

# Minutes

## OF A MEETING OF THE

## Council



Listening Learning Leading

**HELD ON THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2019 AT 6.00 PM**

**THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK, CROWMARSH  
GIFFORD**

### **Present:**

David Bretherton (Chair)

Ken Arlett, Pieter-Paul Barker, Robin Bennett, Sue Cooper, Peter Dragonetti, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Elizabeth Gillespie, Sarah Gray, Victoria Haval, Simon Hewerdine, Lorraine Hillier, Alexandrine Kantor, Mocky Khan, George Levy, Lynn Lloyd, Axel Macdonald, Caroline Newton, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, Jo Robb, Sue Roberts, David Rouane, Anne-Marie Simpson, Ian Snowdon, Alan Thompson, David Turner and Ian White

### **Apologies:**

Anna Badcock, David Bartholomew, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Kate Gregory, Kellie Hinton, Jane Murphy and Celia Wilson tendered apologies.

**Officers:** Steven Corrigan, Simon Hewings, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

### **38 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

### **39 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest**

None.

### **40 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

The Chairman provided general housekeeping information and advised there were no items of urgent business.

At the request of the Chairman, Mark Stone, Chief Executive, provided an update on the Local Plan 2034. He advised that the direction issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government remained in place (see minute 28 of the

October Council meeting). Officers were in discussion with civil servants and a decision was expected in the new year.

#### **41 Public participation**

None.

#### **42 Petitions**

None.

#### **43 Making the Berrick Salome Neighbourhood Development Plan**

Council considered the recommendations of Cabinet, made at its meeting on 5 December 2019, on making the Berrick Salome Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the development plan for South Oxfordshire.

The plan was compatible with the European Union obligations and complied with the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

**RESOLVED** to:

1. make the Berrick Salome Neighbourhood Development Plan so that it continues to be part of the council's development plan; and
2. authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for planning, and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to correct any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

#### **44 Treasury Management Outturn 2018-19**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 5 December 2019, on the outturn performance of the treasury management function for the financial year 2018/19.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet had considered the head of finance's report and were satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

**RESOLVED:** to

1. approve the treasury management outturn report 2018/19; and
2. approve the actual 2018/19 prudential indicators within the report.

#### **45 Council tax base 2020/21**

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 5 December 2019, on the council tax base for 2020/21.

## **RESOLVED:**

1. to approve the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 5 December 2019 for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2020/21 be approved;
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 2020/21 be 57,848.5; 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 2020/21 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 5 December 2019.

## **46 Designating the council's section 151 chief finance officer**

Simon Hewings left the room during the consideration of this item.

Council considered the report of the chief executive on the designation of Simon Hewings, interim head of finance, as the council's section 151 chief finance officer.

The Chairman on behalf of Council congratulated Simon Hewings on his appointment as interim head of finance and section 151 officer.

## **RESOLVED: to**

1. designate Simon Hewings, the interim Head of Finance, as the council's section 151 chief finance officer from 23 December 2019;
2. authorise the head of legal and democratic to make any consequential changes required to the council's constitution to reflect this change.

## **47 Report of the leader of the council**

Councillor Sue Cooper, Leader of the council, addressed Council. The text of her report is available on the council's [website](#).

## **48 Questions on notice**

1. Question from Councillor Ken Arlett to Councillor David Rouane, Cabinet member for housing and environment

How many vehicles/drivers have been caught feeding the meters for over three hours, in both the Kings Road and Greys Road car parks in Henley over the past three months?

### **Answer**

If car park inspectors spot meter feeding they issue an excess charge notice for the expiry of the first ticket. However, we do not hold records regarding the specific reason for issuing excess charge notices (ECNs) and therefore we are not able to say what proportion relates to meter feeding. Some drivers are very astute and remove any trace of previous tickets from their vehicles. We are aware that this can happen and our car park inspectors are doing their best to monitor the situation. However, drivers are allowed to

move from Kings Road to Greys Road without penalty as the current parking order allows this.

The car park contract manager has provided the below data on ECNs:

For overstay/expired ticket we have issued the following between 1 September 2019 to 30 November 2019

Greys Road 92  
Kings Road 45  
Southfields 2

### **Supplementary question**

In response to a supplementary question regarding the roll out of updated ticket machines (see minute 34(9) of October 2019 Council minutes) the Cabinet member responded that there was no further detail available.

