

Didcot Town Council

Extra Ordinary meeting of Council

Monday 24th June 2019 at 8.45pm

All Saints Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this committee.

PRESENT

Councillors:

Mr A Dearlove
Mr P Davies
Mr P Giesberg
Mrs E Hards
Mr N F Harris
Ms V Haval
Mr S Hewerdine
Mr A Hudson
Mr M Khan
Mr A Macdonald

Mrs D Macdonald
Mrs M Mallows
Mr M McNeill
Mr J Moody
Mr D Rouane
Dr A Sandiford
Dr P Siggers
Mr A Thompson
Ms M Walsh
Ms C Wilson

Officers: Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)
Mr T Hudson (Deputy Town Clerk)

Public Participation

None

33. To receive apologies

No apologies received.

34. To receive declarations of interests

Councillors A Macdonald; A Thompson; M Khan; V. Haval; C. Wilson; S Hewerdine; D Rouane declared an interest in item 8 – Motion Five. They would take no part in the vote or debate but would stay in the room to listen. Cllr D Rouane also declared an interest in item 8 motion two and a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 7. He would leave the room for this item.

35. To receive and approve the following Governance documents as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Chairman presented the following reports to the Council:

- Strategic Risk Assessment 2018 – 2019
- Asset Register 2018 – 2019
- Internal Audit Report year ended 31st March 2018
- Effectiveness of internal controls and future improvements

It was proposed by Councillor J. Moody and seconded by Councillor P. Siggers **RESOLVED** to note and approve these documents and the comments made by the F&GP Committee.

36. To receive, note and approve the completion of the end of year accounts and the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31 March 2019.

Councillor J Moody and Councillor P Siggers proposed approval of the end of year accounts noting the areas which would need improvement for next year.

Councillor Hewerdine stated that the strategic risk relating to the management of the Civic Hall along with the possibility of further VAT to re-pay and further back-dated business rates means that he would not be able to support these reports. He stated that he had been in contact with the external auditor on last year's audit and reported the response back to Council. He was concerned that there was no sign of this information in the reports.

Councillor N Harris stated that he would not support the accounts and that he may write again depending on the comments received back.

Councillor E Hards stated that defamatory statements against professional people by Members of the Council was also a risk and the Council should disassociate itself from these comments.

It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that the accounts were unaudited but must be with the auditor by the 01 July otherwise we could receive a qualified audit and

possibly a fine if late in submitting the reports. We also have a duty to make the unaudited accounts available to the public for the first ten days in July.

Councillor M Khan thanked the Town Clerk for getting these reports together in such a short space of time.

Recorded Vote

Councillor name	For	Against	Abstain
A. Bell	-	-	-
P Davies		x	
A Dearlove	x		
P Giesberg	x		
E Hards	x		
NF Harris		x	
V Haval	x		
S Hewerdine		x	
A Hudson		x	
M Khan	x		
A Macdonald	x		
D Macdonald	x		
M Mallows			x
M McNeill	x		
J Moody	x		
D Rouane	x		
A Sandiford	x		
P Siggers	x		
A Thompson	x		
M Walsh	x		
C Wilson	x		

Proposal carried

37. To receive nominations and make appointments to the working groups and external bodies and organisations

There was a long discussion on the potential breach of policy concerning the Leader attending a meeting of the Didcot Garden Town Board. Councillor M Khan confirmed that he was invited to attend as Leader of Didcot Town Council and Councillor D Rouane confirmed that the meeting was to re-visit the terms of reference rather than progress any business.

The Mayor read down the list of outside bodies – any spaces not taken this evening would be open to all to attend and possibly filled later. The following representatives were confirmed:

Working Group/Outside Body	
Allotment Liaison Representatives – one for each site 1. Broadway 2. Cockcroft 3. Mereland Road 4. New Road 5. Wantage Road	No nominations
Allotment Liaison Group	Councillor A Thompson
CCTV Management Group (1 plus Town Clerk)	Councillor M Khan
Citizens Advice, Oxfordshire South and Vale	Councillor M Walsh
Didcot Arts and Community Association	Councillor V Haval
Didcot Chamber of Commerce	Councillor P Davies
Didcot North East Stakeholder Group	Councillor E Hards Councillor P Giesberg
Didcot Town Fayre Working Group	Councillor M Khan Councillor D Macdonald Councillor A Macdonald 2 x Vacant seats
Didcot Garden Town	Councillor M Khan Councillor D Macdonald (sub)
Didcot Volunteer Centre	Councillor M Mallows
Earth Trust Local Stakeholder Group	Councillor A Sandiford
Fleet Meadow Community Association	Councillor A Thompson
Hagbourne Charities to act as trustees ideally for a four year term	Councillor A Thompson Councillor M Mallows
King Alfred Drive Community Centre	Councillor M Khan
Ladygrove Community Centre Management Committee	Councillor P Giesberg Councillor P Davies Councillor M Mallows
Ladygrove Fishing Association	Councillor A Thompson Councillor M Walsh
Ladygrove Lakes Working Group	Councillor S Hewerdine Councillor C Wilson Councillor P Davies
Oxfordshire Assoc of Local Councils	Councillor M Khan Councillor D Macdonald

