

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At the Meeting of the
WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen,
Witney, on Wednesday 25 February 2015 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillors: N A MacRae MBE (Chairman), Mrs M J Crossland (Vice Chairman), Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, A C Beaney, R J M Bishop, M R Booty, M Brennan, Mrs L J Chapman, A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, N G Colston, J C Cooper, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, R A Courts, H G Davies, C G Dingwall, P J G Dorward, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, P Emery, D S T Enright, S J Good, J Haine, P J Handley, A D Harvey, S J Hoare, H J Howard, E H James, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, Mr R D J McFarlane, J F Mills, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan, W D Robinson, G Saul, T B Simcox, D A Snow and B J Woodruff.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 January 2015, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A J Adams, Mrs L C Carter, Mrs E H N Fenton and Mr P D Kelland.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers at this juncture. Subsequently, Mr Robinson declared an interest in agenda item No. 10 (Sealing of Documents) by virtue of his tenancy of Council owned premises in the Station Road Industrial Estate, Witney.

52. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

52.1 Chairman's Award

The Chairman thanked those Members who had submitted nominations for the Chairman's Award.

52.2 Blue Plaque Scheme

The Chairman advised that, as part of his duties, he sat on the Board of the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme. He invited any Member wishing to make a nomination under the scheme to do so. Details of the scheme may be found at <http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/index.html>

52.3 Mr Simon Hoare

The Chairman advised that Mr Hoare had stated his intention to stand down from the District Council having secured the Conservative Party Nomination for the North Dorset Parliamentary constituency.

Mr Hoare was first elected as the representative for the Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield Ward in May 2004, serving on the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Licensing Committee.

In 2005 he was appointed as Chairman of the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, serving in that capacity for two years.

In 2007, Mr Hoare was appointed to the Cabinet with responsibility for Resources, a role he continued to fulfil during a time of significant change for local government nationally and this authority locally with the need to make efficiency savings and the continued development of shared services. Since 2007, Mr Hoare also served as Chairman of the Human Resources Committee.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hoare for his work on behalf of West Oxfordshire and wished him well in his future political career.

52.4 'No Food Waste' Campaign

Mr Harvey advised Members that the 'No Food Waste' sticker campaign encouraging residents to utilise their food caddies had been successful in significantly increasing the volume of food waste recycled. A significant number of householders had requested caddies and an additional 130 tonnes of food waste had been collected in December and January representing a saving of £10,000 in landfill costs. Mr Harvey expressed his thanks to residents for their support of the scheme.

52.5 Ms Hayley Beer

Mr Langridge advised that Ms Hayley Beer, the Council's Tourism Manager, was leaving the Council to take up the position of Chief Executive of Experience Oxfordshire. Members thanked Hayley for her work on behalf of the District and wished her well in her future career.

53. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

No submissions were received from the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

54. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees from 4 to 19 February 2015.

In proposing the recommendations Mr Norton advised that there was an amendment to the recommendation relating to the Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CT/102/2014/2015) such that it should read as follows:-

- (a) That, subject to the inclusion of the correct CIL rate of £100 per m² for extra care housing in the high value zone, the Council be recommended to approve the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) attached at Appendix I for the purposes of a 6-week period of public consultation in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations as amended; and
- (b) That the Council be recommended to agree that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and

Strategic Housing to make any minor/factual/typographical amendments to the Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) in conjunction with Officers, prior to publication.

The proposal was seconded by Mr Booty and on being put to the vote were carried.

RESOLVED: that the recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees from 4 to 19 February 2015 be approved in relation to:

- (a) Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure (Minute No. CT/102/2014/2015 Levy – amended as detailed above);
- (b) Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy (Minute No. CT/104/2014/2015);
- (c) The delegation of powers and level of Fixed Penalty Notice under the Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.)(England) Order 2014 (Minute No. CT/106/2014/2015);

55. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The reports of the meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees held between 4 and 19 February 2015 were received:

55.1 Potential Sale of Investments
(Minute No. CT/96/2014/2015)

Mr Hoare advised Members that the minimum price at which it had been agreed that the Council would undertake a transaction for the sale of its interest in Glitner had not been reached at auction. Consequently, the Council's funds remained in an escrow account. The investment remained safe and West Oxfordshire was not the only authority that continued to hold funds in this way. Efforts continued to find the best mechanism to return the funds in the fastest way possible.