2. Question from Councillor Ken Arlett to Councillor David Rouane, Cabinet member for housing and environment

Since the reduction of car park spaces in the Kings Road Car Park and the closure of one of the two entrances, what has been the loss on revenue since April?

### **Answer**

There has been no loss of revenue since April 2019 and we are monitoring this situation carefully. There is an arrangement in place which means that Murphy's pay for the spaces they are using.

### **Supplementary question**

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet member undertook to provide details of the precise revenue figures over the past 6 months for 2019 and 2018 in writing.

3. Question from Councillor Ken Arlett to Councillor David Rouane, Cabinet member for housing and environment

Is it correct that takings from all town/parish council car parks are not kept separately?

### **Answer**

For clarification this response relates to car parks in towns that are managed by the councils and monitored by Saba. We do not monitor the town/parish council car parks. The Council accounts for income from all its car parks together within its budgets so does not separate income for the different car parks. However, we are able to interrogate and analyse the ticket sale data and income recorded by Saba for each individual car park if required.

### **Supplementary question**

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet member referred to his previous answer in which he stated that income details for each individual car park could be provided.

4. Question from Councillor Ken Arlett to Councillor Sue Cooper, Leader of the council

Can the leader of the council confirm that the following issues will be considered by the constitution review working group?

- to allow local ward councillors to take part in the debate and vote at planning committee meetings
- to reduce public speaking time for each group of speakers to 3 minutes at planning committee meetings.
- to allow planning committee members to only ask one question per application to speakers, and one question to officers.

**Answer**

I have previously confirmed in a written response to a question, submitted at the July Council meeting, that the issue of local ward councillors taking part in the debate and vote on planning applications in their ward at planning committee meetings will be considered as part of the review. I have spoken to officers who have also confirmed that the other issues you have raised for review will also be considered.

**Supplementary question**

In response to a supplementary question the leader of the council confirmed that each political group would be represented on the constitution review task group and that councillors would have the opportunity to raise issues with the recommendations coming to Council for consideration and agreement.

**49 Motions on notice**

**1. Motion proposed by Councillor Robin Bennett, seconded by Councillor David Rouane as set out in the agenda at agenda item 13(1)**

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council notes that South Oxfordshire District Council's current position is support for an Oxfordshire County Unitary; in March 2017 this council voted to support 'Better Oxfordshire', a proposal to create a unitary authority.

The approach of 'Better Oxfordshire' was for a single unitary authority based on the current County Council boundary. Oxfordshire County Council and Vale of the White Horse District Council also took formal decisions to support the proposal.

The proposal was submitted to the Secretary of State for approval under legislative provisions containing a sunset clause, which expired in March of 2019, meaning that at this time the proposal is not under active consideration.

Government's current stated intention, according to recent statements by Robert Jenrick, in his role as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, is to move away from smaller district councils and towards Unitary and/or Combined Authority models of Governance.

**Council recognises that:**

Democratic institutions should be responsive and accountable to their electorate as well as being efficient and achieving value for money for their services. South Oxfordshire District Council's status enables a close connection to residents and communities, especially with regard to planning, and it is a democratically accountable body with the powers and resources to work with other organisations and deliver services in ways that more distant organisations cannot.

Therefore, any future move towards Unitary status should be on the basis of the smallest viable geography that enables a similarly close link to communities and should not prevent independent candidates and smaller political parties competing for seats alongside the major political parties.

Should such structural change occur in the future, in addition to securing increased value for money in service delivery, it must also aim to increase, not reduce, localised accountability for service provision and resource allocation, and should support the devolution of power to the lowest sustainable level.