Oxfordshire Larger Local Councils Bi - Annual Meeting (1 + Town Clerk)	Councillor M Khan
Parish Transport Representative	Councillor A Thompson
Power Station Liaison Committee	Councillor A Macdonald Councillor S Hewerdine
Public Art Working Group	Councillor E Hards Councillor M Walsh Councillor M Mallows Councillor P Giesberg Councillor S Hewerdine
Sutton Courtenay Local Liaison Committee	Councillor A Dearlove
Traffic Advisory Group (open to all)	Councillor C Wilson Councillor A Sandiford Councillor P Giesberg Councillor P Siggers
Twinning Association	Councillor P Giesberg
UKAEA Liaison Committee	Councillor P Siggers
Willowbrook Vacant Space Working Group	Councillor S Hewerdine Councillor M Mallows Councillor V Haval

- Any vacant seats will be deferred until the next Full Council meeting (but not the meeting for 01 July).
- It was agreed to ask for another seat on the Didcot Garden Town Board.
- The Traffic Advisory Committee was due to meet on 4th July – a motion from Cllr Harris; seconded by Cllr Hewerdine to clarify terms of reference for this Committee failed. The Committee will continue to report to the Planning Committee.

38. To consider re-allocation of Willowbrook vacant space – item deferred as the nominated Councillors above are the new representatives.

39. To sign and seal the engrossed CCTV contracts.

On the proposal of Councillor M Khan; seconded by Councillor A. Thompson, it was RESOLVED to sign the CCTV renewal contract for the next five years.

40. To consider the following motions:

Motion One was withdrawn at the request of the Councillor concerned.

Motion Two from Councillor D Rouane, Ladygrove.

The following motion was proposed by Councillor D Rouane; seconded by Councillor P Davies.

Climate Emergency

Council notes that:

- a) the recent 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius;
- b) all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, and local governments that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies. UK county, district and town councils need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible;
- c) Didcot Town Council is well placed to take action through: its role in advising the district council on the many planning applications being submitted in the growing town, its management of outdoor spaces, the management of its own buildings, and its support for community groups within the town.

In light of the above, the Council therefore agrees to:

1. Join other councils in declaring a Climate Emergency.
2. Ask the Leader to write to the district and county councils to seek confirmation of their intention to work with town and parish councils on climate change strategies.
3. To further ask the Leader to write to the District and County Councils for advice and support as to the practical steps we need to take to bring down our CO2 emissions both in production and consumption to reach carbon neutrality by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.
4. Ask that staff and committees of the council, when reviewing policy and strategies, give specific consideration to how policies, and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to climate change, and where necessary, highlight the need to update these policies to reduce our impact wherever possible. As far as possible, the reporting templates for council and committee papers to be amended to include an 'Environmental Impact' section.
5. Ask the clerk to provide the cost and availability of the most appropriate training options for members and staff about how to promote carbon neutral policies for future consideration by the council.

The amendments to this motion proposed by Councillor C Wilson was accepted. Cllr M Walsh had left the meeting previously.

A further amendment agreed that the Proper Officer would draft a letter – it would be signed by the Proper Officer and would be signed by all Councillors.

It was noted that this was just the start of the work and the spirit of the motion would need to be adopted as far as practical in all future Council work and projects.

Motion Three from Councillor M Walsh, Northbourne.

This motion was withdrawn by Councillor Wilson on behalf of Councillor M Walsh.

Motion Four states “Withdrawn” on the agenda and should have said “deferred” – by the Proper Officer whilst legal advice was sought.

Motion Five from Councillor E Hards, Northbourne.; seconded by Councillor D. Macdonald.

The Local Plan 2011 to 2034 was approved by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) on 20th December 2018. On 2nd May 2019, after the Local Elections the composition of the council changed. Liberal Democrats and Green Party became the ruling group by forming a coalition.

One of their key local manifesto commitments is to protect and not to build on the Green Belt and to amend or withdraw the Local Plan.

Motion: **The Threat to the Emerging SODC Local Plan 2011 - 2034.**

Didcot Town Council (DTC) is concerned to hear that the Emerging Local Plan 2011 - 2034 may be withdrawn or significantly amended as Liberal Democrat / Green Party manifesto commitment is not compatible with the Local Plan. DTC acknowledges:

- A new ruling group has the right to review key decisions made by previous administrations and implement their own policies
- The protection of the environment is important and the Green Belt is an area that should be protected where possible and appropriate.

However, DTC firmly believes that the Local Plan is beneficial for Didcot as it will provide funding for the infrastructure needed within the Town. This will also benefit the surrounding areas, including the villages that look to Didcot for services, provide the protection from inappropriate planning applications and allow DTC to have a greater influence on the growth of Didcot. Therefore, DTC’s preference is to continue with the current submitted plan.

This council agrees to write to the new Leader of SODC Council, Cllr Sue Cooper and to SODC Chief Executive, Mark Stone to state the views of the council:

- DTC strongly opposes to any major amendments and to the withdrawing of the Local Plan as the consequences for Didcot will be detrimental:

- Loss of 5-year land supply
- Loss of Housing Infrastructure (HIF) - £218 million
- Loss of the Growth Deal
- HIF funding and the Growth Deal is desperately needed in Didcot and other parts of the District to provide the capital for the infrastructure required:
 - A Didcot Science Bridge on the A4130 – going over the railway line and Didcot A Power Station site and joining the A4130 Northern Perimeter Road
 - Improvements to the A4130 from the Milton Interchange by making it a dual carriageway
 - A new river crossing at Culham
 - A Clifton Hampden bypass.
- A major concern for residents in Didcot is traffic congestion. Having a Local Plan allows for greater consideration for improvements, planning and funding of the local road network, safe cycle lanes and destinations which will ease traffic in Didcot and help to move traffic away from rural routes and villages
- Didcot has already been allocated 6,503 dwellings to be built in the current plan - withdrawal of the Local Plan will lead to a rise of inappropriate and speculative planning applications. Didcot needs protecting and so do the surrounding villages from urban sprawl
- DTC to be consulted and updated on progress of the Local Plan and Didcot Garden Town status
- Lack of Local Plan makes neighbourhood plans which are time consuming and costly, redundant
- If building is required on the Green Belt eg Grenoble Road, then SODC should review options to identify innovative ways to create new green belt areas in the future
- Leader of DTC to be invited and participate in any working groups to review the Local Plan
- SODC to listen to the views of DTC and any amendments to Local Plan not to be detrimental to Didcot and to understand that the current Local Plan and the associated funding will have a positive impact for Didcot and surrounding villages
- SODC and DTC must work together and be collaborative to identify a solution which is best for Didcot
- SODC to provide a written response to DTC concerning the Local Plan.

I move.

Cllr P Davies tabled an amendment that bullet point 10 be changed from “the Leader of DTC to be invited to attend any working groups to review the Local Plan” to “a representative”. This was seconded by Cllr Giesberg. **Motion failed.**

Councillor Giesberg requested an amendment to the motion to ask SODC to include safe cycle routes and connections both within and around Didcot. Councillor Hards felt that this was too great a level of detail and did not accept the amendment. Cllr Davies seconded the amendment. Amendment carried.

Recorded Vote.

Councillor name	For	Against	Abstain
A.Bell	-	-	-
P Davies	x		
A Dearlove	x		
P Giesberg	x		
E Hards	x		
NF Harris		x	
V Haval	-	-	-
S Hewerdine	-	-	-
A Hudson		x	
M Khan	-	-	-
A Macdonald	x		
D Macdonald	x		
M Mallows			x
M McNeill	x		
J Moody	x		
D Rouane	-	-	-
A Sandiford	x		
P Siggers	x		
A Thompson	-	-	-
M Walsh	-	-	-
C Wilson	-	-	-

Motion passed.

41. Questions to the Leader concerning the business of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 45.

Question from Councillor Hards

Does the Leader agree that the professionalism of the staff during a dangerous incident should be recognised?

Response: I agree with Councillor Hards and will write to the staff at the Civic Hall and the Town Council offices to congratulate them on the exemplary way they handled the incident.

Question by Councillor S Hewerdine

Does the Leader realise that if the local plan is withdrawn we have over nine years land supply – but if the option voted for tonight proceeds the Local Plan will have around 5.17 years of land supply which runs out in 2022 allowing speculative development to take place?

Response: I did not take part or vote in the local Plan motion and so there are no issues regarding predetermination, I cannot answer this question so no comment.

Question by Councillor P. Davies

Can the Leader take down postings in social media of a defamatory nature against the Procedure group?

Response: Anyone can post on social media – I cannot see why it should be taken down.

Question by Councillor C Wilson

Can the Leader up-date the Council as to the status regarding civil parking enforcement with the new District Council since the election?

Response: I have written to the Cabinet Member responsible for parking and will update when I have a response.

Question by Councillor A Thompson

Can the Leader write to the Navy regarding the practice of affiliating ships to Didcot in terms of naming?

Response: Happy to look into this but would like more details.

Question by Councillor S Hewerdine

Did the Leader have permission to display a photograph of the Town Clerk on her first day on social media?

Response: The photograph was a celebratory photograph to mark the Town Clerk's first day at Didcot Town Council. It was published on my personal Facebook page.

The meeting closed at 10.58 pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: