

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

23RD SEPTEMBER 2014

Present:

Councillor Clive Bennett - Chairman
Councillor Mark F Annett - Vice-Chairman

Councillors -

Julian Beale	JP Hughes
JGK Birch	RL Hughes
John Burgess	Mrs. Sheila Jeffery
Sandra Carter	EGJ Jenkins
Sue Coakley	Mrs. SL Jepson
PCB Coleman	Ms JM Layton
DE Collier	AJ Lichnowski
Mrs. VB Crosbie Dawson	DJ Nash
(until 12 noon)	Mrs. Carolyn Nicolle
BS Dare	Jim Parsons
RW Dutton	NJW Parsons
David Fowles	David Penman
BD Gibbs	Mrs. M Phillips
C Hancock	Lee Searles
JA Harris	GM Selwyn
Mrs. DE Hicks	Lynden Stowe
Mrs. JL Hincks	R Theodoulou
PR Hodgkinson	Mrs. CH Topple
RP Hooper	M Wardle
Sir Edward Horsfall	LR Wilkins

Apologies:

DC Broad Mrs. MS Rickman
SG Hirst

CL.10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

Councillor BS Dare declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of Agenda Item (10) - Treasury Management - Annual Report and Prudential Indicators 2013/14, because he had investments in some of the counterparties referred to in the circulated report, and he left the Meeting while that item was being determined.

Councillor C Hancock declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (9) - Statement of Accounts 2013/14, because he was a Trustee of the Friends of the Cotswolds, and he left the Meeting while that item was being determined.

Councillor PR Hodgkinson declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (13)(2) - Notice of Motions - Motion 6/2014, because his Partner was employed by St. James Place.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations from Officers.

CL.11 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13th May 2014 be approved as a correct record;

Record of Voting - for 38, against 0, abstentions 3, absent 3.

(b) subject to the amendment of Appendix 'A' to reflect the nominated/identified Committee allocations/memberships, the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 13th May 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 9, absent 3.

CL.12 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

(i) Recording of the Meeting - the Chairman confirmed that notification had been received that one person intended to film the proceedings and, as a result, the Council would be making its own audio recording of the Meeting.

(ii) Petition - the Chairman explained that a Petition relating to the proposed Chesterton Strategic Development would be presented and debated at this Meeting.

(iii) Notice of Motions - the Chairman advised that, once Proposed and Seconded, Motion 5/2014 (relating to a proposed extension to the kerbside recycling scheme) would be referred to the Cabinet for consideration; but that Motion 6/2014 (relating to speed limit issues within the purview of Gloucestershire County Council) would be debated at this Meeting.

(iv) Members' Christmas Lunch - the Chairman explained that the traditional Members' Christmas Lunch would be held on Tuesday 16th December 2014, following the Council Meeting scheduled to be held on that date.

(v) 2020 Vision - the Chairman reminded the Council that there would be a briefing for Members on the 2020 Vision at the conclusion of this Meeting.

(vi) Land Parcel South of Home Farm, Cirencester Road, Fairford (CT.8988/A) - the Leader reported that notification had been received on 22nd September 2014 that the Planning Inspector had allowed the appeal in respect of the above-mentioned application and that permission had been granted. The Leader explained that the Cabinet would review the options for seeking a Judicial

Review of that decision and he would welcome comments from Members in that respect.

(vii) Councillor John Burgess - the Leader reminded the Council that Councillor John Burgess had stepped down from the Cabinet at the end of July 2014. The Leader explained that Councillor Burgess had served on the Cabinet since its inception in 2004 and had worked diligently overseeing various projects including GO Shared Services, ICT contracts, E-Government and tourism, as well as serving as the Chairman of the Joint Consultative Committee from 2006. The Leader thanked Councillor Burgess for all his work and wished him well for the future.

There were no announcements from the Head of Paid Service.

CL.13 LONG SERVICE AWARDS

The Chairman of the Council presented long service awards to Michaela Salter, Senior Land Charges Officer; and Wendy Nicholls, Print and Design Services Manager. Such awards were made to staff who had achieved 25 years' service in local government, of which at least 10 had been with this Council.

The Chairman also reported that Ann Pain, a Technical Support Officer in the Planning Team, had also achieved 25 years' service in local government, all of which had been with this Council. Ann had been unable to attend, and had therefore received her Award outside of the Meeting.

The Chairman congratulated Michaela, Wendy and Ann on their service and commitment to the Council, and Members echoed those sentiments.

CL.14 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, Mr. AR Brassington of Cirencester had submitted the following questions to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning:

'Why has it been decided that there should be one massive residential development in the Chesterton area of Cirencester when it would be better to distribute the housing evenly across the Cotswolds towns and villages? And what improved infrastructure does CDC propose for Cirencester if this development goes ahead?'

The following response had been provided by Councillor Parsons:-

'The rationale for prioritising Cirencester in the Strategy is explained in the Second Issues & Options Supporting Information and, more extensively, in the Development Strategy Evidence Paper (which supported the Preferred Development Strategy).

Cirencester has been recognised for many years as the pre-eminent centre in Cotswold District where "*most of the District's development requirements should be met.*" [e.g. Gloucestershire Structure Plan Second Review, November 1999].

Chesterton and other potential 'strategic' areas around Cirencester were assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal process and performed

better in sustainability terms than the other locations. [Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report May 2013].

The questioner doesn't state why it would be '*better to distribute the housing evenly across the Cotswolds towns and villages*'. I would ask, better for whom? Only a small proportion of the District's settlements have more than limited access to every-day services and facilities; and only a handful of rural Parishes expressed any desire for more development in response to the Preferred Development Strategy.

A recent appeal decision concluded that: "*...To approve schemes in locations such as (Cowley) has the potential to seriously undermine planning policies designed to create sustainable patterns of development...the construction of this single dwelling ...remote from facilities and services would not satisfy the Framework's definition of sustainable development.*"

The questioner's idea of an '*even distribution*' suggests an indiscriminate allocation of development across the District, regardless of sustainability considerations, such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty national landscape designation (80% coverage).'

Mr. Brassington thanked Councillor Parsons for his reply, and then asked the following Supplementary Question:-

'There are proposals to build up to 2,500 houses on a greenfield site in Chesterton, which will result in 7,000 to 8,000 extra residents in a town with a current population of 18,000. This will be a massive increase of 40%. As a resident of Cirencester I accept that there is a need for new housing in the town but I have concern over the sheer scale of this proposal. Councillor Parsons, you cited an example of a single dwelling in Cowley as not being sustainable. However, small-scale developments across the District help to keep villages alive and thriving. Does the Council agree with this statement?'

In response, Councillor Parsons drew on the Planning Inspector's opinion of the Cowley decision, which was that it was not sustainable. Councillor Parsons stated that there was now a different climate in relation to planning policy and that the Council could not base its Local Plan on what it hoped to accept without evidence, and it had evidence that small-scale developments in villages were not sustainable.

CL.15 MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, questions had been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'What is your view on the proposed large development at Chesterton which is part of your emerging Local Plan? Do you support it?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

‘Based on the evidence and information available thus far, it would seem that the Chesterton site appears to be the most suitable in the District for larger-scale development. However, as with any planning-related matter, I will not finally make up my mind until I have considered all available information, which will not be until after the various consultations have been concluded.’

Councillor Hodgkinson thanked Councillor Stowe for his response, in which he had stated that he ‘believed the Chesterton site to be the most suitable for a large-scale development in the District’. Councillor Hodgkinson reminded the Council that the land was owned by the Earl Bathurst and expressed concern that the Leader could, potentially, have links with the Earl Bathurst. Councillor Hodgkinson stated that, on 8th March 2014, the Conservative Web Site had shown that the Earl Bathurst was President of the Cirencester Conservative Branch, which could imply links to the Conservative Group on the Council which would be involved in taking vital decisions in relation to the proposed development, including whether it went ahead and the sum which would be paid to the current landowner. By way of a Supplementary Question, Councillor Hodgkinson asked if the Leader agreed that Members of the Conservative Group on the Council should not continue to support the proposed development as, if they did so, there would be a conflict of interest.

In response, Councillor Stowe stated that he had used the words ‘appears to be the most suitable site in the District’ very carefully and that, over the next few weeks, Members could bring forward other, alternative sites in Cirencester with the same capacity as the Chesterton site. Councillor Stowe confirmed that he was a member of the Cotswold Conservative Association but not of the Cirencester Conservative Branch, and that he was not aware that the Earl Bathurst held any position within that Branch. Councillor Stowe disagreed with Councillor Hodgkinson over the issue of a conflict of interest, stating that he had met the Earl Bathurst on approximately six different occasions over the past twelve years and that, further, on no occasion had there been any dialogue between them over the Chesterton site or any other development proposals in Cirencester. Councillor Stowe considered that other Members of the Conservative Group on the Council might wish to speak for themselves on the issue of conflict of interest at the appropriate time and he concluded by reiterating that he had no relationship with the Earl Bathurst which would prevent him taking part in any decision(s) relating to the Chesterton site.

Note:

At this point, a Member rose on a point of order. The Member explained that the Cirencester and Thames Head Conservative Branches had recently merged and did not currently have a President.

(2) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

‘Do you agree that local authorities who fail to get Local Plans in place in a timely fashion fail to provide their communities with valuable clarity as to what development is appropriate and where?’

Response from Councillor Stowe

‘As at 17th September 2014, only four authorities (out of 348) have produced National Planning Policy Framework-compliant (NPPF), comprehensive Local Plans. These are not to be confused with the twenty-two authorities that have produced sound NPPF-compliant Core Strategies, of which fifteen have so far been adopted. A Core Strategy only sets out the broad vision and strategy for the future of a district. It wouldn’t specify development sites or include policies for managing development. This Council switched to producing a comprehensive Local Plan in March 2013 because a complete Plan prepared in one go would be adopted much earlier than producing site allocations and detailed policy documents after the Core Strategy.

In order to ensure that the Local Plan has a good chance of being declared legally compliant and sound at independent examination, it is imperative that robust, up-to-date evidence has been produced which underpins and fully justifies the submitted document. Evidence takes considerable time to produce, analyse and then mould into a coherent strategy with associated policies/proposals. The risk of rushing preparation and/or cutting corners is that the submitted document would either be unsound or not legally compliant. In such circumstances, the Inspector would have no choice but to reject the document and adjourn or even cancel the examination. This has happened to an increasing number of authorities, including Stroud District Council.

Submitting a Plan that fails at examination would delay the adoption of a Local Plan significantly longer than producing a sound Plan in the first place.’

Councillor Hodgkinson thanked Councillor Stowe for his answer, stating it satisfied no-one. Councillor Hodgkinson referred to comments made by Mr. Nick Boles MP relating to the failure of some local authorities to have Local Plans in place, adding that he agreed with those comments. Councillor Hodgkinson contended that the Council was one of 28% of Councils which did not have a draft Local Plan, leaving it open to speculative development. By way of a Supplementary Question, Councillor Hodgkinson asked if Councillor Stowe agreed with the Minister, ‘yes or no’.

In response, Councillor Stowe stated that ‘life was not so easy’ and that development was the most complex issue faced by the Council. Councillor Stowe reminded the Council that Officers had already spent three years on the emerging Local Plan and that it was likely to be another eighteen months before it could be adopted. Councillor Stowe explained that it took time to analyse the responses to large-scale consultations and that only 4 out of 300 local authorities had ‘compliant’ Plans in place. Councillor Stowe expressed a view that the Minister had been culpable of giving out ‘mixed’ messages. Councillor Stowe believed that the Council had achieved a five-year supply of housing land, and a 20% buffer, as it was required to do. However, the recent appeal decision relating to the land parcel at Home Farm, Cirencester Road, Fairford did not tie-in with the Ministerial Statement. Councillor Stowe considered the appeal decision to be a disappointing situation for this Council and for neighbouring authorities and that Local Plans could become stalled as the proposed numbers of houses presented would not be sufficient for Inspectors and/or Ministers.

Councillor Stowe also explained that the Council was due to publish its Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) figures in the next few weeks, which would

give the best indication if the figure of 6,900 houses proposed over the next twenty years was robust or not. The figure would need to be analysed before it would be possible to say if there would be an under-provision. If this was to be the case, then this would have to be addressed through revisiting specific allocations, as had happened at Stroud District Council. The Leader concluded by expressing his extreme disappointment in the outcome of the Fairford appeal.

Note:

At this point, the Chairman reminded the Questioners and Responders of the need for brevity in their Supplementary Questions and responses thereto.

(3) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'Many complaints have been made to me from residents about the fact that they don't know enough about the on-going Local Plan process and aren't well enough informed about the consultation process.'

'Does the Deputy Leader agree that making sure the public are continually involved in constructing the new local plan is essential to its eventual success? What is the budget to advertise the consultation process?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

'Details of the communications undertaken thus far are attached at Appendix 'A' to the circulated report.

The Communication Strategy moving forward, and budget, are currently under consideration.'

Councillor Harris commented that the questions posed related to important issues, which needed to be raised. Councillor Harris stated that the emerging Local Plan could radically change Cirencester and the Cotswolds and that many residents were of the view that it was being 'done through the backdoor'. Councillor Harris expressed a view that the Council did not take consultation seriously; it did not have an advertising budget for consultations; and it should have had a consultation strategy in place at the beginning of the Local Plan process.

By way of a Supplementary Question, Councillor Harris asked how many responses had been received as a result of the consultation events; and how many people had attended those events.

In response, Councillor Parsons stated that he did not agree with Councillor Harris' assessment of the Local Plan consultation. Councillor Parsons explained that the Local Plan process was a lengthy one and that, while the Council tried to keep the public informed, it could not force people to attend events, or to respond. However, he did not know the exact figures sought by Councillor Harris. Councillor Parsons added that Officers were drawing up the budget for the next stage of the process and that the Council would make the necessary financial provision.

(4) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Chris Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships

'Will Councillor Hancock accept that Cotswold District Council's parking policy is hated by residents and businesses across the Cotswolds?'

Response from Councillor Hancock

'While it is obvious that people would prefer to have free parking, I do not accept the assertion made by Councillor Harris.'

Councillor Harris thanked Councillor Hancock for his response and stated that, while he welcomed the recent decision to offer free parking in the Council's car parks, he did not think it went far enough, given the profit the Council had earned from car parking in recent years. By way of a Supplementary Question, Councillor Harris asked Councillor Hancock if he agreed that further cuts in parking charges were required in order to support the local economy and to help local residents.

In response, Councillor Hancock stated that, while everyone needed a fair deal for car parking, the cost implications of any changes would have to be met from elsewhere. Councillor Hancock reminded the Council of various forthcoming car parking initiatives, including phased improvements over the next few years at a cost of £500,000; support for various Christmas events; the introduction of a 50p charge for 30 minutes' parking; and the installation of new 'pay and display' machines. All of these initiatives had been supported by local people.

(5) From Councillor Mrs. JL Hincks to Councillor Chris Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships

'I have visited several towns within the Cotswold area and note that in places the lack of disabled parking spaces is very apparent. For instance, Stow-on-the-Wold has disabled parking outside the central area of the town whereas normal parking is in a central position.

Could the Cabinet Member please advise me what each town/village allocation of disabled parking spaces is and its position in relation to the centre?'

Response from Councillor Hancock

'Details relating to spaces allocated for people with mobility problems ('disabled spaces') in all the Council's off-street car parks are available on our Web Site.

In line with good practice, and indeed the Council's Parking Strategy, we review the number of disabled spaces at each site as part of any refurbishment work proposals - as an example, the Forum Car Park re-design includes a marked increase in the number of disabled bays, from four to twelve, following consultation with the local Access Group and in the light of information reported to Officers that this car park is preferred by those with disabilities.

It is also worth remembering that vehicles displaying a valid blue badge and clock may park in any of our off-street car parks for up to the maximum stay period for the car park concerned (even in non-designated

bays), thereby offering drivers the option of parking as close as possible to facilities.

On-street disabled bays are the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council, and I believe that the bays in Stow-on-the-Wold to which you refer are on-street ones.'

Councillor Mrs. Hincks asked the following Supplementary Questions:-

'I thank Councillor Hancock for this reply and his suggestion that I look at the Council's Web Site for the information requested, and I must admit to be very surprised that this Council is unable to provide basic numbers of disabled parking spaces on this site; stating 'yes' or 'none' is not helpful to any visitor thinking of visiting one of our lovely towns or villages. In Cirencester alone, out of the eight car parks which have 2,716 car parking spaces, less than 1% are designated 'for disabled person use only'. This is reflected across the District, including none in Stow-on-the-Wold and only one car parking space in Tetbury. Is it because they park free and therefore this Council is losing revenue?

Would Councillor Hancock please explain why the Council cannot provide the number of parking spaces on its Web Site instead of 'yes' and 'none'? And, secondly, why is this Council not doing more to provide a more inclusive parking strategy that would involve some or more priority parking for blue badge holders?'

In response, Councillor Hancock explained that the improvements proposed in respect of The Forum Car Park, Cirencester would demonstrate that the Council had reconsidered its provision of parking spaces for disabled motorists and that the number of disabled spaces available in that car park would be increased. Councillor Hancock stated that the Council's Web Site could be updated to include the number of disabled spaces available in each of the Council's car parks, and that he would investigate the options for a link to Gloucestershire County Council's Web Site in order to achieve a mutuality.

CL.16 PETITIONS

(1) Petition Relating to the Proposed Strategic Development Site at Chesterton, Cirencester

A Petition was presented by Mr. Mark Pratley of Cirencester, as follows:-

We, the undersigned, believe that the Cotswold District Council plan for an extra 3,360 (39.2%) new homes in Cirencester will significantly damage our town, and will not be a proper solution to the need for more housing in the Cotswolds. We are dismayed at the dismissive response to more than 2,000 objections, including those of the Town Council, and demand that far more of the housing be allocated across the 450 square miles of the District, including brownfield sites rather than productive farmland.

A supporting rationale had also been provided, as follows:-

Why is this important?

As part of the CDC's allocation of an extra 3,360 new homes in Cirencester their intention is to build an estate of 2,500 houses on the fields to the south-west of Cirencester.

We believe Cirencester's residents have not been made fully aware of CDC's plans, which would fundamentally change the character of our market town.

Cirencester's population of 19,000 would be increased by nearly 40%.

In contrast, other Cotswold towns will be proportionately much less developed, and most villages, despite their needs, will only have minimal, or no, new housing.

Focussing development on Cirencester, and specifically on one large site, risks dwarfing the existing historic town, and diminishing its distinctive character.

The distance from the planned estate to the town centre is too great to walk. Many will opt for the car, thereby exacerbating the existing traffic congestion and parking problems in the town.

Sustainable housing development should be distributed throughout the whole Cotswold region, and not disproportionately concentrated on one site in Cirencester.

The Chairman explained that, in accordance with the Council's approved Local Petitions Scheme, the issue would be the subject of a Council debate, as the Petition contained more than the threshold number of signatories (850).

Attention was drawn to a number of related questions that had been submitted by/through the petition organiser. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning had provided answers thereto, copies of which had been circulated to Members and were also available for those present at the Meeting.

In accordance with the approved Scheme, Mr. Pratley was then invited to present the Petition. Mr. Pratley stated that the petition contained 2,708 signatories, which represented a strong feedback, and explained that the campaign had been welcomed by residents. He considered the two key words to be 'impact' and 'trust'. In his presentation, Mr. Pratley expressed concern over the likely impact of the proposed development on the town; agreed that there was a need for more housing in Cirencester, but not on the scale proposed; expressed concerns over issues relating to water supply and sewage disposal, employment, and the pressure that a development of such size would generate on the existing infrastructure, schools and services. He also contended that there was a lack of trust within the town in respect of the agencies involved in managing the process; the ability of the Council to hold the developers to account; and the ability of staff in the Planning Department to manage the project. He suggested that, based on past experiences, the developers would devalue the promised enhancements and expressed the view that the consultation process was merely a 'tick-box' exercise, with the on-line exercise being too complicated. Mr. Pratley referred to the professional architects employed by the landowner and asked if the Council was 'passing the buck' as it hadn't been represented at any meetings. He concluded by expressing the view that this was an opportunity for the Council to manage the

number of houses to be built in Cirencester over the next twenty years and to rebuild the public's trust in how it dealt with what would be a significant impact on the town.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning was invited to address the Council. The Deputy Leader thanked Mr. Pratley for the Petition, and for raising various issues. The Deputy Leader considered it beneficial for Members to have a debate on the issues raised and explained that, following such debate, he would be Proposing that the Petition be referred to the Cabinet for consideration as part of its deliberations on the Local Plan consultation draft in December.

The Deputy Leader did not accept that the consultation process was poor but, rather, considered it to be well-informed, highly-g geared and efficient. He explained that various experts in the planning 'field' had considered the process to be appropriate. The Deputy Leader stated that the Council would continue to publish consultation plans in order to ensure that everyone knew what was happening and when it would happen. The Deputy Leader stated that he was saddened by the Petitioner's comments in respect of trust. He reminded the Council that developers could seek to negotiate over applications and that the Council was required to submit its evidence to the Inspectorate. The Council's Forward Planning Team would draft a workable Local Plan and the Planning Committee and staff in the Planning Department would ensure it was implemented as applications came forward. The Deputy Leader concluded by stating that the Council would enter into negotiations to seek to secure the inclusion of appropriate infrastructure in respect of proposed developments.

A number of Members welcomed the Petition, commenting that it had provided the first opportunity for the Council to debate the issue. Those Members accepted that there was a need for additional housing, particularly affordable housing for younger people, across the District and they agreed that Cirencester had to take a share of any provision. However, they considered the proposed development at Chesterton to be too big and that small-scale developments should be allowed across the District, particularly in those villages where an element of new development had been requested. Those Members also contended that the Council should seek the redevelopment of brownfield sites rather than greenfield or farm land, and that any development at this site should be for fewer dwellings with associated infrastructure improvements, including flood alleviation. Concern was expressed that the Council should seek to protect the existing vibrant community within the town.

A Member referred to the Kingshill Meadow development and expressed the view that it had been badly planned and that there were still a number of empty homes and shop units within that development. The Member referred to recent incidents of flooding in Cirencester and stated that neither Thames Water nor the Environment Agency had given any assurances that the issue of flooding would be addressed. The Member contended that the consultation process had not been good enough, as demonstrated by the people present at the Meeting. The Member considered that the Council had not listened to the views expressed and that this was an opportunity for the Council to make a statement, albeit rather belatedly. The Member did not agree that the Petition should be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

Another Member expressed the view that the Council had a poor track record in respect of strategic planning. He reminded Members that they should promote

the interests of the electorate and he implored the Leader and the Deputy Leader to be sensible and to re-visit the options for the development of this site. A Member stated that, since 2011, a number of Members had recommended a review of the Council's approach to housing need and for identifying sites in villages. The Member acknowledged that some villages were reluctant to put sites forward for consideration and contended that, despite a lack of affordable housing in the villages being one of the most frequent complaints, the Council still operated a policy of extreme restriction in respect of development in villages. The Member expressed support for some significant development in Cirencester but he questioned the need for a development which would increase the population by 40%. The Member concluded by expressing the view that the District would need to experience a period of rapid housing development in order to sustain its five-year supply of housing over a long period and he concluded by suggesting that the Council should consider if this proposal represented a sustainable development that would help to meet the needs of the District.

One of the Ward Members was present and was invited to address the Committee. The Ward Member stated that he would be representing the views of his constituents. The Ward Member referred to the application in Cowley which had been referred to earlier by the Deputy Leader and he referred to a previous application in Longborough which had come forward in an attempt to sustain the local primary school. The Ward Member contended that, of the fifty consultation items referred to earlier in the Meeting as part of a response to one of the formal Member questions, only ten related to 'public' consultations, one of which had been conducted by the Chesterton Community Group. The Ward Member further contended that, despite all the publicity in the local Press and that engendered by the Petition, some people were still not aware of the threat being posed to the town. The Ward Member agreed that Cirencester would have to accept a degree of new housing but concluded that the current proposal was too large.

A number of other Members referred to recent applications approved in respect of new developments in various other market towns. One Member stated that his Ward would have welcomed the level of consultation being afforded to the current proposal and pointed out that developments could only be dispersed across the District if suitable sites came forward. Another Member suggested that Cirencester Town Council should consider developing a Neighbourhood Plan which it could then use to assess all potential sites, even those not included in the SHLAA, and rank them in a priority order. The Member also referred to a small development in Wiltshire which, he contended, could receive some £1m in Section 106 Agreement contributions towards infrastructure improvements and he concluded by commenting on what the contribution might be in relation to Chesterton.

A Member commented that villages had the same sustainability issues, as well as limited supplies of land and resources, and that the Council needed to look at key settlements to accommodate development. Another Member expressed the view that villages needed an element of housing and that development should be spread across the District. The Member suggested that the Government should seek to address the issue of empty houses and a lack of employment in the north of the country.

Other Members commented that Section 106 Agreement contributions would not solve the problems being experienced by Thames Water and that consideration should be given to the impact the proposed development would have on Cirencester, rather than meeting housing and/or financial needs; the Council

should represent the interests of the entire District; there was a need to get the emerging Local Plan adopted as soon as feasibly possible; it was likely that in excess of 6,900 new houses would be required in order to address the impact of previous underbuilding nationally; and the Council needed to know the cost of the unsuccessful Judicial Review in Tetbury before deciding to seek another Judicial Review.

Mr. Pratley was invited to present his closing statement. He thanked the Council for the debate and stated that he had challenged the Earl Bathurst over the legacy he would leave the town if this land was built on. He expressed the view that the Council also had to decide on its future legacy and reiterated that people had been shocked by the size of development being proposed. He expressed disappointment that consideration of this issue was likely to be deferred to the Cabinet and he concluded by stating that the issue required a 'lively' debate.

The Deputy Leader thanked Mr. Pratley for his constructive contributions. The Deputy Leader stated that the Council did listen to comments put forward by residents but reminded Members that 40% of applicants on the Housing Waiting List had put Cirencester as a first preference. The Deputy Leader also reminded the Council that the District was enjoying its lowest rate of unemployment for ten years and he pointed out that there was currently little or no demand for employment sites due to the lack of an available workforce. The Deputy Leader agreed with the comments made in relation to infrastructure issues and explained that the Council could resist adopting a Local Plan if it wished to avoid having to determine difficult issues. However, the Deputy Leader was not advocating that as an option because it would leave the District susceptible to speculative development in areas the Council might not wish to see development and would result in a strategy being imposed. The Deputy Leader reiterated that it was right for the Petition to be referred to the Cabinet for consideration against a strong evidence base, and he concluded by thanking all those involved for the Petition.

RESOLVED that the Petition be noted, and be referred to the Cabinet for consideration as part of its deliberations on the Local Plan consultation draft.

Record of Voting - for 28, against 11, abstentions 2, absent 3.

Note:

The Chairman of the Council exercised his discretion to extend the time limits for debate in relation to this item, and to allow a period for summing up by the petition organiser and the Deputy Leader.

(2) Other Petitions

No other petitions had been received.

CL.17 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Leader of the Council introduced this item and, in so doing, drew attention to page 88 of Appendix 'B' to the circulated report, which needed amendment to reflect that Councillor Clive Bennett was the current Chairman of the Council.

The Leader explained that the Statement of Accounts had been considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting on 16th September 2014, and that that Committee had commended their approval to the Council. Whilst noting that some minor technicalities had been highlighted for attention, the Leader congratulated staff on achieving an 'unqualified' opinion. Other Members echoed this sentiment.

The Chairman of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee was invited to address the Council and explained that the Council's external auditors had welcomed the co-operation they had received from staff. The Chairman also explained that he would be signing the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council at the conclusion of this Meeting.

Arising on the Statement of Accounts:-

(i) A Member referred to the 'Grant Thornton Report of the Audit Findings for Cotswold District Council 2013/14' and reminded Members that the 'unqualified value for money' conclusion on page 11 of Appendix 'A' was confirmation that the Council had the necessary processes in place in order to achieve value for money, rather than a statement that it had achieved value for money.

(ii) Another Member referred to the Council's 'investment properties'. The Member explained that such investments were commercial properties and that, while a good return was being achieved in terms of rent, the capital value of the properties was declining. The Member reminded the Council of the need to keep its property portfolio under review.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Grant Thornton 'Report of the Audit Findings for Cotswold District Council 2013/14' be noted;

(b) the Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14 be approved;

(c) the Statement of Accounts, as amended, be approved.

Record of Voting - for 40, against 0, abstentions 0, interest declared 1, absent 3.

CL.18 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2013/14

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Leader explained that this item had been considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting on 15th July 2014. The Leader reminded the Council that it was currently debt-free as it was not borrowing money, and drew attention to the Treasury Position as at 31st March 2014, including money which was still being held in an escrow account at the Icelandic Bank, Glitnir, and which was earning interest for the Council.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Annual Report 2013/14, and the associated updated Prudential Indicators, be approved.

Record of Voting - for 40, against 0, abstentions 0, interest declared 1, absent 3.

CL.19 OTHER ISSUES/REPORTS ARISING FROM THE CABINET

There were no other issues/reports arising from the Cabinet.

CL.20 ISSUES/REPORTS ARISING FROM AUDIT AND SCRUTINY

There were no issues/reports arising from Audit and Scrutiny.

CL.21 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, the following Motions had been received:-

(i) Motion 5/2014

Proposed by Councillor PR Hodgkinson, Seconded by Councillor Ms JM Layton:-

'This Council notes the recently missed targets for recycling. At present, tetra packs can't be recycled on the kerbside. As a way of boosting recycling rates across the District, and to help the environment, it calls for tetra packs to be recycled on the kerbside as soon as possible.'

The Chairman of the Council stated that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, once Proposed and Seconded, the Motion would stand referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Hodgkinson explained that, in order to boost recycling rates across the District, tetra packs should be recycled from the kerbside. Councillor Hodgkinson considered this would be good for the environment and would accord with what residents wanted. He contended that this Council was one of the few Councils which did not collect tetra packs from the kerbside, although both Tewkesbury Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council did. Councillor Hodgkinson referred to the sharing of a Chief Executive and various members of staff across this Council and West Oxfordshire District Council and asked why the Council did not also seek to import some examples of good practice from that authority. He considered the collection of tetra packs to be an anomaly which this Council should seek to address as it would lead to a reduction in the volumes of waste sent to landfill. Councillor Hodgkinson reminded Members that the Council had recently missed some recycling targets and suggested that this was one way in which it could seek to get back on track. Councillor Hodgkinson explained that some of the 'bring banks' had been removed from various sites around the District and he reminded Members that tetra packs could not be recycled in the cardboard recycling bags. He concluded by urging the Council to introduce the collection of tetra packs as soon as possible.

Councillor Ms Layton formally Seconded the Motion. Councillor Ms Layton stated that the Council prided itself on refuse collection and referred to a recent initiative, the 'Pledge for Plastics' campaign. Councillor Ms Layton reminded the Council that the Cabinet Member for Environment supported the 'Pledge' and claimed that this Council had the best recycling rates in the country. Councillor Ms Layton

contended that some 5 billion tonnes of waste had been sent to landfill in the past year, including 55,000 tonnes of tetra packs, and that there was a clear need for a kerbside collection service. Councillor Ms Layton further contended that it was unreasonable to expect residents to travel to the tetra pack recycling facilities in Cirencester, Fairford, South Cerney, Stow-on-the-Wold or Tetbury, and concluded by reiterating that tetra packs should be collected from the kerbside.

At this juncture, the Motion stood referred to the Cabinet for consideration, it being noted that the Proposer and Seconder would be invited to present the Motion to the Cabinet in due course, possibly at its November 2014 Meeting.

(ii) Motion 6/2014

Proposed by Councillor JA Harris, Seconded by Councillor DJ Nash:-

'This Council notes the high number of traffic accidents, sadly some of them fatal, that have occurred on the dual carriageway A419/A429 ring road around Cirencester.

This Council notes the potential for a very significant housing development on land south-west of Cirencester, and is mindful of the considerable increase in traffic this will cause if approved.

This Council also notes that an application for a considerable office development on the St. James Place site is currently being considered and that the developers involved have expressed an interest in creating a new entrance on the A429 in order to ease congestion upon entrance into Cirencester. The 70 mph speed limit means this is proving difficult.

This Council therefore resolves to bring pressure upon Gloucestershire County Council as highway authority to initiate action to reduce the speed limit on these two roads to 40 mph.'

The Chairman of the Council stated that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, he intended to allow the Motion to be debated at the Council Meeting.

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Harris explained that he had witnessed a fatality on the ring road in December 2013, and that accidents of varying severity frequently occurred along the length of the ring road. Councillor Harris stated that the proposed development at Chesterton would exacerbate road safety problems, and suggested that congestion on the road was often caused by unnecessary braking. Councillor Harris contended that lowering the speed limit on the ring road would lead to a reduction in congestion as drivers would not need to brake suddenly. Councillor Harris also referred to the proposed development at St. James Place and stated that the suggested access onto the A419 could relieve congestion at the pinch point at Hammond Way. Councillor Harris reminded the Council of the regular complaints relating to maintenance of the verges and roundabouts along the ring road which, he stated, had been reduced due to the costs involved in closing the road and he suggested that lowering the speed limit would enable the verges and roundabouts to be maintained without the need for the road to be closed. Councillor Harris stated that Cirencester Town Council was supportive of a reduction in the speed limit and that support from this Council would save lives and improve the town.

Councillor DJ Nash formally Seconded the Motion. Councillor Nash referred to statistics from the County Road Safety Unit for the period 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2013, during which time there had been a total of twenty-seven reportable accidents involving forty-nine vehicles, one cyclist and two pedestrians. Councillor Nash reminded the Council that evidence from the RAC Foundation correlated vehicle speeds at the moment of impact and he outlined the likely survival rates for pedestrians involved in collisions with vehicles travelling at 20 mph, 40 mph and 70 mph, the current speed limit along the ring road. Councillor Nash suggested that reducing the speed limit should be linked to the potential developments at Chesterton and St. James Place. He reminded the Council of the original purpose of the ring road and commented that it had effectively divided the town, with access across the ring road to the historic centre being achieved by footbridges and subways. Councillor Nash suggested that, if the speed limit was reduced, there could be an opportunity to create crossings over the road which would ease passage for pedestrians and cyclists. Councillor Nash concluded by referring to a similar situation in Corin Way, Gloucester, where the speed limit along the dual carriageway road had been reduced to 40 mph.

An Amendment was Proposed and Seconded to the Motion, which sought to delete the last paragraph and replace it with:-

'This Council resolves to refer this matter to Gloucestershire County Council, as Highway Authority and the Cotswolds Road Safety Partnership, and explore the options for a reduction in the speed limit along the length of these roads.'

This Amendment was accepted by the Proposer and Secunder of the Motion.

The Council then debated the Motion, as amended. A number of Members spoke in support of the amended Motion. Those Members considered that the ring road had met its original purpose; traffic travelled too fast along the road; and that a reduction in the speed limit would be of benefit to residents of Preston who had to cross the road in order to access the bus stop on the Tesco side, near the Preston Toll Bar.

Councillor Harris was invited to sum-up and he thanked the Council for its support of the Motion.

RESOLVED that the Motion, as amended, be supported.

Record of Voting - for 40, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 4.

CL.22 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to all contracts, conveyances and any other documents necessary for carrying into effect all resolutions passed by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 40, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 4.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m., adjourned between 11.30 a.m. and 11.40 a.m., and closed at 12.16 p.m.

Council

23rd September 2014

Chairman

(END)