

Council



Listening Learning Leading

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Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on

THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 6.00 PM

at

DIDCOT CIVIC HALL, BRITWELL ROAD, DIDCOT, OX11 7JN

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Nick Bennett
Head of Legal and Democratic

Note: Please remember to sign the attendance register.

Agenda

1 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2 Minutes (Pages 9 - 15)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes, and the confidential minutes, of the meeting held on 12 December 2024.

3 Declarations of interest

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests or any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4 Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

5 Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

6 Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

7 Treasury management 2024/25 mid-year monitoring report (Pages 16 - 29)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the attached report of the head of finance on the treasury management activity for the first half of 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: to approve the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2024/25.

8 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26 (Pages 30 - 67)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the attached report of the head of finance on the council's treasury management and investment strategy for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: to

1. approve the treasury management strategy 2025/26 set out in Appendix A to the

- head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025;
2. approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2025/26 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix A to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025;
 3. approve the annual investment strategy 2025/26 set out in Appendix A to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025, and the lending criteria detailed in table 6;
 4. approve the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy in appendix E to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025.

9 Capital Strategy 2025/26-2034/35 (Pages 68 - 90)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the report of the head of finance on the council's capital strategy for 2025/26 to 2034/35.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: to

1. approve the capital strategy 2025/26 to 2034/35 attached at appendix 1 of the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025, and
2. to agree the strategy for flexible use of capital receipts which is contained as annex A of the capital strategy.

10 Council tax long-term empty property premium duration change (Pages 91 - 94)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the attached report of the head of finance on the adoption of an amended (reduced) empty duration before a long-term empty property premium becomes applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: that, with effect from 1 April 2026, the following amendments are made to the council's long-term empty property premiums (LTEPP):

1. to reduce the current empty property duration allowed, prior to a council tax LTEPP commencing, down from two years to one year. This change is provided for within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023
2. adopt all LTEPP exceptions laid out within the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024, published on 1 November 2024 (listed within the body of the report).

11 Revenue Budget 2025/26 and Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30 (Pages 95 - 131)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the attached report of the head of finance on the the draft revenue budget 2025/26, and the capital programme to 2029/30.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: to

1. set the revenue budget for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix A.1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 January 2025;
2. approve the capital programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30 as set out in Appendices D.1 and D.2 to the report, together with the capital programme changes as set

- out in Appendices D.3 and D.4 to the report;
3. set the council's prudential limits as listed in Appendix E to the report;
 4. set the medium-term financial plan to 2029/30 as set out in Appendix F to the report;
 5. allocate £590,000 to fund the Communities Capital and Revenue grant scheme

12 Council tax 2025/26

To consider the report of the head of finance on the setting of the council tax for the 2025/26 financial year – report to follow.

13 The Way Ahead - Council Plan 2025-2029 (Pages 132 - 188)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 January 2025, considered the attached report of the head of policy and programmes on the proposed Council Plan 2025-2029.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: to adopt the Council Plan – The way ahead

14 Pay policy statement 2025/26 (Pages 189 - 195)

To consider the report of the head of corporate services on the adoption of a pay policy statement to meet the requirements of the Localism Act - attached.

15 Making the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan

To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet member for planning on the neighbourhood plan for Berinsfield.

The referendum on the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan will be held on Thursday 7 February 2025. If the referendum results in a Yes vote the recommendations of the Cabinet member will be circulated prior to the Council meeting.

16 Making the Thame Neighbourhood Development Plan

To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet member for planning on the neighbourhood plan for Thame.

The referendum on the Thame Neighbourhood Plan will be held on Thursday 7 February 2025. If the referendum results in a Yes vote the recommendations of the Cabinet member will be circulated prior to the Council meeting.

17 Making the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan

To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet member for planning on the neighbourhood plan for Wallingford.

The referendum on the Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan will be held on Thursday 7 February 2025. If the referendum results in a Yes vote the recommendations of the Cabinet member will be circulated prior to the Council meeting.

18 Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order

(Pages 196 - 206)

To consider the Cabinet member for planning's recommendation on the Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order. The Individual Cabinet Member Decision made on 3 February 2025 is attached.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

1. To determine that the Burcot and Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order does not meet three of the relevant seven basic conditions, specifically:
 - Having regard to national policies and advice containing guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the Order.
 - The making of the Order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
 - The making of the Order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.
2. To accept the Examiner's recommendation and resolve that the Burcot and Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order be refused.

19 Crowmarsh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

(Pages 207 - 274)

To consider the Cabinet member for planning's recommendation on the Crowmarsh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review. The Individual Cabinet Member Decision made on 3 February 2025 is attached.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL: to

1. To make the revised Crowmarsh Neighbourhood Development Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of this report, so that it becomes part of the council's development plan.
2. To delegate to the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, Crowmarsh Parish Council, the making of minor (non-material) modifications, the correction of any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

20 Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of the Leader of council.

21 Future Oxfordshire Partnership update (Pages 275 - 277)

To receive the attached update report.

22 Questions on notice

To receive questions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 33.

- A. Question from Councillor Snowdon to Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council

At the December full council meeting an extremely late motion recommending approving the award a huge councillor allowance increase was approved by Liberal, Labour, and Green councillors. As Leader you responded to the BBC with the quote claiming "I want to hear different voices: people who are at home caring for their disabled child" giving the impression you hoped this increase might attract a more diverse councillor. However, it appears the council no longer wish to attract new councillors with this increase or perhaps the silence by design, accident or simply due to embarrassment.

Apart from the fact that the carer of a child would already be able to claim childcare costs, can the leader explain why our brilliant communications team who put out so much information and detail on the district council's website and social media about motions approved at full Council along with prosecutions of taxi drivers, fly tippers, advertise events and performances and so on, yet this motion to hugely increase councillors allowances was not communicated in any form?

- B. Question from Councillor Snowdon to Councillor Bennett, Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration

It is exactly two years ago since I asked the question at full council about the lack of delivery of conditioned infrastructure for the residents of Great Western Park in Didcot and now six years as portfolio holder. I am sure you will agree with me the huge benefits of allotments not just for growing nutritious food, flowers, exercise but mental health benefits. If a developer builds a house with the wrong type of bricks planning enforcement will take action and yet you allow residents to be without even one of the legally conditioned allotments for years. Perhaps allowing the developers to do as they like is a lack of effort as portfolio holder for six years or you do not feel allotments are as important to residents as I do.

So, I'll ask again, are you happy that residents of a high-density housing development many with small or no gardens have still not a single one of their three planning conditioned allotments yet?

23 Motions on notice

To consider motions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 38.

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Casey -
Rerhaye:

Support for a More Democratic Devolution Process for South Oxfordshire

This Council believes that:

1. The current devolution process as it affects South Oxfordshire must prioritise democratic governance and accountability to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of South Oxfordshire residents.
2. The current high cost of standing for metro mayoral elections in England, including a £5,000 deposit and a £5,000 contribution for inclusion in a candidate booklet, deters capable and independent individuals from running for office. While it is essential to discourage frivolous candidacies, alternative mechanisms, such as requiring candidates to gather a specified number of signatures from electors, could achieve this more effectively. Reducing the financial barriers to standing for election would foster greater participation and diversity among candidates, strengthening democracy.
3. Spending limits for mayoral elections are disproportionately high, with an allowance of up to £150,000 for areas with significant populations. This potentially creates a significant barrier to genuine democratic participation and fair competition.
4. Until 2023, mayoral elections in England were conducted under the Supplementary Vote system, which provided a fairer voting mechanism compared to the First Past the Post system now in use. Reintroducing a fairer voting system would ensure a more representative and democratic outcome.
5. An assembly or committee made up of democratically elected representatives from the constituent authorities, with appropriate political balance, would enhance the devolution process by providing necessary oversight and scrutiny of the mayor's decisions, ensuring power is exercised transparently and in the best interest of South Oxfordshire's residents.

This Council resolves to:

1. Submit a formal request in writing to the Electoral Commission to call for the cost of standing for the mayoral election to be lowered by reducing deposit requirements, and introducing an alternative mechanism, such as requiring signatures from electors, to discourage frivolous candidacies and to ensure fair and equitable competition among candidates;
2. Support the reintroduction of a fairer voting system rather than First Past the Post for mayoral elections in England;
3. Support the establishment of a democratically representative committee or assembly as part of the devolution process, to provide oversight and scrutiny of the mayor's decisions, and write to the Local Government Association (LGA) to investigate whether this move could be backed and supported nationally;
4. Write a letter to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, the relevant minister in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and our local MPs, stating the council's position with regard to recommendations one, two and three (above) and seeking their support for these reforms.
5. Support the above positions during the devolution process in our interactions with

Oxfordshire County Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other relevant stakeholders.

24 Exclusion of the public

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that:

- (i) It is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

25 Confidential minutes (Pages 278 - 279)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the confidential Council minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024.

26 Revenue budget 2025/26 and capital programme 2025/26 - 2029/30 (Page 280)

Details contained in Appendix D4.

Nick Bennett
Head of Legal and Democratic