

# **COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**

### **THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2014**

**Councillors Present:** David Allen, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Jeff Beck (Chairman), Brian Bedwell, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hower, Roger Hunneman, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones (Vice-Chairman), Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Gordon Lundie, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Geoff Mayes, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Pask, James Podger, David Rendel, Andrew Rowles, Garth Simpson, Anthony Stansfeld, Julian Swift-Hook, Ieuan Tuck, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Keith Woodhams and Laszlo Zverko

**Also Present:** Nick Carter (Chief Executive), David Holling (Head of Legal Services), Gary Lugg (Head of Planning & Countryside), Bryan Lyttle (Planning & Transport Policy Manager) and Keith Ulyatt (Public Relations Manager), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Robin Steel (Group Executive (Cons))

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Dominic Boeck, Councillor George Chandler, Councillor Roger Croft, Councillor Richard Crumly, Councillor Marcus Franks, Councillor John Horton, Councillor Alan Law, Councillor Royce Longton, Councillor Joe Mooney, Councillor Irene Neill, Councillor Tony Vickers and Councillor Emma Webster

#### **PART I**

##### **60. Chairman's Remarks**

Following a minute's silence Councillors Gordon Lundie, Jeff Brooks, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Jones and Alan Macro paid tribute to Councillor David Betts who had passed away on the 25 October 2014 following a long and courageously fought battle with cancer.

Councillor Betts, who had been elected to the Council in 2007, was remembered as a courteous gentleman, a private man, great digital pioneer at the Council, a 'petrol head' and an ardent Chelsea football supporter. He was described as a diligent, challenging, quietly thoughtful and measured Councillor who was liked and admired by Officers and Members in equal measure and who would be sorely missed. The Council passed on its sincere condolences to his family.

The Chairman reminded Members that he would be hosting the Chairman's annual quiz night on the 20 November 2014 and he encouraged Members to get involved.

##### **61. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

##### **62. Response to the Council Motion of the Future of the Planning Policy Task Group**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning a response to a Motion tabled at the 18 September 2014 Council meeting.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Gordon Lundie:

That the Council:

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“continues to operate the Planning Policy Task Group in its current form”.

Councillor Cole noted the report set out the Planning Policy task Group’s recommended response to a Motion from Councillor Macro tabled at the 18 September 2014 Council meeting pertaining to changing the status of the Planning Policy Task Group to that of a formal Committee.

At the request of the Chairman of Council, the motion was considered at the September Planning Policy Task Group and the extraordinary Council meeting had been arranged to consider the recommendation of the Task Group, prior to the December Council meeting, at which the Housing Site Allocation Plan was due to be discussed. The report outlined the positive and negative factors of both a Task Group and a Committee.

A frank and open discussion was held at the Task Group and every member of Task Group had the opportunity to voice their opinion and set out their reasons why they had decided as they did. Following the discussion the Planning Policy Task Group decided to recommend to the Council that the Motion be rejected and that the Task Group continue to operate in its current format.

Councillor Cole accepted that the recommendation would be disappointing to the Members of the Opposition. She stated that the contribution made by the Liberal Democrat Members of the Planning Policy Task Group was valued and was valuable and she sincerely hoped that they would continue their membership of this Group, which they had setup in 2002.

Councillor Cole also informed all Members that following the highly successful consultation on the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document the plan would not be coming back to the Council meeting in December as had previously been advertised. As had been explained at the previous Council meeting Officers had received comments from around 4,500 people and they were still busy analyzing the information received and formulating responses. A revised timetable would therefore be issued in due course.

*(Councillor James Podger arrived at 7.26pm)*

Councillor Alan Macro stated that he was disappointed not to have been able to debate the original motion. As the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document would have long standing consequences he felt that residents and stakeholders should be able to be present to hear the discussions and that they should therefore take place at a Committee rather than a Task Group. He noted the reasons cited not to change to a Committee and commented that it would still be possible to provide Members with briefings at special meetings and that if items were required to be placed on a Forward Plan it would mean that other Members and residents would be alerted to what would be included on future agendas. It would still be possible to hold some of the meetings in private if the items were deemed to be genuinely confidential. He stated that although the Task Group was not a formal decision making body and all the decisions were made at Council meetings there was insufficient time to debate all the sites at Council meetings. He therefore urged Members to reject the report thereby ensuring that the decision making was transparent.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document was of great concern to residents and they were concerned about the decision making process. He felt that the current system did not promote understanding and

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transparency. He noted that a huge response had been received to the consultation and he felt that it would have been preferable to engage residents and stakeholders from the outset. Many of the respondents had a lot of material knowledge which could have been harnessed before the potential sites were selected. He stated that meetings held in secret would always be perceived as being suspicious and he would therefore like to see more openness in the process by the meetings taking the form of a committee. Councillor Brooks reiterated that if there was a discussion that need to take place in private there was an existing mechanism in place to do so. He accepted that the Liberal Democrats had originally set the task Group up and stated that in hindsight it was probably a mistake to do so.

Councillor Brooks thanked Councillor Cole for announcing that the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document would be delayed

Councillor Julian Swift-Hook stated that he did not think that it was appropriate for the Planning Policy Task Group to make a recommendation about its own future.

Councillor Keith Woodhams was concerned about the timing of the consultation on the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document. He stated that as result of it being held over the summer a number of organisations had not been able to respond adequately.

Councillor Graham Pask stated that previous iterations of the Local Plan had not been subject to the level of consultation that this document had been and he welcomed the exceptional response that had been received which the Council would take full note of.

Councillor Garth Simpson in accordance with paragraph 4.13.12 (Closure Motions) the question be put. This was seconded by Councillor Gordon Lundie.

In accordance with paragraph 4.13.15 the seconder of the motion Councillor Gordon Lundie stated that the cross party Planning Policy Task Group had done some excellent work. They had gone about the difficult process of selecting sites in a measured way. He was concerned that Members of the Opposition appeared to vote one way in the Task Group meetings and then differently at Council meetings. He stated that he had first been party to discussions about potential development in Lambourn at a public meeting that had taken place in January 2014 almost ten months ago. Following this meeting the number of sites to be put forward for Lambourn had been reduced from five to two. The consultation on the Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document had been run for seven weeks and an unprecedented 4,500 responses had been received which was the most successful consultation the council had ever undertaken.

Councillor Hilary Cole reiterated that 4,500 responses had been received from all across the district and from a range of stakeholders including residents, developers and town and parish councils. This was an outstanding example of how a consultation could be conducted. She therefore proposed that Members accept the recommendation as set out in the report.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.15.2 it was requested that the voting on the Amendment be recorded. The names of those Members voting for, against and abstaining were read to the Council as follows:

### **FOR the Motion:**

Councillors Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell, Paul Bryant, Virginia von Celsing, Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Mike Johnson, Graham Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Pask, James

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Podger, Andrew Rowles, Garth Simpson, Anthony Stansfeld, Ieuan Tuck, Quentin Webb, Laszlo Zverko (28)

**AGAINST the Amendment:**

David Allen, Jeff Brooks, Billy Drummond, Roger Hunneman, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Geoff Mayes, David Rendel, Julian Swift-Hook, Keith Woodhams (11)

There were no abstentions.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

*(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 7.51 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....