

These notes indicate the decisions taken at this meeting and the officers responsible for taking the agreed action. For background documentation please refer to the agenda and supporting papers available on the Council's web site (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.)

If you have a query please contact Deborah Miller (Tel: 07920 084239; E-Mail: deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

COUNTY COUNCIL - TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2020

<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA</i>	<i>DECISIONS</i>	<i>ACTION</i>
<p>1. Minutes</p> <p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2020 (CC1) and to receive information arising from them.</p>	<p>The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 September were approved and signed, subject to the amendments set out on the Schedule of Business.</p>	DM
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p>	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Afridi and Councillor Billington.</p>	Andrea Newman
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.</p>	<p>There were none.</p>	
<p>4. Official Communications</p>	<p>Council sent best wishes for a speedy recovery to Councillor Maurice Billington.</p> <p>Council thanked staff for their tireless contributions across all services in the County and for their ongoing commitment during the pandemic.</p>	All to note
<p>5. Appointments</p> <p>To make any changes to the membership</p>	<p>Council noted the following appointments:</p>	

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of the Cabinet, scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups.	HOSC Councillor Susanna Pressel in place of Councillor Laura Price.	Sue Whitehead
6. Petitions and Public Address	Council received a Petition from Mr Chris Jessop, Chairman of Goring Heath Parish Council requesting Council support to reduce the traffic speed limit through Crays Pond from the current 40mph to 30mph, and to request that you instruct your relevant officers to undertake this reduction with urgency.	
7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public	Question from Mr Chris Henderson to Councillor David Bartholomew – see Annex	
8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council	<p>25 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.</p> <p>In relation to Question 5, Councillor Constance undertook to provide Councillor Sudbury with a written answer clarifying whether the County Council had contact with other local authorities such as Hackney who had ambitious tree planting targets.</p> <p>In relation to Question 10, Councillor Bartholomew undertook to provide Councillor Roberts with a written answer on whether there was a likely timescale for when OCC would be signing the funding agreement.</p> <p>In relation to Question 12, Councillor Stratford undertook to provide Councillor Pressel with a written answer as to whether the Council had a policy in relation to vaping.</p>	<p>Jenny Larkcom</p> <p>Lorna Baxter</p> <p>Ansaf Azhar</p>

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	<p>back from recruitment as part of the £15m in year budget cuts?</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 1 of the report (Question from Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Heathcoat) Councillor Hudspeth undertook to ask Councillor Heathcoat to provide a written response in relation to concerns about the rising number of unemployed 18 to 24-year olds and whether more apprenticeships were being offered this year?</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 4 of the report (Question from Councillor Jane Hanna to Councillor Steve Harrod) Councillor Harrod undertook to provide a written response on whether there was an update of risk assessment of safeguarding in light of OSCB Annual Report statistics.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 4 of the report (Question from Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Steve Harrod) Councillor Harrod undertook to provide a written response detailing what measures had been put in place over the past 3 years to alleviate the impact of the removal of the Youth Service, as highlighted in the OSCB Report.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 5 of the report (Question from Councillor Emma Turnbull to Councillor Lindsay-Gale) Councillor Hudspeth undertook to ask Councillor Lindsay-Gale to provide a written response detailing what progress has been made, since the Cabinet Meeting, in undertaking a full review of the High Needs Block and how Councillor Lindsay-Gale was going to ensure that young people did not suffer as a result of the deficit reduction measures when it was known that young people with SEND</p>	<p>Karen Edwards</p> <p>Kieris Mace</p> <p>Kieris Mace</p> <p>Kieris Mace</p>

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	<p>had been severely impacted by Covid.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 5 of the report (Question from Councillor Richard Webber to Councillor Lindsay-Gale) Councillor Hudspeth undertook to ask Councillor Lindsay-Gale to provide a written response detailing whether there was any news of government support for the High Needs Block.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 9 of the report (Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Constance) Councillor Constance undertook to speak with the parking Manager and provide a written response on when the Website would be amended so that people outside of the City Boundary could report parking enforcement complaints.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 11 of the report (Question from Councillor Glynis Phillips to Councillor Bartholomew) Councillor Bartholomew undertook to provide a written response on the progress of the review of the Major Infrastructure Programme pipeline and when the outcome of this review will be shared with members.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 13 of the report (Question from Councillor Richard Webber to Councillor Mark Gray) Councillor Gray undertook to ask officers to provide a comment on the inequality of stop and search of young Caribbean males and to forward the comments to the police.</p> <p>In relation to paragraph 14 of the report (Question from Councillor Glynis Phillips to Councillor Harrod) Councillor Harrod undertook to provide a written response in relation</p>	<p>Kieris Mace</p> <p>Jenny Larkcom</p> <p>Lorna Baxter</p> <p>Mark Gray/ Jason Russell</p> <p>Kieris Mace</p>

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	to the risk register line LR2 which raised the risk of central government intervention in relation to safeguarding children and adults and the associated assessment of the likelihood of central government intervention.	
<p>11. Committee Dates</p> <p>A schedule of meeting dates proposed for the 2021/22 Council Year is attached.</p> <p>The schedule has been drawn up to reflect the various rules about frequency of meetings set out in the Council's Constitution. Attention is drawn to the following proposed changes to previous patterns:</p> <p>Bring forward April Council in 2021 to 23 March to avoid the restricted period before the elections. Bring forward February Council in 2022 to 8 February to aid District Council budget setting.</p> <p>Following discussion with Political Group Leaders it is proposed that whilst meetings of full Council are being held virtually their start time should be brought forward to 10.00am.</p> <p>Council is RECOMMENDED to:</p> <p>(a) agree the schedule of meeting dates for 2021/22 and in particular to agree to waive Rule 2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules to allow the April 2021 meeting of full Council to be held on 23 March 2021 and the February 2022 Council meeting to be held on 8 February 2022;</p> <p>(b) agree that Council meetings start at 10.00am for the period that Meetings are held Virtually.</p>	Recommendations agreed.	Sue Whitehead

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<p>12. Motion by Councillor Liz Leffman</p> <p>“With the closure of schools for an entire term due to the Covid pandemic, restricted access to leisure facilities, and reduced support for their emotional and mental health, the lives of young people in Oxfordshire have been severely disrupted over the past six months. Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will have suffered disproportionately and 16-24 year olds are most vulnerable to the resulting economic downturn.</p> <p>A year ago, this council acknowledged the importance of youth services and agreed to a county-wide review. A partial Youth Study is now being commissioned. Although the outcome of this study will not be known for several weeks, this Council recognises that the need for a well-funded, county-wide youth offer has never been greater, and commits to creating a Youth Strategy for Oxfordshire as soon as possible.</p> <p>This Council asks the Director for Children’s Services to establish an internal team to work in partnership with voluntary organisations, ensuring that our young people are provided with a youth offer that supports their learning, their physical development, their mental well-being and their employment prospects. This council commits to ensuring that young people in our County receive the informal education and support that they need to recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic so that they can flourish.”</p>	<p>The Motion was Lost by 31 votes to 29.</p>	
<p>13. Motion by Councillor Charles Mathew</p> <p>“The decision, last autumn now, by the Oxfordshire LEP to withdraw the funding from the Loop Farm project (Duke’s Cut to</p>	<p>With the consent of Council, Councillor Mathew moved his motion, amended at the suggestion of</p>	

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<p>Loop Farm Roundabout), a long-promised relief road to the A40 round Oxford, undermines sensible solutions to the endless traffic jams on the A40 between Witney and Oxford roundabouts. Given that the use of public money should be productive.</p> <p>Council asks Cabinet to review the plans presently being offered and adopt a long-term strategy that will meet the public's needs for the next twenty years at least and should include serious consideration of a rail link from Carterton, Witney and Eynsham to Oxford."</p>	<p>Councillor Tim Bearder as shown below in strikethrough and bold italics:</p> <p>The decision, last autumn now, by the Oxfordshire LEP to withdraw the funding from the Loop Farm project (Duke's Cut to Loop Farm Roundabout), a long-promised relief road to the A40 round Oxford, undermines sensible solutions to the endless traffic jams on the A40 between Witney and Oxford roundabouts. Given that the use of public money should be productive.</p> <p>Council asks Cabinet to review the plans presently being offered and adopt a long-term strategy that will meet the public's needs for the next twenty years at least and should include serious consideration of a rail link from Carterton, Witney and Eynsham to Oxford as part of this work Council asks the Cabinet to consider undertaking a feasibility study should funding be confirmed to look at a rail link from Carterton, Witney and Eynsham to Oxford.</p> <p>The Motion as amended was agreed nem con, with 1 abstention.</p>	<p>Paul Feehily</p>
<p>14. Motion by Councillor Liz Brighthouse</p> <p>"The impact of COVID 19 has exposed the enormous inequalities in our County and the senseless death of George Floyd followed by demonstrations across our County have highlighted the injustices and inequalities experienced by many. In particular, there have been calls for changes to the National Curriculum which reflects our past rather than our present or future needs.</p> <p>Until 1988 Oxfordshire, as the Local Education Authority was responsible for</p>	<p>The Motion was lost by 32 votes to 28.</p>	

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<p>what was taught in Oxfordshire Schools. When that ended, the responsibility went to the Secretary of State for Education advised by a National Curriculum Council, this was revised by Labour. In 2010 Michael Gove, as Secretary of State for Education in the Coalition Government, abolished it completely and took power to himself advised by Dominic Cummings.</p> <p>Now is the time to consider whether this is the most inclusive or effective way of determining what our children learn. The CBI and the TUC think that the National Curriculum is inappropriate for the needs of industry and the life chances of future employees. We see cries from those demonstrating in the streets that it is not inclusive and diverse. Now is the time for change.</p> <p>This Council asks the Leader of the Council to seek support from the LGA and the CCN to lobby Central Government to bring forward proposals to devolve responsibility for the Curriculum to Local Government within a framework agreed by an Advisory Council made up of Local Authorities CBI, TUC, Teachers, Faith Groups, EHRC.”</p>		
<p>15. Motion by Councillor Suzanne Bartington</p> <p>“Increasing tree cover is recognised as one of the most effective strategies to tackle the climate crisis, given the critical role of trees for absorbing and storing carbon. Additional benefits of appropriate tree species in suitable locations include mitigating flood risks, improving air quality, providing protected wildlife and contributing to improved mental health. Our Government has pledged to plant 30 million trees each year until 2024, and it is estimated that doubling UK woodland cover could absorb 10% of UK annual</p>	<p>The Motion was carried unanimously.</p>	

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<p>greenhouse emissions.</p> <p>In July 2019 this Council declared a climate emergency and committed to achieving carbon net-zero status by 2030. Currently, trees cover 9% of Oxfordshire's land area, compared with an EU average of 35%. We therefore call upon the Cabinet Member for Environment to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognise the critical role of existing tree preservation and planting for effective climate action and consider developing a Trees and Woodland Strategy. 2. Set a target for increased tree cover in Oxfordshire, and explore the viability of doubling coverage by 2045 3. Undertake a survey to identify existing tree cover and suitable sites for new trees (with consideration for habitat protection, land-use and biodiversity) 4. Work collaboratively with District, Town and Parish Councils, civic and commercial partners to deliver tree planting initiatives, considering maintenance responsibilities. 5. Influence developer schemes to ensure tree planting is undertaken, supported by relevant planning agreement contributions. 6. Write to the SoS for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request additional local authority funding to support tree-planting and maintenance." 		Paul Feehily
<p>16. Motion by Councillor Bob Johnston</p> <p>"Council asks the Cabinet Member for Environment that full consideration be given to cyclists and pedestrians when future schedules are drawn up for grass cutting and vegetation management.</p> <p>Along with vision splays, verges next to</p>	<p>The Motion was carried by 54 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.</p>	Paul Feehily

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<p>footpaths and cycle tracks must be given greater priority and cut earlier and more frequently than at present.</p> <p>Other flower-rich highway verges where these priorities do not apply must be cut only once a year at the end of October when insects and birds have finished breeding. This will both maximise the potential for the County's wildlife to thrive and prevent footways and cycle tracks becoming unpleasant to use, especially in wet weather."</p>		
<p>17. Motion by Councillor Emma Turnbull</p> <p>"This Council notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds undertake apprenticeships. They are more likely to be in apprenticeships at lower levels, be paid lower salaries, and work at smaller companies. • Due to the economic impact of Covid-19, employers are unlikely to be recruiting apprentices in the numbers we have seen recently, meaning there will be fewer apprenticeship vacancies available for young people to access and more competition for the fewer opportunities. • New apprenticeships in Oxfordshire are already down by 30-60% on last year, depending on the sector, and are likely to drop significantly further. • A rising number of Oxfordshire's young people are not in education, employment or training. • With young people unable to access face-to-face career guidance, networking events or work experience opportunities it will be harder for disadvantaged young people to access high quality information and skills needed to secure an apprenticeship or job. 	<p>The time being 3.43 pm, this Motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.1.</p>	

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<p>This Council resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all careers advice for young people produced by this Council is fully accessible online, and has a particular focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and ask OxLEP and other partners to do the same. • Create a post-16 study and training fund to attract financial support for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and invite contributions from county councillors priority fund and partner organisations. • Ask the Leader and Chief Executive to write to central government recommending that social mobility and widening opportunity should be an explicit criterion in a review of the Apprenticeship Levy.” 		

