

Cherwell District Council

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 15 July 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke (Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Jean Conway
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Julian Nedelcu
Councillor Rob Parkinson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Alisa Russell
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Nigel Simpson
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Linda Ward
Councillor Amanda Watkins
Councillor John Willett
Councillor Douglas Webb

Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Ian Harwood

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

16 **Communications**

Parliamentary Election

On behalf of Council, the Chairman congratulated Councillor Sean Woodcock on his election as MP for the Banbury Constituency. The Chairman also congratulated Calum Miller who was elected as MP for the Bicester and Woodstock Constituency.

On behalf of Council, the Chairman extend gratitude to Victoria Prentis who served as MP for the Banbury Constituency for 14 years; to John Howell who, for 16 years, was MP for the Henley Constituency, which previously incorporated areas of the Kirtlington and Otmoor wards; and Layla Moran, who remains MP for the Oxford West and Abingdon Constituency, which, prior to the constituency boundary changes, incorporated Kidlington, Begbroke and Yarnton.

Euro 2024

On behalf of Council, the Chairman congratulated the England men's football team on reaching the finals of Euro 2024. Whilst the outcome wasn't what we hoped for, reaching the final was a great achievement. Congratulations to Spain on their victory.

Radio Horton 60th Anniversary

On behalf of Council, the Chairman congratulated Radio Horton on its 60th anniversary.

Founded by local journalists on 7 July 1964, the station was built on the founding principles of uplifting spirits and brightening patients' time in hospital. To mark the diamond jubilee, the radio station aired a 60-hour marathon of programmes, culminating in a live broadcast from the Horton Restaurant on Monday 8 July. The special programme starred Radio Horton presenter Anthony Brown and station President John Craven OBE.

Chairman's Engagements

A copy of the events attended by the Chairman, or the Vice-Chairman was published with the agenda.

Meeting Etiquette

The Chairman asked councillors to be respectful of each other when addressing the meeting and out of courtesy, to remain in their seat during items. If necessary, the Chairman would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

Change to Agenda Order

Item 12, "Notification of Committee membership changes" would be taken before item 11, "Motions".

Members' Pigeon Holes

The Chairman reminded Members to check their pigeon hole and take any post with them.

17 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

18 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19 Minutes of Council

Subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

- attendance to record Cllr Webb's apologies
- Minute 11, resolution (2),
 - second bullet, change from "all Labour & co-operative members" to "all Labour or Labour and co-operative members"
 - third bullet, change Green / Independent to Green and Independent Alliance Group

20 **Minutes**

a) Minutes of the Executive, Portfolio Holder Decisions and Executive Decisions made under Special Urgency

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Portfolio Holder decisions as set out in the Minute Book be received and that it be noted that since the last meeting of Council on 26 February 2024 two key or exempt decisions had been taken which were not included in the 28-day notice: Temporary accommodation lease and the letting of Unit 5 at Castle Quay 2.

b) Minutes of Committees

Resolved

That the minutes of Committees as set out in the Minute Book be received.

21 **Questions**

a) Written Questions

There were no written questions.

b) Questions to the Leader of the Council

Questions were asked and answers received on the following issues:

Councillor Parsons: Community facilities and infrastructure to support development

Councillor Cherry: Police and Crime Commissioner proposal to centralise CCTV operation monitoring

Councillor McHugh: Cherwell Military Champion attendance or representation at relevant events

Councillor Mawer: Sanctuary Housing and long term voids

Councillor Watkins: Short breaks to be factored into all meetings approximately every two hours

c) Questions to Committee Chairmen on the Minutes

There were no questions to Committee Chairman on the minutes of meetings.

22 **Annual Report of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2023/2024**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report which presented the annual report of the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee 2023/24

Resolved

- (1) That the Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee 2023/24 be noted.

23 **Treasury Management Report - Annual Performance Report 2023/24**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to provide Council with information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2023-24 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice. The report demonstrated that all treasury management activities undertaken during the financial year 2023-24 complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice, the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy and that all Prudential Indicators were met during the reporting period.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Annual Performance Report 2023/2024 and the Capital Prudential indicators be noted.

24 **Amendment to Committee Membership**

The Chairman referred to the agenda which set out that the former Labour Group Leader, Councillor Woodcock and newly appointed Labour Group Leader, Councillor Watkins, had notified the Proper Officer of a change to the Labour Group Leader and Deputy Leader and committee membership changes and that the Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Reeves, had notified the Proper Officer of a change to the Conservative Group committee membership.

Resolved

- (1) That the following Conservative Group committee membership amendment be noted:

Planning Committee

Councillor Andrew McHugh from full committee member to named substitute

Councillor Phil Chapman from names substitute to full committee member

- (2) That the notification of the change of Labour Group Leader and Deputy Labour Group Leader be noted:

Labour Group Leader: Councillor Amanda Watkins

Deputy Labour Group Leader: Councillor Andrew Crichton

- (3) That the following Labour Group committee membership amendments be noted:

Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee

Remove: Councillor Sean Woodcock

Add: Councillor Besmira Brash

Appeals Panel

Remove: Councillor Sean Woodcock

Add: Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Budget Planning Committee

Remove: Councillor Sean Woodcock

Add: Councillor Andrew Crichton

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Motions

The Chairman advised that four motions had been submitted. An amendment to the "Consultation on Congestion Commission" had been submitted. In line with the Constitution, no further amendments were now permitted.

Motion One: Mental Health Initiative

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Dr Thornhill that the following motion be adopted:

"The Labour Group would like to increase the impact of the existing mental health programme which was started by the Youth Activators in conjunction with the mental health charity MIND. It is proposed that this is achieved by making the programme longer and available through all schools, which we can achieve by partnering with the North Oxfordshire School Sports Partnership to identify schools where there were higher levels of need reported initially.

Providing a 12-week programme in 11 schools per term will result in all schools in the district benefitting within two years. The proposal would also target academic years 5 and 6 in primary and year 7, 10 and 11 in secondary as transition years.

The cost of the proposal is £0.035m per year and is proposed on an ongoing basis. Funding can be provided from the general contingency budget within Policy Contingency.

This council resolves to ask the Executive to increase spending on the mental health initiatives currently in place within the Chief Executive's directorate to be funded by an allocation from the Policy Contingency budget."

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was carried unanimously.

Motion Two: Spare Seats Scheme

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mallon that the following motion be adopted:

“Oxfordshire County Council has not run its Spare Seats scheme for school bus places well in recent years. Parents and carers have too often been left in an unenviable position following changes, with consultation of Cherwell District Council too often lacking about changes affecting its wards and schools.

On 26 June, the Oxford Mail reported that:

“Oxfordshire County Council is withdrawing its Spare Seats scheme for pupils travelling from Middle Barton and The Bartons villages to Chipping Norton School.

“It follows a furore last year when the council scrapped the scheme on nine routes, affecting more than 200 children including at Wheatley Park School, The Warriner in Bloxham and Wood Green in Witney.

Parental choice remains an important principle of the current education settlement and will remain so unless changed by a new government. Whilst such a principle remains, it is important that local government works with maintained schools and academies to facilitate transport to families’ preferred schools at reasonable cost.

Given that County Hall’s most recent cancellations would appear to imperil this important principle, the Council requests that its Leader write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council setting out in clear terms that, in future, Cherwell District Council would expect to be more fully consulted upon all such changes affecting families across North Oxfordshire.”

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was carried unanimously.

Motion Three: Consultation on Congestion Commission

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mallon that the following motion be adopted:

“On 14 February, Oxfordshire County Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission as part of its last budget debate. Although this measure was not taken up at the time, this Council now considers that it is time for such commission to ensure that commuters into Oxford have a meaningful voice about how any policy changes planned in County Hall affect their working lives.

This Council further notes that the administration at Oxfordshire County Council has refused to rule out extending measures currently planned for

Oxford to Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, despite concerns from local businesses about the health of our high streets.

Such measures include Oxfordshire County Council's ambitious suite of traffic filters, workplace parking tax and Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods, none of which have been ruled out for Cherwell in future.

Were all such measures to go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists and working people could be hit by £57million in fines and charges over a five-year period as follows:

Zero Emissions Zone: £25m;
Workplace Parking Levy: £21m;
Traffic Filters: £11m.

This Council requests that its Leader write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council requesting that Cherwell District Council be fully consulted before any plans are put in train or capital expenditure committed to introduce similarly restrictive measures across North Oxfordshire, mindful of this Council's need to protect our high streets and local economy."

Councillor Biegel proposed the following amendment (amendments struck through and revised text in italics), which was duly seconded by Councillor Crichton.

"On 14 February, Oxfordshire County Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission as part of its last budget debate. Although this measure was not taken up at the time, this Council now considers that it is time for such commission to ensure that commuters into Oxford have a meaningful voice about how any policy changes planned in County Hall affect their working lives.

This Council further notes that the administration at Oxfordshire County Council has refused to rule out extending measures currently planned for Oxford to Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, despite concerns from local businesses about the health of our high streets.

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before any plans are put in train or capital expenditure committed to introduce ~~similarly restrictive~~ *similar* measures across North Oxfordshire, mindful of this Council's need to protect our high streets and local economy."

The amendment was debated. On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried and became the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was debated. On being put to the vote the substantive motion was carried.

Motion Four: Member Briefings

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mallon that the following motion be adopted:

"This Council notes that, by the time of its next elections in 2026, it will have been in No Overall Control for three years. Mindful that a new approach to local politics is required, this Council resolves to:

- i. Ask the Chief Executive to consider and ensure that 'all member' briefings on forthcoming policy matters of concern are offered as standard practice; and allow designated frontbench spokespeople from political groups to attend relevant Director briefings, for example, in connection with non-confidential items; and
- ii. Ask that the Constitution Review Group consider whether the formal designation of opposition spokespeople should now be enshrined in the Council's constitution."

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Resolved

- (1) That the following motion be adopted:

Mental Health Initiative

"The Labour Group would like to increase the impact of the existing mental health programme which was started by the Youth Activators in conjunction with the mental health charity MIND. It is proposed that this is achieved by making the programme longer and available through all schools, which we can achieve by partnering with the North Oxfordshire School Sports Partnership to identify schools where there were higher levels of need reported initially.

Providing a 12-week programme in 11 schools per term will result in all schools in the district benefitting within two years. The proposal would also target academic years 5 and 6 in primary and year 7, 10 and 11 in secondary as transition years.

The cost of the proposal is £0.035m per year and is proposed on an ongoing basis. Funding can be provided from the general contingency budget within Policy Contingency.

This council resolves to ask the Executive to increase spending on the mental health initiatives currently in place within the Chief Executive's directorate to be funded by an allocation from the Policy Contingency budget."

- (2) That the following motion be adopted:

Spare Seats Scheme

"Oxfordshire County Council has not run its Spare Seats scheme for school bus places well in recent years. Parents and carers have too often been left in an unenviable position following changes, with consultation of Cherwell District Council too often lacking about changes affecting its wards and schools.

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Parental choice remains an important principle of the current education settlement and will remain so unless changed by a new government. Whilst such a principle remains, it is important that local government works with maintained schools and academies to facilitate transport to families' preferred schools at reasonable cost.

Given that County Hall's most recent cancellations would appear to imperil this important principle, the Council requests that its Leader write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council setting out in clear terms that, in future, Cherwell District Council would expect to be more fully consulted upon all such changes affecting families across North Oxfordshire.

- (3) That the following motion, as amended, be adopted:

Consultation on Congestion Commission

"On 14 February, Oxfordshire County Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission as part of its last budget debate. Although this measure was not taken up at the time, this Council now considers that it is time for such commission to ensure that commuters into Oxford have a meaningful voice about how any policy changes planned in County Hall affect their working lives.

This Council further notes that the administration at Oxfordshire County Council has refused to rule out extending measures currently planned for Oxford to Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, despite concerns from local businesses about the health of our high streets.

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The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Chairman:

Date: