OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 14 July 2020 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 4.40 pm.

Present:

Councillor Les Sibley – in the Chair

Councillors:

John Howson
Sobia Afridi
Jamila Begum Azad
Hannah Banfield
David Bartholomew
Dr Suzanne Bartington
Tim Bearder
Maurice Billington
Liz Brighouse OBE
Paul Buckley
Kevin Bulmer
Nick Carter
Mark Cherry
Dr Simon Clarke
Yvonne Constance OBE
Ian Corkin
Arash Fatemian
Neil Fawcett
Ted Fenton
Nicholas Field-Johnson
Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Mike Fox-Davies
Stefan Gawrysiak
Mark Gray
Carmen Griffiths
Pete Handley
Jane Hanna OBE
Jenny Hannaby
Neville F. Harris
Steve Harrod
Damian Haywood
Mrs Judith Heathcoat
Hilary Hibbert-Biles
Tony Ilott
Bob Johnston
Liz Leffman
Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Mark Lygo
D. McIlveen
Kieron Mallon
Jeannette Matelot
Charles Mathew
Glynis Phillips
Susanna Pressel
Laura Price
Eddie Reeves
G.A. Reynolds
Judy Roberts
Alison Rooke
Dan Sames
Gill Sanders
John Sanders
Emily Smith
Roz Smith
Lawrie Stratford
Dr Pete Sudbury
Alan Thompson
Emma Turnbull
Michael Waine
Liam Walker
Richard Webber

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.

20/20 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 May 2020 were approved and signed as an accurate record subject to adding a sentence to explain that the Meeting was held virtually.

21/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
(Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Hudspeth. Council sent its best wish for a speedy recovery.

22/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
(Agenda Item 3)

Councillor John Howson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 (Motion by Councillor John Sanders) by virtue of being a non-car driver.

23/20 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS
(Agenda Item 4)

Council congratulated and paid tribute to staff and the community on their tremendous efforts and response during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Council Paid tribute and held a minute's silence in Memory of former Honorary Alderman Patrick Greene.

Following requests from district council colleagues, the Director of Finance had notified Council of the need to move the Budget Meeting of Council in 2021.

RESOLVED: (nem con) to move the Budget Meeting of Council from the scheduled date of 16 February 2021 to the 9 February 2021.

24/20 APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda Item 5)

Council noted the following appointment:

Councillor Ted Fenton in place of Councillor Mike Fox-Davies on the Planning & Regulation Committee.

25/20 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS
(Agenda Item 6)

Council received the following public address:

Mr Jamie Hartzell presented a Petition of some 2, 500 signatories, calling on the Council to commit now to doubling tree cover by 2045.

Dr Liz Sawyer addressed the Council on behalf of Liveable Streets Oxfordshire in support of Agenda Item 16, Motion by Councillor John Sanders on adopting Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

Mr Patrick Coulter addressed the Council on behalf of Headington Liveable Streets, Headington Action and Headington Neighbourhood Forum in

support of the Motion by Councillor John Sanders supporting Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

26/20 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Question from Mr Chris Henderson to Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale

On 10th May the Government released its roadmap for exiting lockdown, at which point it became clear that Libraries would be allowed to open to the public from the 4th July. Local authorities around the Country worked towards this date, Neighbouring Buckinghamshire, for example, established a select and collect service from 22nd June and had their entire library network open on 6th July.

Oxfordshire in contrast seemed totally unprepared. A decision to phase re-opening was made in early May but it remains unclear upon what basis. Despite a late change in timetable with the opening date for the first tranche of libraries brought forward from the 31st July to the 13th July there are at present only plans to have 11 sites open by 20th July with no date given for the rest of the network (at time of writing this question).

Members of Library staff, keen to provide a service to their public, were repeatedly told they should say absolutely nothing about re-opening to the public who pay their wages or to their Library Friends Groups with veiled threats of repercussions for anyone who stepped out of line.

No information was available on the County website until 7th July, in marked contrast to almost every other local authority.

Can the Cabinet Member explain what exceptional circumstances exist in Oxfordshire that make it so difficult to re-open their library service?

Answer

Oxfordshire County Council is in step with other local authorities in taking a planned approach to reopening its public libraries and public facilities in a prioritised way, making sure all staff and our communities are safe when they return to our buildings.