ANNEX

Question from Mr Chris Henderson to Councillor David Bartholomew, Cabinet Member for Finance

Question

As budget setting approaches, I wonder if the Cabinet Member could explain to me the high level of balances and reserves held by the County.

The business management and monitoring report July 2020 forecasts general balances at £30.3 million at the end of 20-21. This is significantly higher than the risk assessed level of £23.4 million. Why?

Answer

At the year end any underspend on Council services is transferred into general balances. The Council's 2019/20 year-end position was better than forecast when the 2020/21 budget was set. Therefore, general balances started the year already higher than the risk assessed level at £28.7m. The current forecast of £30.3m assumes that there may be a further contribution by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. However, given the unprecedented uncertainty regarding the financial impact of Covid-19, this is uncertain. With a net revenue budget of £475m, £30.3m is only enough to meet 23 days' worth of spend.

Similarly looking at “earmarked reserves” there are some very large figures. Capital reserves are set to increase to £35.2 million, with the vague explanation that it is for “financing capital expenditure in future years”. If this is not allocated to specific projects with a likelihood of delivery then does it really qualify as an earmarked reserve at all?

The Capital Programme for the period 2019/20 to 2029/30 which was approved by Council in February 2020 set out how the programme is to be funded. This includes the full use of the Capital Reserve over the period of the programme. If this reserve was not held, then some schemes currently in the programme would not be able to proceed.

The “demographic risk reserve” is set to increase to £6 million. Can the Cabinet member explain exactly what this is for?

This reserve is held to help manage demographic risk, particularly the significant pressures relating to High Needs. At the end of 2019/20, the High Needs part of the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves was in deficit by £11.2m and is forecast to be in deficit by £22m at the end of 2020/21. Whilst the Council is not required to meet the deficit in the High Needs reserve from general funding, it cannot have negative reserves overall. Given the significant deficit forecast, this reserve ensures that overall, the Council has sufficient reserves.

There is an insurance reserve of £11.4 million. It is claimed that this figure is based on experience of claims but since the figure has remained relatively unchanged and the reserve has not been used for some years then is it really necessary?

Each year an independent actuarial assessment is undertaken to review the appropriate level of reserves to be held for future claims. The outcome of this assessment informs the annual review of Earmarked Reserves which is undertaken as part of the Budget and Business Planning process. In 2019/20 £1m was released from the reserve to support service delivery.

I also notice there is a vehicle and equipment replacement reserve of £2.8 million. Can the Cabinet member then explain why the new electric cars for Community Safety at £200,000 were cut from the budget in September and not simply financed from this reserve?

Annual contributions are made into the vehicle and equipment replacement reserve to allow for the replacement of our fire appliances and other vehicles. These funds are fully committed to replacement of our existing stock and there isn't enough in the reserve to meet additional vehicles.

Many would applaud the County for saving for a “rainy day”. However it might be an idea to look out of the window and see that the weather couldn't get much worse and spend some of these reserves rather than cutting services.

As part of their ‘going concern’ assessment our External Auditors have used the Institute for Fiscal Studies’ Covid risk and resilience indicators for local government (published in June) to assess the level of reserves. Reserves data indicates that Oxfordshire has ‘most risk’ compared to our peers as our percentage of earmarked reserves to net revenue budget. Furthermore, CIPFA’s Financial Resilience Index, which provides information on the level of reserves for all authorities, also identifies that Oxfordshire County Council is more at risk than other Counties in terms of the level of reserves held compared to its net revenue budget. The appropriate level of reserves and balances to be held by the Council is considered as part of the Budget and Business Planning process every year.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for your reply.

The projected figure for balances is from July, well into Covid. I still don't understand why they should be higher than the risk assessed level.

I have looked at the Capital Programme as set out in February. As far as I can see only £18.07 million of the £35.2 million capital reserves are projected to be used by 2029. Perhaps the Cabinet Member can explain why the rest qualifies as an earmarked reserve?

I just hope that when budgets are set for next year Members look closely at reducing the level of reserves.

Answer

The risk assessment determines the minimum level of General Balances that should be held rather than a finite sum. The risk assessment is undertaken annually and with increasing and new risks, it would not be prudent to spend this one-off resource now with the expectation that the risk assessment will require a higher level of General Balances in 2021/22 than in 2020/21.

The Capital Reserve will be used over the period of the Capital Programme not in one specific year.