**Council therefore confirms that:**

- A. It recognises that much of the financial and economic data and analysis that underpinned the 'Better Oxfordshire' submission is now out of date; and
- B. Due to an absence of up to date analysis, South Oxfordshire District Council can no longer support a view that a County-wide single Unitary currently represents the best governance model for Oxfordshire: and proposes that:
  - i. Officers explore alternative governance approaches that protect, and enhance, the democratic link to local communities, to assist council in taking a new, updated view;
  - ii. As part of this, officers should make contact with the MHCLG to explore the approach the new Secretary of State will take to any proposals for unitary based re-organisation; and asks that
  - iii. A report on this matter is brought to full Council, by the Chief Executive and Leader, outlining their understanding of the new Government's intentions and possible approaches available to this council, by Summer 2020.
  - iv. A cross party 'governance model' working group is formed to support the Council's review of this area; and notes that
  - v. Should any revised unitary proposal be developed in future, the Constitution Review Group will be asked to recommend appropriate constitutional models for consideration by Council.

## **2. Motion proposed by Councillor Robin Bennett, seconded by Councillor Sue Roberts as set out in the agenda at agenda item 13(2)**

The mover and seconder of the motion accepted an amendment moved by Councillor Caroline Newton to add the words “housing and employment” after **all** in the second paragraph of the motion.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Council notes the continuing development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – a joint statutory spatial plan based on the boundary of the County.

Council sees merit in regional - and county - scale planning for biodiversity and environmental sustainability matters, such as “nature recovery networks”, as well as for public transport infrastructure, but considers that **all** housing and employment allocations (including strategic sites), planning policies and other related matters continue to be best dealt with at the local district planning authority level, and should not form part of the Oxfordshire 2050 plan.

Council therefore asks:

That officers and any councillor representing the council ensure this position is reflected in all engagement with, and contributions to, the Oxfordshire 2050 plan making process, and that the Council’s position is made known, and emphasised, to key partners and Government.

## **3. With the agreement of Council, Councillor Sue Cooper moved and Councillor Andrea Powell seconded, the altered motion set out below with the additional wording shown in bold**

Recognising the financial position of the Council, and the need to ensure that residents are represented by a robust and sustainable council, officers are asked to bring forward proposals for South Oxfordshire District Council to consider whether or not a formal merger with the Vale of White Horse District Council, with the same total number of district councillors, creating a single district council based on their combined geography with increased financial resilience would be beneficial. This work should also consider the options for the development of area committees within this model, to ensure that decision making is devolved to the lowest appropriate level.

Should any formal merger proposal be developed in future, the Constitution Review Group will be asked to recommend appropriate constitutional models for consideration by Council.

Further, in recognition of the recent General Election and the fact that Local Government finance has been cut by nearly 50% in the last 10 years, with funding often short term in scope and tied to national government goals, Council requests the Leader in the first instance to:

- Write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge that a Local Government Financial settlement is devised as a matter of the utmost urgency that is sufficient to give stability to all

councils across the Country and will support the ability of local councils to make decisions on their statutory duties in line with their local elected mandate.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That recognising the financial position of the Council, and the need to ensure that residents are represented by a robust and sustainable council, officers are asked to bring forward proposals for South Oxfordshire District Council to consider whether or not a formal merger with the Vale of White Horse District Council, with the same total number of district councillors, creating a single district council based on their combined geography with increased financial resilience would be beneficial. This work should also consider the options for the development of area committees within this model, to ensure that decision making is devolved to the lowest appropriate level.

Should any formal merger proposal be developed in future, the Constitution Review Group will be asked to recommend appropriate constitutional models for consideration by Council.

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- Write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge that a Local Government Financial settlement is devised as a matter of the utmost urgency that is sufficient to give stability to all councils across the Country and will support the ability of local councils to make decisions on their statutory duties in line with their local elected mandate.

**4. Motion proposed by Councillor Sue Cooper, seconded by Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers as set out in the agenda at agenda item 13(4)**

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council:

1. Believes that young people should be allowed a say over their future.
2. Recognises that 16 and 17 year olds are knowledgeable and passionate about the world in which they live and are as capable of engaging in the democratic system as any other citizen.
3. Notes that there is currently an unequal situation across the United Kingdom, with 16 and 17 year olds having voting rights in Scotland and Wales that are not available to them in England and Northern Ireland.
4. Supports the need for greater engagement with young people, leading to greater involvement of young people in the decisions that affect their community.
5. Believes that lowering the voting age to 16, combined with strong citizenship education, would empower young people to better engage in society and influence decisions that will define their future.
6. Believes that people aged 16 and 17, who can consent to medical treatment, work full-time, pay taxes, get married or enter a civil partnership and join the armed forces, should also have the right to vote.



7. Recognises and supports the ongoing 'Votes at 16' campaign by the British Youth Council, the UK Youth Parliament and other youth organisations, supported by thousands of young people across the UK.
8. Calls for 16 and 17 year olds to have the right in all elections and referendums across the UK.

Council therefore:

1. Requests that the Leader write to relevant Ministers and local MPs: expressing this Council's support for the Votes at 16 campaign; calling for the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in all elections and referendums across the UK
2. Requests that the Leader write to the local MYPs and the British Youth Council expressing this Council's support for the Votes at 16 campaign
3. Asks the Electoral Registration Officer/ Returning Officer to consider participating in any pilot scheme.

**5. Councillor Sue Roberts sought the agreement of Council to move an altered motion from that set out in the agenda at agenda item 13(5). Following an adjournment of the meeting (7.55pm until 8.05pm) Councillor Sue Roberts withdrew her motion with the intention of submitting the revised wording to the Council meeting in February.**

**6. Motion proposed by Councillor Sue Roberts, seconded by Councillor Simon Hewerdine as set out in the agenda at agenda item 13(6)**

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council notes that:

- South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) will be undertaking a constitutional review beginning in January 2020. A working group, with representation from all political groups, has been set up to conduct this review.
- Other motions tonight relate to consideration of whether the council should consider a merger with Vale of White Horse with whom SODC shares an officer-corps, and wider unitary related decisions.
- It should be ensured that the Constitution Review Working Group gets sufficient training to enable it to make informed decisions. Training might be required from external experts, and information may be required through visits to or from other councils.

This Council agrees that the Constitution Review Working Group will include the following topics in its considerations:

- Whether there would be a benefit to residents in terms of decision-making, representation, and transparency were South Oxfordshire District Council to move to a committee-based structure:
- Whether the Climate Change Advisory Committee should become a Committee of Council and what, if any, amendments should be made to its terms of reference; and that

- Training should be made available to the Constitution Review Working Group and to all members on the matters referred to herein. Council asks Cabinet to reflect the cost of this in any budget proposals they bring forward.

Prior to the consideration of the following motion Council agreed, in accordance with Council procedure rule 12, to extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes.

**7. In the absence of Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Councillor Andrea Powell moved and Councillor Sue Cooper seconded the motion as set out in the agenda at agenda item 13 (7)**

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council notes that:

- Cycling and walking are healthy, climate-friendly modes of transport
- In 2018, of fatalities on the road caused by vehicles crashes, 31% were people walking or on pedal cycles
- Many people are put off cycling because of perceived and actual dangers
- Electric bicycles could be a revolution in bringing more people to cycling and cycling further
- In a rural district many roads are narrow, winding and without pavements for walking
- A number of the towns in the district suffer from poor air quality that have major health impacts, particularly for children
- Physical inactivity is a contributor to diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, depression and dementia
- The Council has a goal to achieve a carbon-neutral District by 2030
- Infrastructure needs to be developed rapidly to support more active travel, including for electric bicycles, to achieve national and local climate and health goals
- travel habits need changing urgently and that cycling and active travel need be easy and safe to be chosen over alternatives
- the Council already has a walking and cycling policy: T7

This Council therefore calls upon the relevant Cabinet members to:

- i) develop a prioritised plan of where new and improved cycle and walking infrastructure is needed in the District to contribute to a SATN (Strategic Active Travel Network) and actively seek, and support the County to actively seek, capital and revenue funding for delivery of it through local and national sources
- ii) update planning policy to better achieve active travel outcomes across the district and with greater urgency, noting such further policy development is currently unfunded (and is subject to Council having planning powers to do this).
- iii) work to prioritise active travel in planning policy and use walking and cycling as an improvement to urban and rural communities in terms of community cohesion, wellbeing, and tackling inequalities

- iv) engage in active travel promotion with relevant partners to encourage travel behaviour change
- v) urge the County Council to prioritise quality control of all active travel infrastructure in accordance with the Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards, ensuring all proposals are audited for safety and encouragement of active travel.

## **50 Exclusion of the public**

**RESOLVED:** to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- i. it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- ii. the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **51 Confidential Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

The meeting closed at 8:40pm

Chairman

Date