

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3 November 2015 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor John Sanders – in the Chair

Councillors:

Lynda Atkins	Mark Gray	David Nimmo Smith
Jamila Azad	Patrick Greene	Neil Owen
David Bartholomew	Tim Hallchurch MBE	Zoé Patrick
Mike Beal	Pete Handley	Glynis Phillips
Maurice Billington	Jenny Hannaby	Susanna Pressel
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Nick Hards	Laura Price
Kevin Bulmer	Neville F. Harris	Anne Purse
Nick Carter	Steve Harrod	G.A. Reynolds
Louise Chapman	Mrs Judith Heathcoat	Alison Rooke
Mark Cherry	Hilary Hibbert-Biles	Rodney Rose
John Christie	John Howson	Gillian Sanders
Sam Coates	Ian Hudspeth	Les Sibley
Yvonne Constance OBE	Bob Johnston	Roz Smith
Steve Curran	Richard Langridge	Lawrie Stratford
Surinder Dhesi	Stewart Lilly	John Tanner
Arash Fatemian	Lorraine Lindsay-Gale	Melinda Tilley
Neil Fawcett	Sandy Lovatt	Michael Waive
Jean Fooks	Mark Lygo	Richard Webber
Mrs C. Fulljames	Kieron Mallon	David Williams
Anthony Gearing	Charles Mathew	David Wilmshurst
Janet Godden	James Mills	

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

65/15 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2015 were approved and signed.

66/15 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chairman reported as follows:

Council gave approval to an item of urgent business to be taken directly after Agenda Item 9 on the Agenda (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report) and for Maggie Blyth, Chair of the OSCB to introduce the report.

Council further approved to extend the Council Meeting for 1 hour 9if required) until 4.30 pm.

The Chairman reminded all members that the Leader would be holding a meeting for all councillors on the rising of Council for a discussion around Unitary Status. The Meeting would be held in the Member's Board Room.

The Council held a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Betty Standingford who passed away on Saturday, 24 October 2015. Councillor Standingford was elected as a member of the County Council for New Marston division in 2001, serving until May 2005.

67/15 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

The Council received the following petitions and public address:

Ms Kate Joyce on behalf of Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Oxford spoke in support of Agenda Item 14 (Motion from Councillor David Williams).on the basis that the WEA believed that the Children's Centre's were Social Dynamic Hubs that provided an essential and unique forum for families, often with multiple deprivations, to gain access to social and psychological help. The Centre's further provided a unique situation for social capital, allowing for users to take up positions from volunteering and allowing for study which would have a decisive impact on the next generation.

Mr Trevor License, Resident of Witney asking the Council presented a petition asking the Council to save the Witney Town Service bus route (services 213, 214 & 215), on the basis that the bus service was an important community lifeline for many residents and must be retained. The quality of life for many would be severely restricted if the route was lost. Witney Town Service bus campaign further believed that under the Transport Act 1985, the County Council had a legal duty to regard the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly and disabled and therefore urged the Council to safeguard the future of the essential bus route.

The Chairman of the Council received the Petition and forwarded it to the Director for Environment & Economy to respond.

68/15 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

19 Questions with notice were asked. Details of the questions and answers and the supplementary questions and answers (where asked) will be set out in Annex 1 to the Minutes.

In relation to Question 1 (Question from Councillor Mathew to Councillor Stratford) Councillor Stratford undertook to provide Councillor Mathew was a written response confirming whether or not the level of borrowing was £380m.

In relation to Question 19 (Question from Councillor Janet Godden to Councillor Carter) Councillor Carter gave an undertaking to ask Carillion to ensure that all building projects within the locality are reported on at locality meetings and that the reports produced state the original completion date as well as the current completion date.

69/15 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

The Council received the report of the Cabinet.

70/15 URGENT BUSINESS - OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (OSCB) ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15

Under the provisions set out in Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the Chairman of the meeting was of the opinion that the following report (Annual Report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board) could be taken after Agenda Item 9 as urgent business because of the need for full council to have an opportunity to discuss the report at the earliest opportunity.

The Council had before it the Annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB), which provided an independent analysis of the safeguarding services provided to the County's children over 2014/15 and outlined the challenges ahead over the next year.

The Chairman sought Council's approval to the Independent Chairman of the Board introducing the report to Council.

RESOLVED: (nem con) that the Independent Chairman of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board introduce the Annual Report to the Council.

The Independent Chairman, Maggie Blyth, in introducing the report, reminded members that the report was an independent assessment of the pressure points across the system, identifying what was working well and what needed attention. The report looked at how best to ensure those working on the front line were a key part of learning and development. There had been a particular focus on older children in the child protection system; strengthening systems and practice to ensure they are being supported

appropriately and not disadvantaged in the transition into adulthood. Oxfordshire also maintained a focus on children leaving care. The OSCB has also carried out a lot of work with the wider community to raise awareness of child protection matters.

Councillor Tilley moved and Councillor Hudspeth seconded the recommendations as set out on the face of the Agenda.

In moving and seconding the report, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families paid tribute to the Independent Chairman of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board for an excellent report.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was carried nem con.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note that the child protection partnership is working effectively across Oxfordshire but there are severe pressure points in relation to the increased complexity of cases and activity in the system;
- (b) consider the implications for the partnership in relation to the deficits in appropriate provision for those adults that disclose abuse or exploitation from childhood;
- (c) ensure that they prioritise attendance at the Member safeguarding briefing on 8 December 2015;
- (d) to note that the report is yet to go to the Performance Scrutiny Committee and Health & Well Being Board, whose comments are to be fed back to Council.

71/15 ADULT SERVICES WORKFORCE STRATEGY

(Agenda Item 10)

The Council had before them a report (CC10) which set out the Oxfordshire Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy, developed to address the significant challenges with workforce capacity and capability, arising from growing demand for care and support and the increasing complexity of care and support needs.

On 20 October 2015, the Cabinet considered and approved the Workforce Strategy and that the report be presented to full Council.

Councillor Heathcoat moved and Councillor Hudspeth seconded the recommendations as set out on the face of the Agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was carried nem con.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

72/15 VIREMENTS TO COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 11)

Council had before them a report (CC11) which set out two virements, that under the virement rules needed to be agreed by Council. The virements were in respect of the un-ring-fenced grant received by the Council relating to the closure of the Independent Living Fund and the transfer £2.0m from Public Health reserves to the Capital Programme for the Children's Homes Project.

Councillor Stratford moved and Councillor Hudspeth seconded the recommendations as set out in the report and on the face of the Agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was carried nem con.

RESOLVED: (nem con) to agree:

- (a) the virements in respect of the unring-fenced grant received by the Council relating to the closure of the Independent Living Fund;
- (b) the transfer £2.0m from Public Health reserves to the Capital Programme for the Children's Homes Project.

73/15 OXFORDSHIRE DEVOLUTION - THEMED DEBATE

(Agenda Item 12)

On 4 September, the Leaders of the six Oxfordshire Authorities, along with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Clinical Commissioning Group submitted an expression of interest to government setting out initial proposals for devolution in Oxfordshire for discussion with government. The proposals requested greater local control over significant funding for transport, skills training and health services.

At its meeting on 20 October Cabinet agreed that a debate should be held at full Council in order to understand all members' views. Council had before them a report (CC12) which gave an overview of the context, the proposals, the current work underway and set out the next stages in the process.

Accordingly, the Council had before them a report on Devolution (CC12).

Councillor Ian Hudspeth moved and Councillor Rose seconded the recommendation as set out on the face of the Agenda.

Following a lengthy debate (a detailed copy of the debate can be found on the website) the Council:

RESOLVED: (nem con) to note the report and to consider the possible implications of devolution in Oxfordshire.

74/15 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE

(Agenda Item 13)

Councillor Brighouse moved and Councillor Christie seconded the following motion:

“This Council, being deeply disturbed at the cuts it has already implemented, those it has agreed but not yet implemented and the additional cuts which will be required as it sets next year's budget, calls on the Government not to set a limit on the Council Tax increase as such a restriction stifles local democracy and will severely hamper our ability to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's Citizens. If such a restriction is subsequently set it asks officers in consultation with Group Leaders to set up an informal survey on the attitude of Oxfordshire's residents to a referendum to meet those needs by an increase in the Council Tax.”