55.2 Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy
(Minute No. CT/102/2014/2015)

Dr Poskitt, sought clarification of the manner in which Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy funding would be applied in relation to the World Heritage Site at Blenheim Palace. The Chief Executive undertook to provide a written answer.

56. WEST OXFORDSHIRE PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

The report of Andrew Tucker, Strategic Director seeking consideration of the proposed pre-submission draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan and the Council's position in relation to the five year housing land supply was received and considered.

Mr Robinson, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning and Housing, introduced the report and advised it had been a long journey in seeking to progress the Local Plan in West Oxfordshire and this had been affected by changes in both national and local circumstances. At times the council had been close to concluding a plan only to have been forced to almost start again following changes beyond its control.

Mr Robinson highlighted the pressing need to introduce a new Local Plan for West Oxfordshire to replace the current plan which was adopted in 2006. Following several years of consultation the final draft plan was being presented for consideration which, if agreed, would be formally published in March for a statutory period of 6-weeks before being submitted in May for independent examination later in the year.

Mr Robinson indicated that, in line with national policy requiring a 15 year period from adoption and the emerging plans of neighbouring authorities, the plan had been extended to cover the period 2011 – 2031, whilst recognising the possibility of an early review to

address possible unmet housing need arising from Oxford City or elsewhere in the County.

It was highlighted that the overall strategy sought to focus the majority of future development at the District's three main towns in the interests of sustainable development and this strategy had been well-supported through consultation. Mr Robinson advised that the plan established a robust housing target and set out a clear strategy for delivery including the allocation of four strategic sites which had been carefully selected following a detailed process of site assessment and consideration of consultation responses received. The plan was seeking to achieve a good mix of new housing with a strong emphasis on affordable housing and self-build.

The plan recognised the importance of balancing housing with jobs and set out a clear economic strategy which would help to ensure the District remained competitive and capitalised on wider economic growth. Mr Robinson outlined that transport was highlighted as a critically important issue to be addressed and the plan set out a broad range of measures including a number of important strategic highway improvements as well as encouraging more walking, cycling and public transport.

Mr Robinson emphasised that, to ensure new development did not have a harmful impact on the unique character of the District, the plan included a range of policies which would help to safeguard its rich natural and historic environment. In recognition of their different characteristics, the plan included a detailed strategy for each of the District's five sub-areas identifying the key issues of relevance to each area and a policy approach for addressing these.

Mr Robinson advised that the plan included a comprehensive delivery and monitoring framework and an updated position statement on 5-year housing land supply. This demonstrated that, based on the proposed local plan housing requirement and taking account of the strategic allocations, the Council had a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

Mr Robinson highlighted a slight error in the calculation set out at Table I of the position statement in that the 5-year requirement set out in Row H of Table I should read 3,685 rather than 3,930 and in Row I should read 737 rather than 786. This served to increase the housing land supply position from 5.6 years to 6 years and would be included in the proposition together with any consequential amendments elsewhere in the text of the statement.

Mr Robinson reminded members that in preparing the plan a whole raft of evidence had to be produced and updated and if the document was to be found sound at examination it was very important that the policies and proposals being put forward were based on the evidence, met relevant national policy requirements and demonstrated that the duty to cooperate had been met.

Mr Robinson asked members to support the proposals as set out in the minutes to the Cabinet Meeting together with any agreed amendments. Mr Robinson reiterated the need to adopt a new Local Plan and the plan provided for the least unacceptable alternatives well supported by a robust evidence base.

Mr Robinson then proposed the recommendations highlighted on the sheet that had been circulated to members. Mr Booty seconded the proposal and reserved the right to speak.

Mr Cooper indicated that any plan being put forward for consultation needed to have robust proposals to help protect the district. Mr Cooper proposed an amendment as follows:

The removal from the Plan of the strategic housing site at North Witney, to be replaced by the site at Alvescot Downs known as Carterton West

Mr Cooper explained that having looked at the options he was of the opinion that Carterton West would be of greater benefit to the district as a whole. Mr Cooper suggested that Witney North had a number of question marks about its suitability. It was indicated that Carterton could provide a greater range of housing and employment opportunities and enable upgrading of facilities in the town, including improvements to access at the A40 junction at Minster Lovell. Mr Cooper acknowledged that a site could not be removed without alternative provision being identified and he considered Carterton West to be the best option.

Mr Snow seconded the amendment. Mr Snow highlighted that the Witney North proposal would drastically alter the nature of the area and it needed more detailed consideration before a decision could be made. Mr Snow suggested that viability of the scheme had not been proved. Flooding remained a concern and he expressed doubt as to whether the proposed dam would alleviate problems. Mr Snow questioned whether proposals for a new link road would actually help reduce traffic in the town with Shores Green being a more effective solution. He suggested that a number of reports had indicated that overall a new link road would have a limited impact and would not help the Council's objective to reduce congestion. Mr Snow opined that there would be a knock-on effect to villages around Witney.

Mr Snow suggested there were more acceptable sites around Witney that were not presented for consideration. Mr Snow referred to discussion at the Cabinet meeting about pausing the local plan process to obtain further information about options. Mr Snow concluded by indicating that members needed to represent the electorate and supporting the plan as it stood was a reputational risk for the council.

Mr Hoare emphasised that all members had a free vote on the local plan and that he concurred with a lot of the concerns raised by Mr Snow in respect of Witney North. However, Mr Hoare indicated that it was not right to include the Carterton West site in to the plan as this had already been tested through the planning process and members of the Development Control Committee had refused an application on the site. Mr Hoare indicated that no appeal had been lodged against that decision.

Mr Hoare reiterated concerns about Witney North but suggested that Carterton West was no better and there was a reputational risk if the council added a site that had already been tested and proved unsuitable. Mr Hoare indicated he would oppose the amendment.

Mr Enright concurred with the views of Mr Hoare in respect of Carterton West and echoed concerns regarding Witney North. Mr Enright suggested that Witney North together with other development around Witney would change the nature of the town. Mr Enright indicated that Carterton was a developing town and whilst Carterton West was unacceptable another scheme may be more appropriate.

Mr Langridge indicated that there appeared to be little support for Witney North and better alternatives such as the old football ground site had not been fully considered. Mr Langridge agreed that Carterton West was not an acceptable alternative but Witney North could be reconsidered together with other sites around the town to identify the best location for housing.

Mr McFarlane emphasised that Carterton West had been rejected as a site on a number of occasions in the local plan process and by the planning committee. There was no support for Carterton West as had been demonstrated through petitions and the views of local

communities to the consultation. Mr McFarlane urged members to vote against the amendment.

Mr Morris expressed support regarding comments on Witney North but he was unable to support the amendment as Carterton West was not a suitable site either. Mr Handley referred to the evidence previously produced regarding Carterton West and indicated he would vote against the amendment. Mr Handley highlighted the development of RAF Brize Norton and the need for improved infrastructure in Carterton.

Mr Booty acknowledged the problems with Witney North but suggested that there were no suitable sites left in the district so any decision on allocation was difficult. In respect of Carterton West Mr Booty suggested the application had been flawed for many reasons and development there could not be supported.

Mr Robinson highlighted the problem of people commuting away from Carterton and a development at Carterton West could exacerbate the situation and whilst new employment areas could be allocated there was no guarantee these would succeed. In respect of housing Mr Robinson advised that a large percentage of people on the waiting list expressed a preference for properties in Witney. Mr Robinson suggested that if development needed to be in Witney then options needed to be considered and extensive work had been undertaken with regard to Witney North.

On being put to the vote the amendment

WAS LOST

Mr Cooper referred to previous discussions regarding the provision of a buffer zone around the Blenheim estate and that a report requested by the scrutiny committee in 2006 on the issue had not been forthcoming. Mr Cooper emphasised that many other World Heritage Sites (WHS) had allocated buffer zones.

Mr Cooper then proposed an amendment in the following terms:

The alteration of Policy EW1 on page 193 to create a buffer zone of 0.5 miles from the park wall in the area which is within West Oxfordshire, so as to provide additional protection for the site.

Dr Poskitt seconded the amendment and whilst acknowledging there was reference to the WHS in the draft plan the amendment would help to strengthen it further. Dr Poskitt clarified that the designation would not preclude development but would provide further protection to ensure the environment around Blenheim was maintained.

Mr Robinson acknowledged that this issue had been raised on a number of occasions and officers had provided a comprehensive response to Mr Cooper. Mr Robinson acknowledged the need to protect the environment around Blenheim and Policy EW1 as drafted was sufficient to do this. Mr Robinson indicated he would not support the amendment.

Mr Postan highlighted that buffer zones did not necessarily provide protection against development as had been demonstrated elsewhere.

On being put to the vote the amendment

WAS LOST

Mr Enright then proposed an amendment as follows:

The removal from the Plan of the strategic housing site at North Witney to be replaced by an increase in windfall numbers in particular in the Carterton sub-area in line with the Town's growth ambitions

Mr Enright explained that the amendment sought to address the impact of second homes and the impact this had on communities. Mr Enright suggested that by developing policies for parish sustainability there would be the opportunity for local communities to suggest sites for small scale development particularly in villages and this could help deliver much needed

affordable housing. Mr Enright emphasised that the council had previously over delivered with windfall sites and this would allow that to continue and address sustainability, economic and social issues.

Mr Coles seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Mr Hoare, in acknowledging the aims of the amendment, suggested that removing strategic sites and replacing with windfall sites was unlikely to be supported by an inspector. Mr Hoare suggested trying to tinker with the plan at this stage would not help and the options available to members were to support the draft plan as it stood or pause the process to look further at other options. Mr Hoare advised that there could be an increase in speculative applications and issues such as CIL payments needed to be borne in mind. Mr Hoare indicated he would oppose the amendment.

Mr Owen suggested that the proposal would be problematic for many villages and development needed to be focussed on the larger towns. Mrs Chapman suggested that it was late to be bringing forward last minute amendments and it would have been helpful if this had been mooted earlier. Mrs Chapman reiterated doubts about Witney North and believed that other strategic options should be explored in more detail.

Mr Norton advised that it was difficult to make late changes as the plan needed to be evidence based. Mr Norton suggested that any delay could increase the number of speculative applications and issues around other sites would be fully tested at the examination in public.

Mr Cooper reminded members that changes had been made to the last local plan at the council meeting so late amendments had been accepted before. Mr Cooper however indicated that increasing the windfall figure was not practical and should have been raised at an earlier juncture. Mr Cooper suggested that a plan needed to be submitted for consideration.

Mr Mills indicated that the amendment was a potential threat to many communities and small scale development would not deliver infrastructure improvements. Mr Mills expressed support for the draft plan as it stood.

Mr Langridge reemphasised the lack of support Witney North and there was some merit in seeking to disperse housing to other areas through small scale development however the numbers needed could not be met through the amendment.

Mr McFarlane highlighted that neighbourhood development plans were already in place and these would help shape local communities. Mr McFarlane advised that he would not support the amendment. Mr Cotterill concurred that the amendment would not meet the required level of housing.

Mr Saul spoke in support of the amendment and advised that a more informal approach than the current neighbourhood development plans was being advocated as a way for communities to suggest how development in their area should be undertaken. Mr Snow suggested that changes to the draft plan at this time should not be ruled out.

Mr Coles suggested the amendment was flexible enough to prevent speculative applications whilst addressing the concerns regarding Witney North. Mr Howard indicated that the 1000 house allocation at Witney North could not be met through small scale development elsewhere.

Mr Robinson reiterated that Carterton West was not feasible and it was not unreasonable to allocate a strategic site in Witney that could provide some much needed infrastructure. Mr Robinson suggested that an inspector would not look favourably on a submission dependent on windfall sites. The Strategic Director indicated that it was difficult to predict the outcome of an inquiry but it was unlikely that windfall development on such a scale would be accepted.

On being put to the vote the amendment

WAS LOST

Mr Langridge suggested that the plan was acceptable in most respects but the debate had demonstrated the concerns of many councillors regarding the allocation of Witney North. Mr Langridge indicated that flooding was a key concern, there were highway implications and the landscape needed to be protected. Mr Langridge questioned the viability of the site and whether the new link road and flood mitigation measures would deliver improvements. Mr Langridge reiterated that a four way Shores Green junction would deliver greater improvements.

Mr Langridge considered that the allocation of the site undermined the whole plan and better alternatives were available that should be explored in more detail. He concluded by acknowledging the need for a plan but felt unable to support the draft submission with Witney North as part of the plan.

Mr Hoare highlighted that Witney North had come forward as a result of the increased Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) requirements. Mr Hoare clarified that the site was actually in the parish of Hailey and suggested that the link road could be delivered through other funding mechanisms. Mr Hoare concurred that the link road was an out-dated option that would not deliver improvements and other sites needed to be considered including the area around the old Witney football ground.

Mr Hoare advised that there was a need to get the plan right and that could only be achieved by properly assessing other sites and it was suggested that limited weight could be given to the emerging plan in respect of considering planning applications. He concluded by suggesting that the case for Witney North had not been proved and the council should listen to the concerns of people about the site.

Mr Harvey highlighted that the expansion of Witney had been very rapid and several developments had been predicated on the delivery of a second river crossing. He suggested that further development had to happen and the examination in public would decide on the merits of Witney North and whether it should be developed.

Mr Harvey acknowledged concerns about flooding and the need for further suitable alleviation works if necessary. Mr Harvey indicated there would always be concerns about the plan but it was important that the draft plan was supported and it would give some protection against piecemeal development.

(Mr Davies left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Mills indicated that the proposed Shores Green improvements would be delivered by the Witney East allocation in the plan. A major concern was air quality in Bridge Street and this needed to be addressed. Mr Mills requested that consideration should be given to improved footpath links, including to the cemetery, as part of Witney East. Mr Mills thanked officers for the inclusion of his previously suggested amendment in respect of (iii) on the recommendations sheet.

Mr McFarlane expressed support for the draft plan as it stood as there had been a lot of discussion and consultation throughout the process and thanked Mr Robinson and officers for their hard work. Mr McFarlane indicated that a lot of advice had been received to meet changing requirements. It was hoped that the inspector would accept the lower housing figure and the reasons for that.

Mr McFarlane highlighted a number of policies such as small scale business development, infrastructure provision and self-build initiatives as being positive for the district. Mr McFarlane emphasised that a five year housing land supply could now be demonstrated.

Mr Cooper questioned whether, under the provisions of Standing Order No. 14, if the draft plan was not supported by members, the decision could not be reconsidered for six months. Mr Cooper suggested that it would be dangerous not to support the plan as the council would be vulnerable if it was relying on the existing local plan. The Chief Executive advised that Standing Order No.14 allowed decisions to be reconsidered under certain circumstances as set out in the Constitution.

Ms Leffman indicated that increased traffic was a major concern. Ms Leffman thanked Mr Robinson for including her suggested amendment regarding the identification of the need for a new recycling facility in the north of the district in his proposal. Ms Leffman expressed the hope that a plan to deliver the facility would be forthcoming.

Dr Poskitt thanked Mr Robinson for including her amendment in the proposal and that it was hoped it could be acted upon to reduce fatalities and injuries on the roads.

Mr Norton highlighted that the Council was the only one to be challenging the SHMA figures due to the council delivering higher levels of housing in previous years and this would form part of the evidence base at inquiry. Mr Norton suggested that the plan was robust and evidence based.

Mr Norton indicated that all councillors wanted to preserve the character of the towns and villages in the district. It had to be acknowledged that new housing was needed. Mr Norton reminded members that there was still more stages before a plan was approved and evidence was needed when aspects were challenged. Mr Norton indicated that a number of issues were still of concern but it was important to agree a draft plan and he encouraged support of the recommendations.

Mrs Little thanked officers for their help in developing the Carterton master plan and the draft local plan addressed a number of those issues and should be supported.

Mrs Chapman acknowledged the need for a plan but expressed doubt that the viability of Witney North could be proved. Mrs Chapman suggested that education provision was a concern, there could be traffic problems on the A4095 with a knock on effect to nearby villages and transport infrastructure generally was lacking.

Mr Howard advised that he had previously expressed concern regarding provision of employment land. Mr Howard referred to the allocation of housing in Carterton and on-going flood concerns in the district. Mr Howard suggested that the inspector might not find the draft plan acceptable and return it for reconsideration but it was important that a plan was submitted and he would support the proposals.

Mr Snow suggested it was good for democracy that members had a free vote on the local plan. Mrs Coles emphasised the need to actively pursue the provision of a new recycling facility in the Charlbury/Chipping Norton area.

Mr Good congratulated officers on their work in preparing the plan. It was highlighted that there was a wide range of issues to be considered and it was difficult to get everything absolutely right. Mr Good indicated it was impossible to predict the outcome of an inquiry but a lot of sites had been considered during the process. Mr Good indicated he would support the recommendation.

Mr Emery suggested it was imperative to progress to the next stage of the plan and highlighted the work being undertaken on a neighbourhood plan for Eynsham.

Mr Morris expressed concern on the implications for the A4095 of increased traffic levels and indicated his concern regarding the Witney North proposal. Mr Morris suggested that the plan should be put before an inspector for determination.

Mr Booty suggested there was no ideal way forward but the draft plan had resulted from consideration of a large number of options. Mr Booty indicated that any further delay would be detrimental as applications would most likely be forthcoming in any event. Mr Booty reiterated that the plan represented the best options at this time and should be supported.

Mr Robinson indicated it had been a lengthy debate with lots of important issues raised. Mr Robinson advised that the proposals were properly evidenced and suggested that any further delay was not acceptable.

Mr Robinson suggested that whilst the focus of debate had been Witney North it needed to be remembered that the plan set a framework for the whole district for the next 15 years and covered more than housing issues. Mr Robinson asked members to support the recommendations.

Mr MacRae thanked members for their input to the debate.

On being put to the vote the proposition

WAS CARRIED

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council approves the pre-submission draft Local Plan attached at Appendix I to the report for the purposes of formal publication for a statutory period of 6-weeks in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 subject to:
- (i) the amendment of Policy EW2 – Eynsham – Woodstock Sub-Area Strategy in relation to the retention and development of local services and community facilities to read: ‘seeking the retention and development of local services and community facilities throughout the sub-area including consideration of a new GP surgery for Woodstock on the site of the police station in Hensington Road.’
 - (ii) the insertion of a new paragraph to follow existing paragraph 8.3. The new paragraph 8.4 to read: “In accordance with national policy, major developments within the AONB will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest. Importantly, there is no singular definition of major development and the Council will consider each case on its merits having regard to relevant factors including location, scale, context and design. In some instances, even relatively small-scale developments will be classed as major development and therefore only permitted in exceptional circumstances and where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest”;
 - (iii) the amendment of Paragraph 9.2.65 to read: “A primary shopping frontage, where the loss of shops will be resisted, is defined linking Marriott’s Walk and Woolgate. Elsewhere, such as at the Market Square and Corn Street, there are opportunities to continue to promote these areas for shopping, leisure and cultural uses, including the Corn Exchange, hotels, restaurants and performing arts. These areas are designated secondary shopping frontages”;
 - (iv) the amendment of Policy WIT3 to include an additional bullet point to read: “In the Buttercross/Church Green area south of Corn Street and Langdale Gate, the further intensification of shopping or commercial development will be resisted except where the proposed use would be incidental to the primary permitted use of the building (e.g. working at home)”;

- (v) the insertion of a new paragraph to follow existing paragraph 9.3.28. The new paragraph 9.3.29 to read: “This sub-area includes a number of important heritage assets including ancient woodland, Conservation Areas, scheduled monuments and numerous listed buildings notably in Shilton which still shows the layout of a 13th century Cistercian farming grange with the Grade II* listed Church of the Holy Rood , dovecote, other features and buildings”;
 - (vi) the amendment of paragraph 7.45 to read: “This is especially so over the river Thames on the southern boundary of the District, where the road crossings are mainly historic bridges of single vehicle width. One of these, on the A415 at Newbridge, is a Scheduled Monument, is deteriorating and is the subject of a weight restriction order. The bridge provides a vitally important transport link to the southern parts of Oxfordshire and any future operational problems would have a significant impact. There is also congestion at the crossing of the River Windrush at Burford as well as the aforementioned problems along the A4095 around Long Hanborough and Bladon”;
 - (vii) the amendment of paragraph 2.40 to read: “In terms of adult health, in 2012 just under 20% of adults were classified as obese. The rate of alcohol related harm hospital stays was better than the average for England as was the rate of smoking related deaths. Estimated levels of adult smoking and physical activity are also better than the England average. The rate of people killed and seriously injured on roads is however worse than average as is the rate of new cases of malignant melanoma. The Council recognises the need to work with Oxfordshire County Council in order to understand and address the relatively high rate of fatalities and serious injuries on the District’s road network. Rates of sexually transmitted infections and TB, statutory homelessness, violent crime, long term unemployment, drug misuse and early deaths from cardiovascular diseases are all better than average.”;
 - (viii) the amendment of paragraph 8.72 to read: “There is a significant need for expanded reuse, recycling and composting facilities to reduce the quantities of waste disposed through landfill. Waste management facilities outside the main landfill site in the District (Dix Pit) and the anaerobic digestion facility at Cassington (where bacteria breaks down organic material, such as householder food-waste, into constituent parts, the gaseous component of which is captured and burnt for energy, whilst the remaining solid organics are utilised as fertiliser) are expected to be small-medium in scale providing local facilities only. There is an identified need for a medium-scale recycling/re-use facility in the northern part of the District’.”; and
 - (ix) the correction of an error in the calculation set out at Table I of the position statement, in which Row H should read 3,685 rather than 3,930 and Row I 737 rather than 786, thereby increasing the housing land supply position from 5.6 years to 6 years, and the making of any consequential amendments elsewhere in the text
- (b) That the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing be authorised to make any minor/factual/typographical amendments to the pre-submission draft Local Plan prior to formal publication;

- (c) That, subject to there being no significant issues raised during the statutory 6-week period, the pre-submission draft Local Plan be formally submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 including any minor modifications;
- (d) That the updated 5-year housing land supply position statement attached at Appendix 2 to the report be published and utilised for the purposes of development management; and
- (e) That, in accordance with the duty to co-operate, the Council commits to an early review of the Plan should this prove necessary in light of the outcome of the work being carried out on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board to determine the extent of any unmet housing need arising across the County and how this should be addressed.

(Mr Barrett left the meeting at this juncture)

57. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2015/2016

The report of the Cabinet setting out its recommendations for the Council's General Fund revenue budgets for 2015/2016, Capital Programme for 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 and the level of Council Tax for 2015/2016 was received and considered.

Mr Norton introduced the budget proposals and advised that copies of his speech would be available after the meeting. A copy of the Leader of the Council's budget speech is attached as an Appendix to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Norton then proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. Mr Hoare seconded the proposition and reserved the right to speak.

Mr Handley, in supporting the proposal, suggested that the Council needed to be proactive in investing in infrastructure in the future. Mr Howard expressed support for the budget proposals and thanked Mr Hoare for his work over many years.

Mr Enright gave his best wishes to Mr Hoare and indicated that the coming year would give an opportunity for future budget items to be discussed particularly through the scrutiny meetings. Mr Enright suggested that issues such as developing housing provision and addressing inequality could be examined in more detail. Mr Enright indicated that the Labour Group would not be proposing any amendments.

Mr Simcox highlighted the importance of achieving a balanced budget and freezing council tax without having to make cuts to services. Mr Langridge concurred and emphasised that free car parking and voluntary grants were being maintained and initiatives like high speed broadband were being delivered. Mr Langridge indicated that changes in respect of shared services and the 2020 Vision had been embraced by all involved and benefits were being achieved.

Mr Courts expressed his appreciation for the additional investment made by the council to provide high speed broadband and the positive impact this would have in rural areas.

Mr Booty suggested that the budget was a reflection of the initiatives started a number of years ago and the positive outcomes were being seen. Mr Booty thanked all involved for their support in respect of the new ways of working and emphasised there was still a lot of challenges ahead.

(Mr Cotterill and Mr Cottrell-Dormer left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr McFarlane echoed the views of other members regarding the budget and the importance of continuing the approved investment strategy to meet future needs. Mr Mills highlighted that careful financial management had meant that the council had been able to

invest in a number of projects. Mr Mills indicated that continued support of tourism and business development was important and the district had weathered the recession a lot better than many other areas.

Mr Cooper referred to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the importance of working with parishes which would benefit from CIL payments to ensure a strategic approach was taken. Mr Cooper highlighted that a number of parishes might be looking to undertake significant infrastructure developments such as replacing memorial halls.

Mr Cooper suggested that members needed to be cognisant of the potential impact of Universal Credit and the pressure this could put on partner organisations that helped people claiming benefits. It was suggested that future grant settlement from the government would be lower meaning future budgets would be even more challenging. Finally Mr Cooper thanked the Strategic Director for the help he had given the Liberal Democrat Group during the formulation of the budget.

Mr Morris highlighted the importance of community facility grants in helping parishes provide new facilities and expressed the hope that this support would continue in the future.

Ms Leffman expressed her thanks for the continued support of voluntary organisations and reiterated the potential challenges as result of Universal Credit. Ms Leffman requested that if reductions in grant to voluntary organisations were being considered then organisations were advised at an early stage so that they could assess their financial position. Ms Leffman supported Mr Morris in respect of community facility grants and also expressed support for initiatives relating to affordable housing.

Mr Dingwall highlighted that grants from the council could open up access to other funding streams so the investment was worthwhile. Mr Dingwall thanked the Cabinet for their work in reducing budgets within their portfolios.

(Mr Harvey left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Robinson indicated that the budget generated a surplus and highlighted that income had increased within the planning department. Mr Robinson highlighted that the return on capital as a result of the investment strategy was positive and there was a different culture within the council and this approach was reaping dividends.

Mr Hoare expressed his thanks to members for their best wishes and congratulated officers on their work in preparing the budget. Mr Hoare emphasised the importance of members and staff adopting the new ways of working and the positive benefits this provided.

(Mr Dingwall left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Hoare suggested the retention of free car parking helped to address inequality and the broadband project would allow businesses in all areas of the district to develop. Mr Hoare stressed the importance of maintaining community grants, acknowledged the concern of Ms Leffman and gave an assurance that there was constant dialogue with community groups and they would be advised at an early stage if cuts were proposed. In respect of future budgets Mr Hoare urged caution as there was likely to be changes in the New Homes Bonus and Business Rates which may not be as favourable to the council as previously.

Mr Hoare expressed the hope there would be cross party support for the proposition and highlighted that the council was a well-run authority and members and officers were all working hard to maintain the services it provided.

On being put to the vote the proposition

WAS CARRIED

The following 35 members voted for the proposition:

Mrs J C Baker, A C Beaney, Mrs L J Chapman, R J M Bishop, M R Booty, M Brennan, N G Colston, J C Cooper, R A Courts, Mrs M J Crossland, P J G Dorward, Mrs J M Doughty, H B Eaglestone, P Emery, S J Good, J Haine, P J Handley, S J Hoare, H J Howard, E H James, R A Langridge, Ms E P R Leffman, Mrs L E C Little, N A MacRae MBE, R D J McFarlane, J F Mills, T J Morris, B J Norton, T N Owen, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan, W D Robinson, T B Simcox, D A Snow and B J Woodruff.

The following four members abstained from voting:

A S Coles, Mrs E M Coles, D S T Enright and G Saul.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The General Fund revenue budgets and use of balances for 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix A be approved;
- 2) The Capital Programme for 2015/16 to 2019/2020 as detailed in Appendix A be approved;
- 3) The Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix B be approved;
- 4) The report of the Strategic Director at Appendix C be noted;
- 5) The 2015/16 Pay Policy Statement as set out in Appendix D be approved;
- 6) For the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2015/16;
- 7) It be noted that at its meeting held on 14 January 2015 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base 2015/16:
 - a) for the whole Council area as 41,175.81 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
 - b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as in the attached Schedule 1.
- 8) The Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2015/16 (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) is £81.63;
- 9) The following amounts be calculated for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:-
 - a) £55,901,660 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.
 - b) £49,487,290 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - c) £6,414,370 being the amount by which the aggregate at 9(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 9(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - d) £155.78 being the amount at 9(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (7(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as

the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).

- e) £3,053,189 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per the attached Schedule 2.
 - f) £81.63 being the amount at 9(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 9(e) above by Item T(7(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates.
 - g) the amounts shown in Schedule 2 being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 9(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Schedule 2 divided in each case by the amount at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.
 - h) the amounts shown in Schedule 3 being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 9(f) and 9(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.
- 10) It be noted that for the year 2015/16 the Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:-

<u>Valuation Band</u>	Oxfordshire County Council	Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley
	£	£
A	821.64	109.13
B	958.58	127.32
C	1,095.52	145.51
D	1,232.46	163.70
E	1,506.34	200.08
F	1,780.22	236.46
G	2,054.10	272.83
H	2,464.92	327.40

- 11) The Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule 4 as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2015/16 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings;
- 12) The Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992; and

- 13) The Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer), GO Shared Service Head of Finance, Joint Head of Legal and Property Services, Joint Principal Solicitor, Joint Legal Executive, Joint Head of Revenues and Benefits, Joint Operations Lead Officer, Joint Operations Manager, Joint Support Lead Officer, Overpayments Officer, Senior Recovery Revenues Officer, and Recovery Officer be authorised to:-
- a) collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax; and
 - b) prosecute or defend on the Council's behalf or to appear on its behalf in proceedings before a magistrate's court in respect of unpaid National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.

58. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Mr Robinson declared an interest at this juncture by virtue of being the director of a company renting premises at Swain Court, Witney.

The Council received and noted the report of the Chief Executive which gave details of documents numbered 11057 to 11065C sealed since the last meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm

CHAIRMAN