

Council

Monday 27 February 2023

Agenda Item xx, Motions

Motion Proposer: Councillor Eddie Reeves

Motion Seconder: Councillor Adam Nell

Topic: Children's health, wellbeing and access to educational provision

Motion

"This Council notes with concern Oxfordshire County Council's decision to withdraw school bus services under its Spare Seats scheme without parental or wider public consultation.

Oxfordshire's Spare Seats programme has offered children a safe and affordable bus service to school for over 35 years, the scheme having largely been cost-neutral throughout its operation. Under the scheme, families are offered spare seats for their children on school buses taking children eligible for free home-to-school transport at reasonable cost.

Following a decision by Oxfordshire County Council, nearly 10 routes in predominantly rural areas are set to be cancelled from September 2023, with more set to follow as contracts are retendered. This decision will affect the 1-WA17 route serving the Warriner School and the 2-ML05 route to the Marlborough CoE School. Over the medium term, as many as 1,384 students could be affected.

Oxfordshire County Council has defended its decision on the basis that it has no legal obligation to operate the scheme, adding that its continuation:

"would incur a financial cost and reinforces children travelling to schools further away than their nearest school".

This Council strongly disagrees with this reinterpretation of what has been established policy and practice. For clarity, it does so on financial grounds as well as for reasons of personal choice, child safety and environmental protection.

This Council instructs the Leader of the Council to write to the Leader and Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council to urge them to reverse their decision as a matter of urgency."

Motion Proposer: Councillor Ian Middleton

Motion Seconder: Councillor Hannah Banfield

Topic: Housing Affordability Mix

Motion

“Providing truly affordable housing is one of the highest priorities for this council. However, our policies currently mandate that only 30-35% of new housing should be designated affordable.

In contrast we have recently accepted Oxford City council’s affordability ratio of 50% for new housing built in Cherwell to meet their needs. It would seem equitable that we should give the same consideration to Cherwell families and residents who are also in desperate need of affordable housing in the district.

As the Cherwell 2040 Local Plan has now been further delayed and will be subject to revision, we have a timely opportunity to correct this imbalance and include an increase in our own affordability requirement for future housing developments within Cherwell. This will show our commitment to our own residents is as great as it is to those from the city.

This Council requests that the Executive consider including an affordable element of at least 50% within future housing developments and that this be included as a requirement in the emerging Local Plan 2040 along with a clear definition of what affordable housing encompasses.

We also request that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to request that his department urgently commissions a review of both affordability criteria and guarantees of profit margins which allow developers to adjust affordability ratios based on Gross Development Values and Viability Assessments.”

Motion Proposer: Councillor Nick Cotter

Motion Seconder: Councillor Chris Pruden

Topic: London Road Crossing, Bicester

Motion

“The government recommitted in the 2022 Autumn Statement to the delivery of East West Rail (EWR). In 2021, EWR consulted on a series of proposals to address the fact that increased train frequency would, in due course, require the level crossing at London Road, Bicester, to be closed. The Chief Executive of EWR told a meeting of local elected representatives on 13 January that EWR would publish its proposals for the whole line by June.

This Council:

- Strongly supports East West Rail as it will increase opportunities for lower carbon travel and support sustainable growth and opportunity;
- Notes that the closure of the London Road would sever the road connection between the south-east of Bicester and the town centre;
- Believes that it must be a priority, working with Oxfordshire County Council and East West Rail, to find a sustainable, funded solution that continues to provide a suitable rail crossing for cars, cycles and pedestrians at or near London Road;
- Recognises that the next four months are critical to ensuring that this solution is adequately funded by EWR and national government, given that the new line is of national importance while the negative impact of closing London Road would fall on the local community in Bicester;
- Resolves to ask the Leader to write to the Chief Executive of East West Rail, stating this Council's support for a new railway crossing at or near London Road that is suitable for cars, cycles and pedestrians."