unitary authority was intended to generate sufficient savings to maintain such services. He undertook to respond via email in more detail to the issues raised in the briefing paper.

As a supplementary question Mrs Payne asked if the district council would make representations to Oxfordshire County Council to keep the children's centres open. Mr Cotton responded that the district council had identified funding to maintain services affected by the county council cuts (rural bus services). He was willing to discuss the matter further with Mrs Payne to identify how the district council could lobby to prevent the loss of important parts of the service ahead of a possible unitary authority.

- B. Mr John Gordon asked what steps the district council is taking to ensure that South Oxfordshire residents will be consulted on the overall growth figures in OxLEP's forthcoming 'refresh' of its Strategic Economic Plan?

Mr Cotton responded that the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is not a statutory document and, that whilst the district council must have regard to the SEP, it does not direct policy for the district council. The district council will undertake an extensive public consultation exercise on its Local Plan and the SEP would be considered by councillors at a future Council meeting.

In response to a supplementary question seeking confirmation that local councillors would be encouraged to hold public meetings with constituents on this issue, Mr Cotton responded that this was a matter for individual councillors.

## 50 Questions under Council procedure rule 34

None.

## **51 Motions under Council procedure rule 41**

None.

## **52 Berinsfield improvement programme**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 April, to vire £1,500,000 from the Regeneration and Housing Initiatives in Science Vale and Didcot scheme in the provisional capital programme to the revenue budget for the purposes of preparing a comprehensive regeneration strategy and delivery plan for Berinsfield by December 2017.

In moving the recommendation Mr Cotton, as Leader and Cabinet member for strategic policy (including the local plan), referred to the challenges in Berinsfield - the main health, education and community buildings being in poor condition, lack of employment opportunities and lower than average household incomes. Substantial investment was required to produce a regeneration strategy for a comprehensive, co-ordinated programme of improvements to create better, more sustainable Berinsfield for current and future generations.

Councillors welcomed the report and the identified funding.

**RESOLVED:** to vire £1,500,000 from the Regeneration and Housing Initiatives in Science Vale and Didcot scheme in the provisional capital programme to the revenue budget for the purposes of preparing a comprehensive regeneration strategy and delivery plan for Berinsfield by December 2017.

## **53 Corporate plan review**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 April, on the council's corporate plan, looking forward to 2020.

A revised corporate plan as tabled at the Cabinet meeting and amended to reflect the change made by Cabinet was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and tabled at the meeting.

Mr Hall, Cabinet member responsible for the corporate plan, thanked councillors for their input and in moving Cabinet's recommendation highlighted a number of areas – tackling air pollution, a cycle hire scheme, improving the provision of cycle tracks, a continuation of the deep clean programme, supporting the voluntary sector, the introduction of individual councillor budgets, investment in leisure facilities and investigating opportunities for increasing the role of parish councils in hyperlocal issues. He believed the corporate plan would focus activity, guide policy and operational decisions, and inform the public of the council's aims.

A number of councillors welcomed the introduction of individual councillor budgets. Those who had experience of such budgets at Oxfordshire County Council identified the benefits of ward councillors having the ability to address issues at the local level, the benefits of seed funding and the potential for achieving matched funding from parish councils. Other councillors welcomed the support for local bus services and the commitment to tackle poor air quality.

In response to a question, Mr Hall stated that reference to any specific areas in the dog fouling and litter target would be removed from the corporate plan.

Council welcomed the corporate plan. Mr Hall advised that the final version would be published taking account of any minor amendments suggested by councillors and agreed by the head of corporate strategy in consultation with him as Cabinet member for the corporate plan.

**RESOLVED:** to

1. adopt the Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020;
2. authorise the head of corporate strategy in consultation with the Cabinet member for the corporate plan to finalise and publish the Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020.

## **54 Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 7 April 2016, to make the Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for South Oxfordshire.

In response to a question Mr Cotton, Leader and Cabinet member, confirmed that he would liaise with the planning department regarding officer resources to support the progression of neighbourhood plans and stated that additional funds would be available for town and parish councils from the new grant scheme which replaced the council tax reduction scheme grant.

**RESOLVED:** to make the Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan, attached at appendix 1 to the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 7 April 2016, part of the Development Plan for South Oxfordshire.

## **55 Leader of the council report**

Mr Cotton, Leader of the council, provided the following updates:

- Devolution (unitary authority) – appointment of consultants to undertake a feasibility study likely in the next few days. A full public consultation would be undertaken on any proposal.
- Recruitment of chief executive – a large number of high quality applications received. Timetable provided for an appointment at the annual meeting of Council in May.
- New offices – further information likely in the next few weeks although with a four year lease at 135 Milton Park and the unitary authority project there was no immediate pressure to resolve the matter.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm

Chairman

Date