Public Library services across the UK are taking a slightly different approach to reopening their services. Some library services have not yet reopened, some libraries have opened some of their libraries and some have offered a click and collect service only.

Derbyshire for example have reopened a very small number of its libraries initially with residents having to book an appointment to visit their library, Cambridge / Peterborough reopened less than 1/4 of its libraries. Dorset will continue a click and collect service for the foreseeable future. Kent has

reopened 12 of its 99 libraries for a click and collect service. Milton Keynes and Wiltshire don't yet have a date for their libraries to reopen.

We are pleased that our planning will deliver a return to some of the things our residents' value and have missed over the last few extraordinary months. While some library authorities are just planning a click and collect service, our priority is to get people back into libraries in a safe and socially distanced way, so that they can choose their own books and access the range of other services that our libraries offer.

They will be able to browse, select their own materials, check these items out and of course return the items to the library. All returns will do 72 hours in quarantine. Customers will be able to use the public computers, and for our vulnerable residents' libraries will provide the bus pass and blue badge validation service. With visits restricted to 30 minutes, we are maximising the opportunity for all members of our community to access our libraries.
The first set of libraries opened yesterday; something I am sure you will join with me in celebrating. And I can reconfirm we will continue a very measured programme to open subsequent libraries in a planned and carefully controlled way.

During lockdown our library staff have been very busy behind the scenes supporting frontline customer services including:

- Making calls to vulnerable residents shielding
- Supporting Registration services with critical document distribution
- Marshalling traffic when the Household Waste Recycling Centres re-opened

I am proud to say that the Library service has also enhanced its ebook provision by £20,000, and has been delivering story times, a creative writing series, book clubs, Lego clubs, poetry competitions, origami sessions, podcasts, online homework and study resources, our digital summer programme and of course our summer reading challenge. 882 people joined online between April-June.

The Service have issued various social media and print press releases advising the public that we are working on a phased re-opening. Library staff have been supported in responding to online queries.

It would be inappropriate of me to comment in detail on internal staffing matters however please be assured that my senior managers have thoroughly reviewed information shared with staff both verbally and in writing and can confirm our staff have been kept fully updated with plans for reopening and key messages they can share with members of the public and friends of the library groups. They are disappointed to receive your allegations of behaviour they do not recognise.

Our focus now must be to get our staff into the libraries set to reopen our doors to Oxfordshire residents in the weeks to come. As of yesterday,

The following libraries are open:

- Oxfordshire County Library with new enlarged lifts…
- Abingdon
- Thame
- Witney
- Bicester
- Didcot

The following libraries will reopen on the week commencing 20 July 2020

- Banbury
- Cowley
- Carterton
- Henley
- Kidlington

Dates for the reopening of libraries elsewhere in Oxfordshire will be published in due course.

Supplementary

I am delighted that we now have dates for the opening of 11 Libraries in Oxfordshire. Can you tell me when you will haves dates for the opening of the other 33 Libraries in Oxfordshire?

Answer

No, I'm afraid I cannot at the moment, but we will be announcing them as soon as they are ready to open. The staff were working hard as a task force, putting in all the safety measures that were now required in a calm and measured way.

Question from Mr Peter Barnett to Councillor Yvonne Constance

Following the disappointing allocation of Tranche 1 Emergency Active Travel Funds (EATF) from DfT and, while I understand the laudable intention of OCC to spread the funds in the bid evenly across the county, will OCC commit to fully involve and consult, not just county councillors, as in the EATF Tranche 1 bid, but also the various cycling and other expert groups such as Cyclox and Build Back Better - Oxford, in the development of the bid for EATF Tranche 2 funding, and further will OCC commit that these groups will actually see the EATF Tranche 2 bid before it is submitted so that further mistakes are not made.

Answer

The Emergency Active Travel Fund was intended to enable walking and cycling as lockdown restrictions were eased through 'swift and meaningful plans to reallocate road space to cyclists and pedestrians, including on strategic corridors. Oxfordshire was given an indicative allocation of £597,000 for tranche one. The conditions we were asked to comply with

included spending the money within eight weeks, and we were given 1 week to submit our proposal.

In developing the Oxfordshire proposal, officers started by reviewing the outputs of the recently undertaken active travel member survey to ensure that our bid reflected their priorities. We then shortlisted these based on the measures we believed were consistent with the grant conditions and those that were aligned with the priorities of the district and city councils. We also ensured that the needs of the entire county were considered. In addition to new temporary measures, we also proposed that we would add to any money from Department for Transport (DfT) by reprioritising our maintenance programmes, and also sought other funding to enable more to be done, including the use of developer's contributions. This process was designed to ensure that we developed a package of measures that would best meet the needs of Oxfordshire's residents and communities as lockdown restrictions were eased.

When we received formal notification of funding, we were advised that DfT had decided to award authorities either 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% of their allocation. In some cases, authorities could receive more than their indicative allocation. This was not stated in the original grant conditions.
Oxfordshire received 50% of its indicative allocation. Feedback from DfT, suggested that they didn't feel all of our measures would achieve the meaningful shift to cycling and walking. They said that "we did not see sufficient evidence of this in your proposal and noted that a number of measures were around maintenance of existing lanes and repainting of existing cycle lanes which is not the primary purpose of the fund, so were not able to agree to the full indicative allocation". We suspect the approach of looking across Oxfordshire as a whole rather than concentrating on main urban areas may have also had a bearing. This does seem to have been an issue across the country, with many counties receiving approximately 50% of their allocation, and many urban metropolitan areas receiving either 100% or 111% of their allocation.

As set out above, the Active Travel Fund was just one of a number of funding sources that we are using to deliver this programme, and I can confirm that all the measures we identified for the tranche one programme will be still delivered. It is clear from the feedback from DfT that any additional funding we could have received from them would have had to be spent on measures that are in addition to what is already planned, and so wouldn't have reduced the financial pressure to deliver our current programme.
We will be looking to increase our funding in tranche two, for which our indicative allocation is £2.3m, and we will liaise closely with DfT to ensure we maximise our chances to achieve that. We have not yet received any information from DfT on tranche 2 but are told that it is imminent.

Supplementary

Will you commit to involve the coalition of Oxfordshire of Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) in the development of the Tranche 2 plans?

Answer

We will consult with as many groups as possible in the time allowed.

27/20 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

33 questions with Notice were asked. Details of the questions and answers and supplementary questions and answers will be set out in the Annex to the minutes.

In relation to question 19 (Question from Gill Sanders to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance gave an assurance to consult with all concerned groups across the county that time allowed and that they were looking for projects right across the County.

In relation to question 26 (Question from Councillor Hannaby to Councillor Hudspeth) Councillor Heathcoat undertook to take back the question to Councillor Hudspeth as to whether he would support the recent Healthwatch report into an enquiry of Care Homes.

28/20 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of the Cabinet.

In relation to paragraph 2 of the report (Question from Councillor Hanna to Councillor Heathcoat) Councillor Heathcoat undertook to take on the points Councillor Hanna made in relation to ensuring that the COVID response and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 19(a) was addressed in the upcoming review of the constitution and to ensure that the Council was fit for the future in relation to COVID planning for Restart, Recovery and Renew.

In relation to paragraph 3 of the report (Question from Councillor Price to Councillor Heathcoat) Councillor Heathcoat undertook to ask HR to consider the request that a report be produced on the ethnic minority gap in the same way they report on the Gender Gap ahead of any legislation requiring it, cautioning that there would need to ensure that no individual could be identified in the report.

In relation to paragraph 4 of the report (Question from Councillor Pressel to Councillor Stratford) Councillor Stratford undertook to give consideration as to whether Children's Centres could receive sustainability funding.

In relation to paragraph 10 of the report (Question from Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance undertook to provide Councillor Roz Smith with a written answer detailing how enforcement would be carried and by whom and whether there would be resource in place to monitor enforcement to ensure compliance.

In relation to paragraph 10 of the report (Question from Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance undertook to provide Councillor Roz Smith with a written answer detailing how enforcement would be carried and by whom and whether there would be resource in place to monitor enforcement to ensure compliance.

In relation to paragraph 12 of the report (Question from Councillor John Sanders to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance gave an assurance that the monitoring of the Connecting Oxford and Liveable Streets initiatives would be kept as separate as possible to determine the outcomes of each scheme.

In relation to paragraph 12 of the report (Question from Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance agreed with Councillor Roz Smith that the Headington CPZ was overdue for a review and asked that she take the issue up with Councillor Walker who was now responsible for that area.

In relation to paragraph 13 of the report (Question from Councillor Mark Lygo to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance confirmed that a programme had been set up with a plan to visit every school to see what could be done in relation to enforcing road closures outside schools at school times.

In relation to paragraph 14 of the report (Question from Councillor Bob Johnston to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance gave an assurance that everything possible would be done to avoid any legal challenge on the project.

In relation to paragraph 15 of the report (Question from Liz Leffman to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance confirmed that there were several bids in for funding and agreed with Councillor Leffman on the importance of connectivity for rural villages.

In relation to paragraph 19 of the report (Question from Deborah Mcilveen to Councillor Gray) Councillor Gray undertook, in relation to the youth opportunities fund – to investigate whether the funding could be reallocated in the event that any group should fail to it.

In relation to paragraph 19 of the report (Question from Richard Webber to Councillor Gray) Councillor Gray gave an assurance that further funding for services for young people was being looked at and that a CAG had been convened to look at the issue.

In relation to paragraph 19 of the report (Question from Jane Hanna to Councillor Gray) Councillor Gray undertook to provide a written answer to Councillor Hanna on the £200,000 fund that was allocated in the Budget specifically to access youth needs.

29/20 DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it the 2019/20 Director of Public Health Annual Report for Oxfordshire. The purpose of a Director of Public Health was to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Oxfordshire. This was done by reporting publicly and independently on issues which affected the health and wellbeing of the population in Oxfordshire and by making recommendations for improvement to a wide range of organisations. Producing a report was a statutory duty of Directors of Public Health.

RESOLVED: (On a motion by Councillor Stratford, seconded by Councillor Heathcoat and carried nem com) to note the report.

30/20 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda Item 11)

Council had before it the Scrutiny Annual Report (**CC11**) which highlighted the key work undertaken by the Council's scrutiny committees to address current and emerging issues including the delivery of improved services for the residents of Oxfordshire.

The report 2019-2020 was presented to full Council, having been considered by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 9 July 2020. Additional comments from the Committee were summarised by the Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee at the Meeting.

RESOLVED: (On a Motion by Councillor Brighouse, seconded by Councillor Fatemian and carried nem con) to receive the report.

31/20 AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda Item 12)

Council considered the Annual Report which set out the role of the Audit & Governance Committee and summarised the work that has been undertaken both as a Committee and through the support of the Audit Working Group in 2019/20.

RESOLVED: (On a motion by Councillor Carter, seconded by Councillor Ilott and carried nem con) to receive the report.

32/20 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS (MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT)

(Agenda Item 13)

There was a requirement on the County Council to appoint one or more Independent Persons whose views had to be sought, and considered, by the authority before it made its decision on an allegation that a councillor had breached the Members' Code of Conduct. Independent Persons performed a key role in the Council's procedures for investigating any such complaints.

The Council currently had one Independent Person, but it was prudent for more than one to be appointed. Accordingly, the Council had before it a report which sought agreement to make two additional appointments to this role.

RESOLVED: (On a motion by Councillor Sibley, seconded by Councillor Howson and carried nem con) to appoint Mr Martyn Hocking and Mr Nicholas Holt-Kentwell to the role of Independent Persons for Oxfordshire County Council for a period of two years, renewable once.

33/20 HEALTH SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

(Agenda Item 14)

Council had before it a report which outlined changes to the scope of delegation of health scrutiny powers for the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). The changes sought to ensure the Horton HOSC could scrutinise the development of a masterplan for the Horton General Hospital.

RESPLVED: (on a motion by Councillor Fatemian, seconded by Councillor Mallon and carried nem con) to agree an amended scope of the health scrutiny powers delegated to the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow scrutiny of a masterplan for the Horton General Hospital, as set out in paragraph 15 (a and b).

34/20 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH

(Agenda Item 15)

With the consent of Council, Councillor Heathcoat moved, and Councillor Brighouse seconded an alteration to her motion at the suggestion of Councillor Liz Brighouse as shown in bold italics and strikethrough below and withdrew her amendment as shown in Annex 1 to the Schedule of Business:

“This Council recognises the excellent work of all local government staff across Oxfordshire during the COVID-19 crisis. Councils have worked together in difficult times, showing that organisational barriers to joint working can be overcome.

All Councils have gone the extra mile in delivering services to ~~our~~ residents ~~that~~ prioritis***ing*** ~~the most~~ vulnerable ***people***. This has inevitably incurred additional costs – c. £90 million across all tiers.

All Councils acknowledge the additional Government funding to date, (**but this is not enough)** and we have a duty to respond to the national financial challenge ahead and to be open with residents. This Council is currently forecasting a deficit of c. £24 million for the financial year 2020/21 and a further deficit of c. £40 million for 2021/22.

All Councils ~~across Oxfordshire~~ are now considering how they can balance budgets. ~~and protect frontline services.~~ No Councillor ~~nor party~~ wants to see drastic cuts to vital Council services.

~~We, as a group of democratically elected leaders, should take the opportunity provided by~~ ***the*** devolution white paper ***presents an opportunity to consider how*** ~~to ensure that we provide the best possible~~ public services ~~for our residents~~ ***can be best provided for Oxfordshire***.

This Council calls on the Leader ***to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer highlighting the way Councils worked together in Oxfordshire and asking him to honour the Government promise to reimburse Councils for the additional expenditure incurred because of COVID 19 and to undertake an open and wide-ranging conversation with Oxfordshire County Councillors , local authority partners, residents and stakeholders to explore all options for a new future for Oxfordshire which is inclusive, protects public services, supports a vibrant local democracy and ensures a strong economy.***

Following a lengthy debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: (unanimously)

“This Council recognises the excellent work of all local government staff across Oxfordshire during the COVID-19 crisis. Councils have worked together in difficult times, showing that organisational barriers to joint working can be overcome.

All Councils have gone the extra mile in delivering services to residents prioritising vulnerable people. This has inevitably incurred additional costs – c. £90 million across all tiers.

All Councils acknowledge the additional Government funding to date, (but this is not enough) and we have a duty to respond to the national financial challenge ahead and to be open with residents. This Council is currently forecasting a deficit of c. £24 million for the financial year 2020/21 and a further deficit of c. £40 million for 2021/22.

All Councils are now considering how they can balance budgets. No Councillor wants to see drastic cuts to vital Council services.

The devolution white paper presents an opportunity to consider how public services can be best provided for Oxfordshire.

This Council calls on the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer highlighting the way Councils worked together in Oxfordshire and asking him to honour the Government promise to reimburse Councils for the additional expenditure incurred because of COVID 19 and to undertake an open and wide-ranging conversation with Oxfordshire County Councillors , local

authority partners, residents and stakeholders to explore all options for a new future for Oxfordshire which is inclusive, protects public services, supports a vibrant local democracy and ensures a strong economy."

35/20 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR JOHN SANDERS

(Agenda Item 16)

Councillor John Sanders moved and Councillor Haywood seconded the following Motion:

"This Council supports the concept of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and will aim to introduce them when and where feasible."

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

RESOLVED: Accordingly.

36/20 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR NEVILLE HARRIS

(Agenda Item 17)

Councillor Harris moved and Councillor Gawrysiak seconded the following Motion:

"Council are delighted to note that the Oxfordshire Charity "Children Heard and Seen" were amongst the 2019 recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The Council further note that:

The Charity's work minimises the effects of parental imprisonment on young people through mentoring, group working and other interventions. Just listening to the thoughts of these young people promises benefit; realising they are not alone in facing problems is often pivotal.

Annually c312,000 children lose a parent to custody in England and Wales, c17,000 following the imprisonment of mothers. The Ministry of Justice advise that 65% of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend themselves.

The Charity's services are mainly reactive, identifying and encouraging children to take part is difficult and time consuming. Developing and fulfilling individual potential, seeking to reduce intergenerational crime and cut parent re-offending, this work impacts positively in Oxfordshire. Over 160 young people are on projects at present, c500 have participated since the Charity's formation in 2014. Commercial sector and grant foundation, purpose specific, funding and c40 volunteers make this endeavour possible.

Council agrees that it recognises, "Children Heard and Seen", as a vital community initiative originating in Oxfordshire. It further agrees to invite the Charity to prepare a brief written report on its work, needs and aspirations and present the report to a meeting of the Council's Performance Scrutiny

Committee and\or to such other Committee the Council may decide appropriate."

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was lost by 29 votes to 16, with 14 abstentions.

RESOLVED: Accordingly.

37/20 MOTIONS BY COUNCILLORS MATHEW, CONSTANCE, FIELD-JOHNSON, BARTINGTON, BRIGHOUSE AND MCILVEEN

(Agenda Item 18)

The time being 4.40 pm, these Motions were considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.1.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....