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: Accordingly.

75/15 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS

(Agenda Item 14)

With the agreement of Council, Councillor Williams moved and Councillor Smith seconded his motion as amended by Councillor Smith below in bold italics and strikethrough:

'Council recognises that early intervention services for young families need to be very local and would like to see additional options that respond more fully to this need. ~~“Having taken into account the comments that have been made during the consultation period thus far, the Council requests that the Cabinet **remove from any future budget proposals options that might involve** reconsider that the closure of any of the Children's Centres. **Council considers** be set aside and not included in the forthcoming budget settlement as an action to assist with further savings. The Council recognises that the closures may be a false economy, the impact on families being such that closure will in all probability resulting in greater financial pressures on the **children's** social-care services and the local NHS. As individuals, mostly women will be forced to give up part time employment, as a result of the planned closures. The Council also recognises that this policy will not only deeply impact on thousands of families and their children but also damage the local economy.~~

During the next six months the Council will **also** assist the Children's Centres in their ongoing quest-efforts for greater efficiency where it **they** can. ~~However for the foreseeable future the option of closure will be lifted and existing financial support retained for all the centres in the network. The Cabinet to take account of this full Council budgetary decision whilst formulating the accounts for the next financial year 2016-2017.”~~

Following debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was lost by 32 votes to 30, with 1 abstention.

76/15 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS

(Agenda Item 15)

Councillor Williams moved and Councillor Coates seconded the following motion:

“This Council welcomes the return of the Business Rate to local Council control but is concerned that the Chancellor is still pledged to continue to reduce the level of Rates Support Grant in his objective of achieving a free market in raising local taxation for that philosophy takes no account of the needs in various local authorities and will only serve to further widen the gap between affluent and deprived areas of the Country.

The Council is also concerned that the ‘devolution’ of control of the Business Rate will be of limited value if it is set at a national flat rate determined by central government a flat rate that the Council cannot modify or sub divide as it sees fit.

After more details are revealed in the New Year, a special briefing to be established that all Councillors and senior officers should be invited to attend to illustrate what this change in responsibilities will mean in financial income and what flexibility the Chancellor has actually given, if any, to local councils to implement a real devolved Business Rate service.”

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was lost by 42 votes to 3, with 16 abstentions

77/15 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR SAM COATES

(Agenda Item 16)

Councillor Coates moved and Councillor Williams seconded the following motion:

“This Council notes the problems that are emerging with the implementation of the ‘Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015’ for teachers and social workers, as well as those in the local community, such as landlords and religious leaders.

There is a challenge for specified authorities, including local authorities, schools, the police, health and others, to implement the new legal obligation in the exercise of their functions, in order to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and, especially for schools to promote ‘British values’, in order to ensure the protection of vulnerable adults and young people at risk of radicalisation.

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The legislation, like all laws based on ‘suspicion’ could breach free speech and professional confidentiality and with its legal obligations places responsibilities on officers of the Council that may be deemed unfair. There is also the fear that a network of false accusations could arise wasting precious police time and stigmatising specific young people. However, these fears and challenges need to be balanced with ensuring that vulnerable people are safeguarded from exploitation by extremists.

This Council will ask the Director for Children, Education & Families to work collaboratively and sensitively with schools, professional groups, school governors, trade unions, local faith groups and others to ensure that implementation of the new duty is done constructively and in consultation with local communities as appropriate.”

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was lost by 30 votes to 28, with 3 abstentions.

78/15 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GILL SANDERS
(Agenda Item 17)

Councillor Sanders moved and Councillor Cherry seconded the following motion:

“This Council recognising that many parents do not take up the offer of a funded place for their 2 year olds, asks the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families to write to the Secretary of State asking that the criteria for receiving the grant be extended to include parents who do not have the confidence to leave their small children but who would happily take up and benefit from taking up a place if they could stay with their 2 year old.”

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was lost by 30 votes to 28 with 3 abstentions.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing