



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 27 JULY 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 19 July 2023

Note: Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in accordance with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services.

The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:
<https://youtube.com/live/DLkSYioFkGU?feature=share>

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website. Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. • Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow. • Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment. • Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions. • Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure. • Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough. • Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Stephen Conway	Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing and Partnerships
Prue Bray	Deputy Leader and Children's Services
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty
Lindsay Ferris	Planning and Local Plan
Paul Fishwick	Active Travel, Transport and Highways
David Hare	Health and Wellbeing and Adult Services
Sarah Kerr	Climate Emergency and Resident Services
Clive Jones	Business and Economic Development
Ian Shenton	Environment, Sport and Leisure
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Finance

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
21.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
22.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 29 June 2023.	9 - 18
23.		DECLARATION OF INTERESTS To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any non-registrable interests relevant to any matters to be considered at the meeting.	
24.		STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER To receive a statement from the Leader of the Council.	
25.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Executive Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	

25.1

David Ireland has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

'Over the past five years litter has increased significantly at Chalfont Park , mainly due to the increased number of local food and drink takeaway outlets, Mc Donald's, KFC, Costa coffee, Domino's Pizza, Greg's, Subway, Asda. All outlets are only a few minutes' walk to Park area.

This increase has resulted in needing three bin collections a week for the summer months, just to keep the volume of litter from overflowing from the bins onto the surrounding areas.

Health and Safety issues going forward.

The Summer School holidays are coming soon and the park area will increased in usage, this in turn will increase the volume of litter also the weather forecast is to get much hotter.

Apart from the unsightly overflowing bins, two factors will have the following H&S effects.

1. Food spillage from the bins, increase in rats attracted to the increased food source
2. Given the increase in summer temperatures, overflow of dog waste and increase smells

What is the justification with no local consultation of reducing the waste bin collection at Chalfont Park from three times a week to once a week; given the significant negative effect this will have on the park area as outlined?

25.2

Peter White has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

Question:

My decarbonisation plan:

solar panels, £9000 pounds, generation of 5Mwh of electricity per year. 1 ton CO₂E equivalent, about the same as a medium sized tree. Developer near me cut down two large trees to widen a drive.

Environmental impact survey request for 155 houses in Three Mile Cross. Approximately 15k tonnes of CO₂ (mostly Scope 3, so WBC doesn't need to count that!).

Electric Vehicle, £18000. Milage 6000 per year, 3 tons of Co₂e equivalent . A development like Hall farm (4500 homes) might have half a million tons of embodied Co₂e. I could drive a gas guzzler for 150000 years to emit that much.

Heating (ongoing): IR panels £6000, or an Air source heat pump £15000 to £20000. These are big numbers again, and I'm wondering is it all worth it ?, will it make a difference? Am I the only person who sees it this way?

Does WBC have a coherent, realistic strategy for explaining to residents why they should engage with the Climate Emergency Action Plan, considering the cost of even attempting to become carbon neutral, and that fact that development in WBC wipes out any gains we might make individually ?

26.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice

Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply

26.1

Councillor Gary Cowan has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question:

At the Planning meeting on the 13th of July the Council's legal representative the Town and Country Act only applied to Part II issues which I found surprising. My comments then are recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

The Town and Country act was written to prevent corruption by creating greater transparency. An example of corruption was John Poulson, jailed for five years for corruption after being found guilty of bribing public figures in a web of corruption that encompassed 23 local authorities and 300 individuals.

I make no allegation against the Council but perhaps it explains why the Planning Committee accepted the legal advice and approved the planning application.

My questions to Officers had led to an email from the legal department suggesting I may want to consider declaring an interest and the Chair of the committee asked the same question. I stayed and I immediately resigned from the Planning committee at the end of the discussion.

My question is as it has been reported that the project

is to be cancelled as its costs have risen by £6.5 million how much has already been spent including design costs.

26.2 Councillor Pauline Jorgensen has asked the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing the following question:

Question:

Could the Leader explain what he is doing to prevent council changes to key services, for example caddy liners and litter bin service reduction, being implemented without following due process and proper approval.

26.3 Councillor Peter Harper has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

Question:

In the 2022-23 Medium Term Financial Plan the Barkham Solar Farm capital cost is shown as £8m but in the Climate Emergency Progress Report from September 2023 it is shown as £26.8m. Which is the correct figure?

26.4 Councillor Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question:

In March 2022 the council had a plan to close Suffolk Lodge and build a new care home at Toutley. I understand the council is buying the Four Seasons Care Home on Barkham Road and has been looking to purchase other homes. I also understand the council plans to proceed with a reduced scale Toutley Home. Please can you advise the overall plan with the acquisition of care homes? How many homes / beds are you planning to purchase or build and what is the future of Suffolk Lodge.

26.5 Councillor Shahid Younis has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

There was a recent Council press announcement that the number of rubbish bins in the borough will be reduced, and the remaining bins will be emptied less frequently.

There are already reports of bins being covered with black bags and waste piling up around overflowing bins.

Inevitably, this will result in piling up of litter around the streets, footpaths and children's play areas and risks encouraging vermin. Who will be responsible for clearing up this mess and what extra costs will it incur?

26.6 None Specific

Councillor Graham Howe has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question:

The Bohunt school expansion was unanimously agreed by Full Council in March 2022, including Sixth Form, SEND provision and extra year 7 places.

The budget was £4.5 million.

Following the Liberal Democratic/Labour Coalition last year, costs were forecast at £6.5 million. The increase was partly change in specification for the extra provisions and material cost increases due to COVID.

We then learned that there were delays with contracts.

Councillors Shenton and Cornish said, presumably informed by the Executive Member, that the Bohunt facilities would open September 2023 but then published a public apology saying it was not going to happen. The Wokingham Paper stated from Liberal Democratic sources that the Bohunt Trust was not going ahead with the project. This was not the truth. The Bohunt Trust were considering what extra contribution they could make to the project, not to abandon it.

We now learn that costs are nearer £10.5 million, an extraordinary 2 1/2 times the original estimate.

Can the Executive Member put an end to opaque, changing stories so that residents of Bohunt community can be informed but also other Wokingham schools impacted, and can she give a clear explanation of the provision, the costs, and timelines?

27.

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

Matters for Consideration

28. Emmbrook

DELIVERY OF WELLINGTON ROAD AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME

19 - 30

29.	None Specific	CAPITAL MONITORING 2023/24 - QUARTER 1	31 - 38
30.	None Specific	REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023-24 QUARTER 1	39 - 54
31.	None Specific	SHAREHOLDERS REPORT	55 - 60
32.	None Specific	BOHUNT WOKINGHAM SCHOOL SIXTH FORM: UPDATE AND BUDGET	61 - 64
33.	None Specific	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2023	65 - 74

A decision sheet will be available for inspection on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER

Priya Patel
Email
Postal Address

Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
priya.patel@wokingham.gov.uk
Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 29 JUNE 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.10 PM**

Executive Members Present

Councillors: Prue Bray (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Rachel Bishop-Firth, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, Sarah Kerr, Ian Shenton and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Apologies:

Councillors Stephen Conway, David Hare and Clive Jones.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the meeting of the extraordinary Executive held on 20 April 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to a typographical error being corrected in 102.3.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER

I am very pleased to be able to announce that last Friday the Council won two Municipal Journal (MJ) achievement awards. One for innovation and delivering sustainability and social value and the other one for the best social housing initiative. I would like to congratulate all the officers who have had anything to do with either of the projects and also to those officers who were shortlisted for two other awards but did not win. We were the only Council who won two awards and we should be justifiably proud of what we have achieved. Thank you to everybody and congratulations.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

4.1 Chas Hockin asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question

Can the Council explain what has happened to all the money taken incorrectly by car parking machines on Bank Holidays? Will it be refunded to users (who can easily be traced) and what plans do the council have to ensure that if charges are made on Bank Holidays in the future the machines will not take them?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Chas. All our car park ticket machines are programmed not to charge on Bank Holidays where charges do not apply.

For any additional special Bank Holidays such as the Golden Jubilee and the Kings Coronation, the council installed notification signs at each car park ticket machine advising that during these special days, charges did not apply. Anyone who did pay on these days were advised no refunds would be offered.

From 3rd July 2023, charges will be made on Bank Holidays and the machines will be programmed for the applicable fees.

Supplementary Question

What has happened to all the money taken incorrectly by car parking machines?

Answer

The money will have gone into car parking income.

4.2 Jim Frewin asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question: Question

At the May full Council meeting leaders past and present strongly emphasised a compassionate council and compassionate budget yet in the budget Wokingham introduced fees for families who suffer the death of a baby, infant or child. Services that were previously free. Will the Executive show some compassion for families in these circumstances and revert these services to being free of charge?

Answer

Thank you for the question – I understand your concern on this sensitive subject, but just to be clear, fees have NOT been introduced for families who suffer the death of a child. Funeral fees for children under 18 years of age are directly claimed by undertakers and paid from the central government Children’s Funeral Fund. This is funding provided to cover the funeral costs in the event of a death of a child, so that families do not have to pay.

What was introduced by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in May, was a fee that is claimed from this Children’s Funeral Fund, to cover Wokingham Borough Council’s costs. This could include coroner services and registering the death. This is funding that has always been available for WBC to claim, but we have not done so until now. However, be reassured that this will have no impact on families who find themselves in these terrible circumstances – and for them, the services are still free of charge.

Supplementary Question

Can something be done on how this is communicated, in terms of the fee not being charged to families.

Answer

Yes, we can look at this.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

5.1 Rebecca Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question:

Residents are concerned about the proposal to build two Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) schools at Rooks Nest. The only bus service to this area is infrequent and there is no pavement or cycleway so the only way to get there for staff and pupils will be to drive. This proposal is contrary to the Council’s own aims to reduce carbon

emissions and promote active travel. What is the administration doing to address these concerns?

Answer:

In recommending locating the two schools on the same site a lot of consideration has been given to carbon emission reduction.

During the construction stage there are a lot of efficiencies the contractors can make, particularly in getting plant and materials on to one site instead of two.

Needing only one access road will lead to significant reductions in materials and minimise costs. Similarly, opportunities will be explored to share infrastructure particularly, parking, playing fields and utilities, similarly reducing the overall carbon footprint.

We have secured a commitment from the Department for Education (DfE) that the schools will be Net Zero Carbon in operation and be climate resilient.

We will be incorporating enhanced landscaping options and additional tree planting in the design.

As with every school, a Travel Plan promoting sustainable travel will be required as part of planning, and we will be promoting walking and cycling to staff and pupils. Having the schools co-located will also provide the greatest opportunity to optimise home to school transport taxi or minibus journeys. But these young people are some of the most vulnerable in our communities and therefore, it is unlikely that either public transport, cycling or walking to school would be a viable option for them. However, the very fact that the schools are in the Borough will by itself reduce the distances travelled and thus reduce carbon emissions.

Having said all that, I do want to make two other points. If you refer to the agenda you will see that these schools will only take up a small part of Rooks Nest. And secondly, the Conservative group – of which you are a member – included Rooks Nest as a site for 270 houses in the Local Plan update. Which I think would worry residents a lot more than the two SEND schools which we are proposing.

Supplementary Question

You've talked about Active Travel for schools, I don't think that addresses the large number of staff who will be required to travel to the two schools. How will these staff travel to the schools? with the exception of staff living in Finchampstead it would seem that the only option would be to drive.

Answer

The report sets out that there is a possibility of locating a bus stop on the road close to the schools. A meeting with local ward councillors will also be arranged to discuss any concerns in the coming weeks.

5.2 Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question

In January, Planning permission was granted for five new houses at 6 Johnson Drive. The site, in a rural area of Finchampstead, had been the subject of multiple planning applications and appeals over the past 20 years. At the last appeal, the Planning Inspector

described the application as “unsustainable”. How could this neighbourhood plan have helped stop this sort of application, and future applications like it?

Answer

In short the answer is no, it couldn't have.

Neighbourhood plans add an additional layer of planning policy to help reflect local circumstance and further guide the nature and quality of development in an area. They are therefore an opportunity to positively influence development based on the priorities of local communities, rather than a mechanism to try to stop development. A neighbourhood plan cannot for example, promote less development than that identified in the adopted local plan for the locality covered by the plan.

In the case of Finchampstead, the parish council and local volunteers have worked hard to prepare the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) which is now at an advanced stage. If recommendations in the Executive item are accepted, the FNDP will proceed to referendum in September 2023 and if supported by the local community through that referendum, will thereafter be adopted as part of the development plan.

The FNDP includes policies to influence development in the parish over the next 15 years.

The plan includes a policy on infill, small plot development and development of private residential gardens. This policy adds additional considerations and requirements for proposals like that granted at Johnson Drive but does not try to prevent this type of development when located within development limits.

Of course, the FNDP also includes other policies such as a Key Local Gap, Green Wedge, Local Green Space policies/designations and those relating to requirements for 10% biodiversity net gain. Once adopted, those policies will add to the quality of future development in Finchampstead Parish by providing an additional layer of planning policy that decision takers will consider when determining applications.

Supplementary Question

I know local volunteers including Councillor David Cornish, worked very hard on this Plan for several years and I commend them for their efforts. In the case of 6 Johnson Drive it's not included in the Finchampstead neighbourhood plan area it is in the countryside but nevertheless in this case officers recommended approval of this application despite being previously assessed as being unsustainable by the Planning Inspector. In this current climate, is it not the case that any protection a neighbourhood plan can offer against unsustainable development is sadly very limited?

Answer

As the answer gave you, the protection is limited. One thing that you could do to help the situation is to prod your government to respond on the NPPF proposals that were consulted on from December until March and that we are able to have inclusion of the overprovision of nearly 2000 homes in this area.

As you know the reason, we don't have a five year land supply at the moment, is because we have built too many houses too early. This has eaten up all of the five year land supply that was there. I would ask you to lobby your government to put their proposals together.

That would be the greatest response and protection we could give and regarding the Local Plan we will be moving forward this year.

6. CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP POLICY

The Executive Member for Finance reported that the policy would introduce clear guidance, governance and processes for officers to follow in order to market, value and contract sponsorship agreements. As the council considered wider policies such as in respect of the climate emergency and/or pay arrangements, amendments would be considered to ensure that the approach aligned to this work. The policy would ensure consistency and ensure that any potential sponsors aligned with the Council's policies and values.

RESOLVED that the Executive adopted the Corporate Sponsorship Policy to enable the Council to provide a support structure and governance for where these opportunities existed, to allow services to explore new revenue streams through sponsorship agreements and in certain circumstances to assist local business to market their services.

7. FINCHAMPSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Executive Member for Planning and the Local Plan reported that he was pleased to see this Neighbourhood Plan coming forward to the Executive. A tremendous amount of work had been carried out by volunteers to get it to this stage. He clarified that the report the report inconsistently made reference to '10 local green spaces' and '8 local greenspaces'. The correct figure was actually 9 local green spaces, this is the number that the Examiner considered were justified.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) Accepted the modifications recommended by the Independent Examination into the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan (as set out in Enclosure 1) and for the modified plan to proceed to referendum;
- 2) Agreed that the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan, as modified in accordance with the recommendations of the Examiner, meets the basic conditions and complies with the provisions of Paragraph 8 (1) (a) (2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Localism Act 2011);
- 3) Agreed to publish the 'Decision Statement' as set out at Enclosure 2 of this report;
- 4) Authorised the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan, to agree minor factual and consequential modifications necessary to the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan, the Decision Statement, and other supporting documents prior to the referendum;
- 5) Agreed the referendum be organised and conducted in the Finchampstead neighbourhood area.

8. REVENUE MONITORING 2022-23 - OUTTURN

The Executive Member for Finance reported that the revenue budget monitoring report presented the final outturn of the last financial year and was a good news story. In the face of rising inflation and unpredicted problems, numerous savings and changes were made to maintain service delivery and to keep the Council solvent.

To add context, the predicted overspend of the revenue budget in quarter one was £2.23 million last year, but with the work of officers, this was turned around by making in-year savings, resulting in an £83,000 underspend by the end of the year.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) noted the outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 2) agreed the General Fund carry forward requests of £317k as set out in Appendix B to the report. This request is lower than in the previous year where carry forwards were £667k.
- 3) noted the general fund balance as at 31 March 2023 is c£9.1m, this balance remains in line with the reasonable level of balances set out in the general fund reserves policy statement as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

9. CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022/23

The Executive Member for Finance reported that the number of capital projects that could be completed this year would be limited given the Council's difficult budget position. The report was overall a good news story as whilst projects were removed, rescheduled or reshaped, the Council was still able to deliver some capital projects as it was recognised that this work was needed for the benefit of residents.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) noted the outturn position of the capital programme for 2022/23 as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in appendix A;
- 2) approved and noted the proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B.
- 3) noted and approved the Quarter 4 budget adjustments to the 2022/23 capital programme which include;
 - a) An additional £63,081 budget for fit out costs for Ryeish Green Learning Disability Accommodation. This is funded in full by a ring-fenced contribution from NHS Berkshire.
 - b) An additional £77,000 budget for works on Dinton Barn is required to meet the latest costs of the project following a recent procurement tender process. This is funded in full from the SANG maintenance reserve.
 - c) An additional £121,607 budget towards Winnersh Farm SEN School. This is funded in full from Reading Borough Council and is a contribution towards abnormal costs identified in the project.
- 4) approved the capital funding and the expenditure budget of £956,000 for the purchase of four properties as part of the single homelessness accommodation programme (SHAP).

This will be funded from S106 developer contributions (£150,000), ringfenced grant (£359,408) and the remainder from HRA borrowing (£446,592).

10. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services reported that she was pleased to be bringing this for Executive consideration. The final strategy would be prepared for the autumn. The strategy would bring consistency, whilst there were pockets of excellence, there also existed instances where customer service could be improved. This strategy would create Council wide ownership of customer service and the customer experience. She thanked Jackie Whitney for her tremendous work on this strategy. The team had worked hard to produce a jargon free strategy.

Executive members welcomed the focus of the strategy set out on page 180 of the report. It was noted that this was the first Council's Customer Excellence strategy.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the draft Customer Experience strategy, for onward public consultation.

11. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL TREE STRATEGY

The Executive Member for the Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that minor changes had been made to the strategy since the last time the Executive had considered it. Much work had been invested in the strategy, which would provide a unified approach to the borough's management of trees.

Executive Members thanked officers for the work that had gone into developing this strategy and to the residents and organisations who had fed into the consultation process. It was noted that that whilst the focus on planting trees was much welcomed, maintaining these trees and protecting their survival was also paramount. It was noted that the strategy would play an important role in informing the environmental element of the Local Plan.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the adoption of the Wokingham Borough Council Tree Strategy.

12. DEVELOPMENT OF TWO NEW WOKINGHAM SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED SCHOOLS

The Executive Member for Children's Services made the following points:

- The timetable on page 298 of the report set out that following a successful bid in the Spring for the development of these schools, the Department for Education (DfE) initiated a bidding process for Trusts to run these schools. 31 August was the deadline for the expressions of interest for running the schools. A decision on the location of the schools was required, in order for this work to progress as outlined in this timetable.
- Page 301 set out plans for reducing carbon, the DfE had confirmed that all Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) schools would embed net zero carbon operationing and climate resilience and that all DfE SEND schools would be fitted with sprinklers. The Executive welcomed this and would encourage the aspiration that ALL schools be built in this way.
- The report included an analysis of the impact of delivering these two new schools in terms of the High Needs block funding and to the Home to School Transport budget. The schools would have a substantial positive impact on both.

- The Executive noted that the schools would occupy one corner of the Rooks Nest site. (Field 1, less than a quarter of the site). The use of the rest of the site had not been confirmed but woodland extensions, farming or solar farming were under consideration.
- The Executive Member for Planning and the Local Plan advised that recommendation 7 of the report confirmed that the whole of the Rooks Nest site would not be used for residential use and that the previous promotion of the site for residential development would be withdrawn from the Local Plan Update process.
- It was noted that the number of pupils at the two SEND schools was much smaller than an average non SEND school, which was likely to reduce any issues around traffic and congestion around the site.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) Confirmed support for the development and provision of **two** new Special Educational Needs School at Rooks Nest Farm in Finchampstead (as per the Officer's recommendation having reviewed this site against all available sites in the Council's ownership)
- 2) Gave delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children's Services to approve the lease of these sites to the DfE for use as a Special Educational Needs school on their model Heads of Terms (a copy is in **Appendix A**) and delegated, under 5.4.3 [which applies to all delegations to officers and individual members below] powers to the Director of Resources and Assets, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to complete the lease.
- 3) Approved a supplementary estimate of £1.5m for the infrastructure and abnormal costs associated with the delivery of the two new SEND schools. Working with the DfE, the Council will aim to minimise these costs where possible. Any costs will be funded from the approved capital contingency budget.
- 4) Subject to the DfE approval of the Council's bid to self-deliver the free school capital projects, give delegated authority to the Director of Resources and Assets, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Children's Services, to approve the capital development of both schools (5.1.9.2) (b) re Virements over £500k) and the procurement and awarding of the construction works through a competitive procurement process, details to be presented and approved by the Strategic Procurement Board (SPB).
- 5) Give delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Children's Services, to run the presumption exercise (along with the DfE) to select and enter into leases with a Trust (or Trusts) to manage both schools.
- 6) Give delegated authority to the Director of Resources and Assets, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Finance, to approve the infrastructure costs and abnormal costs (not funded by the DfE) when these are known.
- 7) agreed that the whole of the Rooks Nest Farm site, which has previously been promoted to the Local Plan Update for residential use with an estimated

residential land value of £19.25M, will now not be used for residential use, with the residential land value estimation to be foregone and that the previous promotion of the site for residential development will be withdrawn from the Local Plan Update process.

13. ST CRISPIN'S LEISURE CENTRE CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that there had been a distinct fall in the use of this leisure facility since the onset of the pandemic. This had prompted a review of usage and future options. It was noted that the opening of the Carnival hub facility had taken some usage away from St Crispin's. An eight week consultation was proposed.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved a public consultation on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre, including an option of closing the leisure centre, and considering all potential options for the future use of the site. Note that a report will be brought back to Executive following the consultation recommending the next steps.

14. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR THE PURCHASE AND DISTRIBUTION OF WHEELED BINS IN THE BOROUGH

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that the Procurement Board had supported an open tender approach.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the proposed procurement strategy of proceeding to 'open tender' to purchase and distribute wheeled bins in the borough.

15. TERM MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS FOR REACTIVE & PLANNED MECHANICAL WORKS

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) Approved the undertaking of a competitive tender process for a new term maintenance contract(s) for Reactive and Planned Mechanical Works;
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Resources and Assets to implement the recommended procurement approach.

16. TOUTLEY EAST DEVELOPMENT - RESIDENTIAL DELIVERY MODEL

The Deputy Leader reported that this item was before the Executive for consideration as a result of the Council no longer being able to afford the original proposal for a new Care Home. The recommendations aimed for a development which was as close as possible to net carbon zero, to maximise social housing and to create an income stream for the Council.

The Executive noted that the Government's Climate Change Committee report had just been published and highlighted that buildings were one of the worst performing areas in terms of achieving net carbon zero, to reduce carbon overall. This should therefore be a significant area of focus for this development. In terms of residential homes, whilst there was an upfront capital cost, the long term benefits and savings would generally outweigh the initial cost. It was also noted that carbon net zero was included in the aspirations and requirements of the Local Plan.

The Executive noted that visibility at the exit of the site onto Twyford Road was limited and residents had expressed concern. It was confirmed that the details of this Highway junction

required Planning approval and so there was still work and scope for any issues to be addressed.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) Agreed to the cessation of the construction of a care home as part of the Toutley East strategic masterplan as previously approved, whilst the viability of alternative delivery models for the care home are explored.
- 2) Approved the development of the land for residential including the provisions for affordable housing and Community Infrastructure Levy as set out in the report
- 3) Noted that further market testing would be undertaken on the costs and values of energy efficient residential development in excess of current policy and building regulations, up to and including Net Zero Carbon design, to input into the delivery model decision.
- 4) Noted the risks and opportunities of the delivery options for the residential development of the land and approved that further market testing would be undertaken on the Disposal and Joint Venture models to ascertain Value for Money and risk exposure;
- 5) Delegated authority to the Director of Resources and Assets, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to implement the programme for the development of the Toutley East site, including a value for money decision on alternative delivery models for the care home and residential delivery models, taking into account the findings of the further market testing and the Council's climate commitments and targets within the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

17. CORPORATE BUILDING CLEANING SERVICES

The Executive Member for Finance reported that this contract would run from April 2024.

RESOLVED that the Executive agreed that a new contract be procured for cleaning services via competitive procurement process.

18. LOCAL SUFFICIENCY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Executive agreed the following Motion:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that this item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

The Executive:

RESOLVED that the Local Sufficiency for Children in Care plan be approved as set out in the report.

TITLE	Delivery of Wellington Road Affordable Housing Scheme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	Emmbrook;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framilico
LEAD MEMBER	Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing and Partnerships - Stephen Conway

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

By agreeing to develop out Wellington Road site for 100% affordable housing based on the funding model outlined in this paper, there is an opportunity to contribute to meeting housing needs in the Borough and address areas of high need by prioritising some of the units as move-on accommodation for care leavers and the other units for key workers who will help support the local economy.

RECOMMENDATION

That Executive approves:

- (1) The expenditure budget of the total costs of the scheme of up to £6,600,000 funded through a combination of borrowing, capital receipts, developer contributions and Homes England funding. To note: budget approval would be dependent on Homes England grant being awarded;
- (2) The release of up to £3m commuted sums (developer contributions for affordable housing) to be used in conjunction with borrowing via the Housing Revenue Account ("HRA") and Homes England grant as per the proposed funding model;
- (3) That the scheme goes into the Housing Revenue Account ("HRA").

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is an opportunity to develop a key vacant and sustainable Council owned site within Wokingham town centre opposite the train station and close to town centre facilities including shops, supermarkets, leisure and transport facilities. The proposal is to develop a scheme of 18 apartments, with all apartments being affordable housing. A planning requirement may be to have one of the units as a commercial unit. One of the apartments will be built to full wheelchair accessible standards M4(3). The proposal is for 5 of the flats to be prioritised as move on accommodation for care leavers, with the remaining 13 flats to be prioritised for key workers.

The total cost of developing this scheme is anticipated to be up to £6.6m. This project was in the MTFP at a capital cost of £5.930m, however, due to inflationary costs since the initial feasibility work was done the total capital cost has been revised to take into

account inflation plus additional contingency to cover any further increases in build costs.

The scheme will be funded through developer contributions for affordable housing (up to £3m), proposed Homes England grant funding of around £1,440,000 (assuming a grant rate of £80k per unit for 18 units), with the remainder funded through borrowing in the Housing Revenue Account. By providing additional subsidy in the form of developer contributions for affordable housing, as well as potential funding from Homes England, this would enable the scheme to be delivered as 100% affordable housing with all the dwellings being let as social rent.

The Executive is asked to approve the total expenditure of up to £6,600,000 and the release of £3m developer contributions for affordable housing towards the development of the scheme. The Executive is also asked to approve that the scheme sits within the HRA.

BACKGROUND

There is an opportunity to develop a key vacant and sustainable Council owned site Wellington Road, within Wokingham town centre opposite the train station and close to town centre facilities including shops, supermarkets, leisure and transport facilities into a 18 dwelling scheme containing a mix of 1 and 2 bed apartments. A planning requirement may be to have one of the units as a commercial unit.

There is a real need to provide affordable housing in the Borough. The Local Housing Needs Assessment report in 2020 indicated a net need of 403 affordable homes per annum. The demand for care leaver accommodation is rising, with the Council having a duty of care to provide accommodation for care leavers. The demand for key worker accommodation (and in particular, accommodation for care and support workers) is continuing to rise. It is proposed that as 100% of the dwellings will be affordable and all social rented (the most affordable of all tenures). Allocations of the homes would be prioritised for two key groups:

- **Move-on accommodation for care leavers** – proposal to have 5 x 1 bed flats to be prioritised for care leavers under standard tenancy arrangements.
- **Key workers** – defined as someone who lives or works in the Borough, providing an essential service to the local economy – proposal to have the remaining 13 flats prioritised for key workers.

To note; if none of these priority groups are in need of housing at the time of allocation, they would be offered to those on the housing register in order of prioritisation.

BUSINESS CASE

The total cost of developing this scheme is anticipated to be up to £6.6m. This project was in the MTFP at a capital cost of £5.930m, however, due to inflationary costs since the initial feasibility work was done the total capital cost has been revised to take into account inflation plus additional contingency to cover any further increases in build costs.

This scheme will be funded through developer contributions for affordable housing (up to £3m), proposed Homes England grant funding of around £1,440,000 (assuming a grant rate of £80k per dwelling for 18 units), with the remainder funded through borrowing through the HRA. The Council currently has in excess of £3m of developer contributions available for affordable housing which can be used for this scheme. In the unlikely instance that Homes England funding is not granted, further developer contributions would be used. The Council currently has over £3m developer contributions for affordable housing in the bank and provisionally allocated to this scheme (subject to Exec approval for release). The Council is also awaiting the outcome of a funding bid to the Brownfield Land Release Fund through One Public Estate for just under £157k. If this were to be unsuccessful, this would increase the amount of commuted sums required. By providing additional subsidy in the form of developer contributions for affordable housing as well as potential funding from Homes England, this would enable to scheme to become 100% affordable housing with a tenure of all the units being social rent.

Financially, having the 18 dwellings in the HRA is viable:

	Housing Revenue Account
Total Scheme Cost	£6,561,752
Less	
Grant funding from Government*	£1,440,000
Brownfield Land Release Funding**	£157,000
Developer contributions for affordable housing	£3,000,000
Net capital cost (borrowing)	£1,964,752
Total interest on loan***	£1,244,509
Profit	From year 1
Return on initial investment over a 60 year period	7.81%
Loan/borrowing payback period	31
Net Present Value	£846,417

*this assumes £80k per unit grant funding through Homes England Affordable Homes Programme. A bid will be submitted once full planning permission on the scheme has been granted.

**this assumes success in our grant application through the BLRF Round 2 fund submitted in April 2023 and the result of which anticipated in Summer/Autumn 2023.

*** A rate of 4.84% has been used for the HRA given the current PWLB borrowing rate as of June 2023.

Any surplus generated from this scheme will be ringfenced in the HRA. From year 31 there is an annual surplus of circa £183k increasing to £580k. As the HRA is a ringfenced account, where income exceeds expenditure, this net income will be factored into supporting the overall HRA business plan and supporting the costs of running the HRA service.

If the commercial unit required by planning (to replace an existing unit which would have been lost to the development of the scheme). The commercial unit will be let at the market rate and will generate an income of approximately £20-25k each year once occupied. Market analysis indicates that the unit is in an attractive location and could be let relatively easily. The costs of delivering the commercial unit and any associated rents and operating costs will be excluded from the affordable dwellings. Whilst a financial appraisal for a standalone commercial unit does not work as well as if the unit was residential, it still has a positive Net Present Value and IRR (Internal Rate of Return) of 6.31%, with the loan paid back at year 51.

Project Timescales

Once the Executive has agreed the recommendations the next steps will be to

- Finalise the design and submit a planning application to the Local Planning Authority – approximately 3 months
- Planning application determination – 3 months
- Submission of bid to Homes England for grant funding – 1 month

- Procurement of Contractor for the construction works – 3 months
- Contractor Lead in and mobilisation – 3 months
- Start of site for construction – likely Summer 2024
- Completion and occupation - December 2025 / January 2026

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	nil	N/A	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£6.6m	Yes, through borrowing, external grant and developer contributions for affordable housing	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	To note the £6.6m is likely to be split between years 2 & 3	See above	Capital

Other Financial Information

The Council is also awaiting the outcome of a funding bid to the Brownfield Land Release Fund through One Public Estate for just under £157k, which has been factored into the financial modelling. If this were to be unsuccessful this would increase the amount of commuted sums required.

This scheme will help address other service area budget pressures. For example, by providing 5 units of move on accommodation for care leavers will help create a saving elsewhere in the Council. For every care leaver who remains in SiL (semi independent living) for longer than needed costs WBC between £600 - £1000 per week. If that care leaver moves into temporary accommodation than average weekly costs are £350.

The scheme has received positive pre-application feedback, and subject to Executive approval of the scheme, the design team will be instructed to proceed with the detailed planning application. The cost to achieve this, including architect fees, surveys and planning fees, will be in the region of £95,000.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Public consultation with local residents and ward members has been carried out as part of the planning application process.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An EQIA has been completed and signed off by the Inclusion Team. The Initial Impact Assessment did not identify any potentially negative impact upon persons with protected characteristics.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

The development would deliver in accordance with current planning policy and building regulation requirements. Where possible the scheme will look to achieve a higher than current regulatory standard to help reduce carbon emissions to meet the priorities set out in the CEAP (Climate Emergency Action Plan) and also to help residents minimise utility costs, given they will be low income earners. The extent to which carbon savings can be made (in both build and operation) will be explored as the scheme progresses towards procurement. The aim will be to secure the most sustainable construction possible within the available budget. The scheme costs outlined in the report currently take into account provision for green roofs, thicker insulation, PV panels, renewable technologies and carbon emission reductions.

Due to the location of the development close to the town centre and rail and bus links, the development will include a very small number of parking spaces, thus encouraging active transport and a reduction in vehicle emissions.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

A copy of the associated Equality Impact Assessment is attached in Appendix 1.

Contact Frances Haywood	Service Place Commissioning
Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6859	Email frances.haywood@wokingham.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: the initial impact assessment

1. Process and guidance

The purpose of an EqIA is to make sure that the council is meeting the needs of all our residents by ensuring we consider how different groups of people may be affected by or experience a proposal in different ways.

The council has a two stage EqIA process:

- Stage 1 - the initial impact assessment
- Stage 2 - the full impact assessment

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This form is for use at Stage 1 of the process. This must be completed when undertaking a project, policy change, or service change. It can form part of a business case for change and must be completed and attached to a Project Initiation Document. The findings of the initial impact assessment will determine whether a full impact assessment is needed.

Guidance and tools for council officers can be accessed on the council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

Date started:	12/05/2023
Completed by:	Samuel Watt
Service:	Strategic Housing – Economy and Housing
Project or policy EqIA relates to:	Delivery of Wellington Road Affordable Housing Scheme
Date EqIA discussed at service team meeting:	12.05.2023
Conclusion (is a full assessment needed?):	No
Signed off by (AD):	Rhian Hayes
Sign off date:	15.05.2023

2. Summary of the policy, project, or service

This section should be used to summarise the project, policy, or service change (the proposal).

What is the purpose of the proposal, what are the aims and expected outcomes, and how does it relate to service plans and the corporate plan?

The proposed development at the land at the corner of Wellington Road and Station Road is for 17 x flats and 1 x commercial space consisting of 10 x 1-bed flats and 7 x 2-bed flats including 1 x M4(3) compliant wheelchair accessible dwelling. All dwellings will be for Social Rent at 60% of market rates.

5 of the apartments are ringfenced for care-leavers move-on accommodation with the remaining 12 designated for key-workers. There is also 1 x wheelchair accessible apartment.

How will the proposal be delivered, what governance arrangements are in place and who are the key internal stakeholders?

The project will be delivered by the Strategic Housing and Commercial Property teams and will be governed by a project group that will meet fortnightly to ensure delivery against Homes England and Council project objectives. The project group will report any blockages to senior management within the Place and Growth Directorate and ultimately the Executive Member for Housing.

Prior to approval, the project will require strategic direction from the Strategic Growth and Assets Board as well as Executive approval for the release of commuted sums.

Who will be affected by the proposal? Think about who it is aimed at and who will deliver it.

The project will benefit key workers (12 flats) and care-leavers (5 flats) as well as providing 1 dwelling that is wheelchair accessible.

3. Data & Protected Characteristics

This section should be used to set out what data you have gathered to support the initial impact assessment.

The table below sets out the equality groups that need to be considered in the impact assessment. These comprise the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and other priority areas defined by the council.

Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Pregnancy/Maternity
Religious belief	Race	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Socio-economic disadvantage

What data and information will be used to help assess the impact of the proposal on different groups of people? A list of useful resources is available for officers on the Council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

The information used to understand the impact of the proposal on different groups is the data and experiences of WBC officers and other local authority partners in relation to the characteristics required of these properties. This is the same intelligence which informed the proposal itself.

4. Assessing & Scoring Impact

This section should be used to assess the likely impact on each equality group, consider how significant any impacts could be and explain how the data gathered supports the conclusions made.

Scoring impact for equality groups	
Positive impact	The proposal promotes equality of opportunity by meeting needs or addressing existing barriers to participation and/or promotes good community relations
Neutral or no impact	The proposal has no impact or no disproportionate impact.
Low negative	The proposal is likely to negatively impact a small number of people, be of short duration and can easily be resolved.
High negative	The proposal is likely to have a significant negative impact on many people or a severe impact on a smaller number of people.

Referring to the Scoring table above, please give an impact score for each group, explain what the likely impact will be, and briefly set out how the data supports this conclusion.

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Equality group	Impact score	Impact and supporting data
Age	Positive impact	5 of the 10 1-bed flats are designated for move-on for care-leavers aged 16-25. This represents a positive impact for those who identify with the protected characteristic of 'age' because these flats have been ringfenced for housing to prevent the 'cliff-edge' when leaving care. Currently, there are 6 care-leavers in urgent need of move-on accommodation according to data collected by Children Services. Providing 5 designated flats will increase options for the Council's care-leavers in a town centre location and with proximity to their previous accommodation.
Disability	Positive impact	There is a positive impact on this protected characteristic as the proposal is providing 1 x M4(3) wheelchair accessible dwelling. There is qualitative data from the Housing Needs team that suggests that this need will be fulfilled from applicants on the Housing Register.
Gender reassignment	Neutral impact.	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Neutral impact.	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy/Maternity	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Religious belief	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Race	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Sex	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.

Sexual Orientation	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.
Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive impact	Care leavers are more likely to have low incomes or be NEET (not employed or in education or training) according to national statistics and as referenced earlier this project provides 5 ringfenced flats for this cohort. (link here) The remaining 12 flats are designated for key-worker accommodation so there is a positive impact on this demographic.
Armed Forces Communities	Neutral impact	There is no tangible impact, positive or negative, on this protected characteristic.

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5. Conclusion and next steps.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment if you have identified any groups as having a low or high negative impact.

If no impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must include reference to the initial assessment in any associated reports, and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy, or service change.

Agenda Item 29.

TITLE	Capital Monitoring 2023/24 - Q1
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance - Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

Effective use of our capital resources to meet the Council Plan investment priorities, and delivering value for money for residents.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) note the position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 1 (to 30 June 2023) as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A to the report;
- 2) approve and note the proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B; and
- 3) Approve a supplementary estimate of £222,000 for Wokingham's share of the Berkshire Archives Extension project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report informs the Executive of the progress of the Council in delivering its capital programme for the financial year 2023/2024. The Executive have previously agreed to consider Capital Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis and this report highlights the capital monitoring as at the end of the first quarter of the financial year (30 June 2023).

The Council continue to face significant financial challenges from rising inflation and demand for services, this impacts both revenue and capital resources. It is therefore essential that the capital programme is closely reviewed to assess the assuredness of funding sources and if there have been any changes in service requirements. The Council on the other hand must recognise that capital investment will play an important role in delivering important services for residents and businesses in the borough.

The programme will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the financial year and any further rephasing will be notified to Executive for approval. During the first quarter monitoring £0.9m savings have been identified (further detail below and on Appendix A), which can be reinvested into future funding of capital schemes in the capital programme.

Capital Monitoring Forecast Outturn Position for 2023/2024 (as at 30 June 2023):-

		£'million
Capital programme approved at Council (Feb 2023)	a	101.7
Budget rephased from prior years (existing projects)	b	320.7

Budget movements in year	c	8.9
Current approved budget	d = a + b + c	431.3
Forecast spend for 23/24	e	180.9
Forecast carry forward into 24/25	f	249.5
Forecast variance (underspend) / overspend	g = (e+f) - d	(0.9)

As at 30 June 2023, there are a net £(0.9m) in savings across the capital programme identified. These are made up as follows:

Analysis of material budget risks / (savings) identified as of 30 June 2023	£'million
<u>Place & Growth</u>	
Winnersh Triangle Parkway - Main build complete but further remedial works to move unforeseen Thames Water Main, costs could be up to £600k, timing still to be confirmed. The Council are working with contractor to further reduce costs of claimed compensation events in 22/23 for delays caused by utilities which may offset these additional costs.	£0.60m
SCAPE Major Road Schemes – savings identified as schemes are completed or near completion. Savings relate to budgets held for risk / retention / final bills, etc.	(£0.92m)
Nine Mile Ride Extension – savings now available as scheme operational. Allowance has been made for outstanding post construction costs.	(£0.55m)
<u>Resources & Assets</u>	
Contract register - budget no longer required.	(£0.03m)
Total	(£0.90m)

Appendix B provides a list of the capital carry forwards identified during quarter one totalling £250m. Carry forwards can relate to either projects that have started and some which are delayed due to issues such as planning, design, etc. Some carry forwards also relate to budget allocations where individual business cases will need to be developed and agreed by the Executive on use of these budgets.

Carry Forwards will be reprofiled across the next three financial years.

Recommendation Three

The Executive are asked to approve a supplementary estimate of £222,000 for Wokingham's share of the Berkshire Archives Extension project. The project is a joint funded project across the six Berkshire authorities. The approved project was agreed in July 2021, since then additional costs have been incurred in relation to inflation, planning delays and planning conditions required for the project to succeed. In addition, the project will be delivered with a higher BREEAM rating (system to measure sustainability and environmental performance of buildings). Wokingham's initial contribution was £303,000, this budget is in the capital programme. An additional £222,000 is required to fund Wokingham's total contribution of £525,000. The total project budget across the six local authorities is £2.5m (costs are apportioned based on the tax base of each local authority).

The Council will fund this additional budget from savings identified in year across the wider capital programme or through the use of the capital contingency budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£181m	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£250m Carry Forward	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	tbc when 2024/25 MTFP budget set	tbc	Capital

Other Financial Information
None

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
None

Public Sector Equality Duty
Equality assessments are carried out as part of each capital project.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
The capital programme includes projects which help achieve our priorities in relation to climate change.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
Appendix A: Capital Monitoring Summary Report for Quarter 1 (2023-2024) Appendix B: List of proposed rephasing of projects in Quarter 1 to 2024-2025

Contact Mark Thompson	Service Business Services
Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6555	Email mark.thompson@wokingham.gov.uk

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT JUNE 2023

Directorate	Current Approved Budget £,000	Forecast Spend £,000	Carry Forwards £,000	(Under) / Overspend £,000	Major Areas Of Forecast Overspend / (Underspend)
Adult Social Care & Health	25,377	18,832	6,544	0	No material variances identified at this stage.
Chief Executive's Office	7,643	7,643	0	0	No material variances identified at this stage.
Children's Services	32,462	32,462	0	0	No material variances identified at this stage.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	43,688	34,994	8,693	0	No material variances identified at this stage.
CF Place & Growth	123,037	44,650	77,521	(867)	- £600k additional costs on Winnersh Triangle Parkway - Main build complete but further remedial works to move unforeseen Thames Water Main, costs could be upto £600k, timing still to be confirmed. Project team working with contractor to further reduce costs of claimed compensation events in 22/23 for delays caused by utilities which may offset these additional costs. - £(916k) Saving - identified across a number of the SCAPE - Road infrastructure projects which are complete or near completion & £(550k) Saving - Nine Mile Ride Extension - schemes now operational, allowance made for outstanding post construction costs.
Resources & Assets	199,133	42,358	156,744	(30)	- £(30k) Saving - Contract register - budget no longer required.
Total	431,340	180,940	249,503	(897)	

Notes:-

Details of carry forwards are shown on next page in Appendix B.

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Appendix B - June 2023 - List of proposed rephasing of projects into future years

Project	Amount £	Reprofiled to		
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Adult Social Care & Health				
Older People's Dementia Home	6,491,000	6,491,000	0	0
Suffolk Lodge - Fire Alarm replacement	53,399	53,399	0	0
Total - Adult Social Care & Health	6,544,399	6,544,399	0	0
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)				
Gorse Ride Redevelopment	7,703,642	7,703,642	0	0
Purchase of council houses HRA	989,805	989,805	0	0
Total - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	8,693,447	8,693,447	0	0
Place & Growth				
SCAPE - South Wokingham Distributor Road (part of the South Wokingham SDL)	55,057,026	41,182,026	13,875,000	0
Sports Provision to Serve North & South SDL's (Grays Farm)	6,220,000	6,220,000	0	0
Toutley Highways Depot Modernisation	5,787,537	5,787,537	0	0
California Crossroads	4,574,873	4,574,873	0	0
Bridge Strengthening - Earley Station Footbridge	2,000,000	2,000,000	0	0
Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) Additional Pitches	1,590,000	1,590,000	0	0
Greenways	889,510	889,510	0	0
Electric Vehicle Charge Points	375,000	375,000	0	0
Public Rights of Way Network (PROW - Loddon Long Distance Path)	328,441	328,441	0	0
Land Acquisition for Major Road Schemes	297,748	297,748	0	0
Wokingham Highways Investment Strategy (WHIS)	221,050	221,050	0	0
Self-Build Project	150,460	150,460	0	0
Street Lighting - LED Project	29,001	29,001	0	0
Total - Place & Growth	77,520,646	63,645,646	13,875,000	0
Resources & Assets				
Strategic Property and Commercial Assets	103,198,590	103,198,590	0	0
Solar Farms (Barkham)	24,215,065	16,000,000	8,215,065	0
WBC (Holdings) Ltd - Capital Loans	21,070,494	21,070,494	0	0
Renewable Energy Infrastructure projects	6,222,774	1,500,000	4,722,774	0
Investment Fund - Mulberry Business Park Wokingham	1,314,835	1,314,835	0	0
Energy Reduction Projects	625,000	625,000	0	0
Investment Fund - General project costs	60,414	60,414	0	0
Investment Fund - Waitrose 108-114 Crockamwell Rd Woodley	37,240	37,240	0	0
Total Resources & Assets	156,744,411	143,806,572	12,937,839	0
Total Reprofiled identified as at end of June 2023	249,502,903	222,690,064	26,812,839	0

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TITLE	Revenue Budget Monitoring report 2023/24 - Quarter One
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance - Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To deliver the Council Priorities for the Community, ensuring the efficient effective and safe use of resource and seek remedial action to achieve a balanced budget where possible.

The Council agrees and sets its budget in the February preceding the current financial year and this report seeks to update Executive on the budget position throughout the year and provide an estimate of the outturn position and impact on balances at year-end (31 March 2024).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) note the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report.
- 2) note the proposed consultation and timeline on grass cutting, public bin collections and street cleaning as set out in the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to allow the Executive to note the current forecast outturn positions for 2023/24 for the Council's net revenue expenditure, its General Fund Balance (GFB), the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

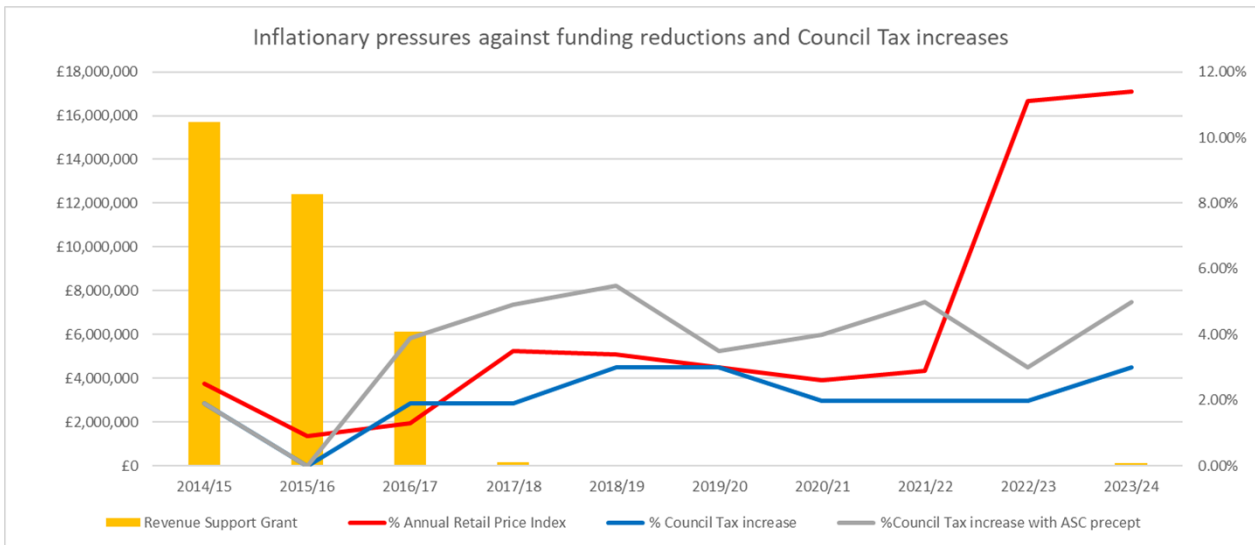
Recommendation 1 – Current Position

The Council continue to face significant financial challenges from rising inflation, interest rates and demand for statutory services. The current projected overspend position of c£2.9m will be closely monitored as we move through the financial year.

In addition, the pay award for 2023/24 is still to be agreed and based on discussions to date this may add a further pressure to the Council once known. This could be an additional c£500-700k of additional pressure.

The graph below shows how acute the difference between inflation and the Council's ability to fund those costs (revenue support grant and council tax) has become in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This is placing a significant pressure across the organisation on

current year budgets, before factors such as specific service demand which are detailed in the report.



As further context to the significant financial pressures faced by the Council, over the past few weeks a number of authorities have been reported as facing the real possibility of considering a Section 114 notice (issued when an authority is in financial distress and unable to balance its budget) in view of their current financial position and recent forecasts. Southampton City Council, Guildford Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Birmingham City Council and Kent County Council have all been quoted as facing significant challenges which if not addressed may mean the financial position of the council is unsustainable.

Given the significance of the financial challenge Directors together with their teams are working hard to come up with ways of reducing expenditure to support bringing us back to budget. Amongst these measures are the potential changes to the home to school transport policy which will be brought back to Executive in August and the proposed consultation on grass cutting, public bin collections and street cleaning referenced elsewhere in this report.

The Executive has agreed to consider Revenue Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis. In February 2023, the Council agreed and set its net General Fund (Revenue) budget at £180.1 million; following year end, this is to be further adjusted to include supplementary estimates and agreed budget movements. This gives a working budget for each of the Councils Directorates. The working budgets and forecast outturn are shown in the table below.

Department	End of Year Position		
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend
	£,000	£,000	£,000

Adult Social Care	66,217	66,517	300
Chief Executive	10,796	10,696	(100)
Children's Services	43,022	45,168	2,146
Place & Growth	53,899	54,147	248
Resources & Assets	6,390	6,655	265
Net Expenditure	180,324	183,183	2,859

Further details of the outturn forecast position and variances are also shown at Appendix A. The main items of variance identified to date are:

Adult Social Care

The predicted £300k overspend represents small (0.45%) variance against budget. The budget target for 2023/24 was set with low net growth, high inflation pressures and continued increased demand for services are creating a small overspend against budget. Work will continue to attempt to mitigate and manage through the rest of the year.

Chief Executive

The forecast underspend of £100k is because of the successful reduction of the use of contractors and the holding of additional vacancies within the Chief Executive directorate.

Children's Services

Of the reported overspend £980k relates to ongoing pressures from Home to School Transport, the bigger driver is the cost price which is being driven by high inflation, and wider pressures in the market such as driver availability have all contributed to an increasing cost base outstripping available resource.

Placements and Allowances for looked after children are responsible for £1,126 of the overspend, of which £522k relates to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) care leavers, where funding from central government is significantly lower than current costs. Funding for UASCs is lower as we have fallen short of our 1% number which in the short-term results in lower income when the UASC is a looked after child, but this represents a longer-term benefit as we are suppressing the number of UASCs reaching care leaver status where placement costs significantly outstrip government funding. An average UASC costs the council £100K in placement costs alone during their care cycle.

Additionally, we have seen an increase in the needs of our high-cost placements. In 2022/23 there were 14 high-cost placements with an average weekly cost of £4,726, in 2023/24 there are 8 high-cost placements with an average weekly cost of £8,892.

The service is also facing significant challenges around recruitment of key staff and increasing demand across all areas. This provides for significant further risk and challenge to the budget as the service meets the costs of statutory services for vulnerable children and young people.

Place and Growth

An overspend of £248k is predicted as a result of £700k underachievement of income from car parking, which is due to delays in the implementation of both on street parking charging and to the increase in off street parking charges as well as challenges around parking enforcement. This underachievement of income is anticipated to be limited to 2023/24, once these schemes are implemented the income is anticipated to be realised in future years.

Further forecast pressures exist around the use of temporary staff and risks around temporary housing accommodation which are exacerbated by increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees entering the borough, while the level of income from planning and garden waste are being monitored. The forecast offsets of additional one-off income in relation to bulky waste and additional grant income result in the overall forecast overspend of £248k.

Resources and Assets

The directorate is forecasting an overspend of £265k. Leisure income targets remain under significant pressure following the impacts of COVID and more recently cost of living pressures. Property rental income also remains under pressure from the external market conditions. The reduced capital programme impacts the work of the property team which is currently being reviewed.

General Fund

The General Fund Forecast is approximately £7.8m however this needs to be taken in the context that it is early in the year and that work will continue throughout the year to contain costs and maximise efficiencies where possible to improve and firm up the year-end position.

The General Fund balance is held to provide a general contingency for unavoidable or unforeseen expenditure as well as providing some stability for longer term planning particularly in uncertain economic times. Professional guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy recommends a minimum general fund reserve of 5% of net expenditure. This equates to a recommended level of c£7.9m set out in the general fund reserves policy statement in the Medium Term Financial Plan. This is within our current general fund balance.

See Appendix B for further details.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Housing Revenue Account is currently expecting to be £16k under budget, although risks exist around rental income, the level of voids and maintenance costs, which are all significant budgets and will become clearer as the year progresses. HRA reserves are estimated to be £1.2m on 31 March 2024. This remains a prudent level of reserves and

above the minimum recommended reserve balance of £0.9m set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. See Appendix C for further details.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

An in-year deficit of £10m is projected, with the budget pressure continuing to be within the High Needs Block. Taken with the brought forward deficit of £9.2m, and expected Safety Valve funding received in-year, a forecast cumulative deficit of £17.5m is now projected to 31st March 2024.

The current in-year forecast represents an adverse movement of £1.9m on the £8.15m deficit included in 2023/24 budget setting. The movement being:

- £216k increase in the Schools Block
- £1.67m increase in the High Needs Block

As is the case with the vast majority of authorities across the country, the overspend on the DSG relates to ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block (HNB), driven largely by continuing increases in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and their related needs resulting in demand for specialist placements.

The Council has moved at pace to formally establish our Safety Valve programme from 1st April 2023, and starting to deliver on key projects to support bringing the DSG spending in line with provided funding.

A Programme Board with agreed project plans has been established. The Board also oversees programme-wide risks, issues, communications, and the development of our benefits realisation plan and monitoring processes.

See Appendix D for further details.

Recommendation 2 - Consultation

The Council's MTFP highlighted savings of some £60k per annum in relation to the naturalisation of areas within the borough but given the pressure of inflation it was clear that further service reductions were needed in relation to grass cutting, public bin collections and street cleaning.

The Council has worked hard to find a way forward with its contractors and began implementing its budget and service reductions which included the taping over of litter bins. Given the impact of these changes it is recognised that the Council started this work without the appropriate approvals and necessary supportive work in place.

In order to ensure the appropriate response by the council, whilst recognising the need to achieve in year savings as previously agreed in the MTFP, it should be clear that there is a necessary savings requirement. Cost efficiencies from these measures are already reflected in the current reported forecast overspend. It is therefore the approach and method of implementation only that is being addressed in this response. In that context it is acknowledged by the Council that these specific issues relating to grass cutting, litter bin collections and street cleaning are indeed a Key Decision for the

Executive and arrangements are in place to ensure that the accepted protocol for a Key Decision is followed. It is intended to work at pace to ensure the following activity:

- A public consultation (on the approach and rationale of reduction of frequency of service activity) to be prepared and begin in August 2023 .
- A report on the rationale and implementation of the service savings incorporating the consultation headlines will be presented to Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd October 2023
- A report will be presented to the Executive on 26th October 2023 in relation to proposed implementation of the required savings, the approach and rationale of the implementation and incorporating the outcomes of the wider public consultation and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In parallel, the Council has already begun working with its contractors to identify and implement the restoration or mitigation of service standards and outcomes to previous levels while due decision-making processes are followed. These discussions are ongoing and will be subject to assessment of Best Value and will be concluded shortly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£183.2m	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Effective monitoring of budgets is an essential element of providing cost effective services and enables any corrective action to be undertaken, if required. Many of the budgets are activity driven and can be volatile in nature.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

Public Sector Equality Duty assessment are undertaken during individual business cases.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

None – this is only a report on the financial position for quarter one.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
None

List of Background Papers
Appendix A – Revenue Monitoring Summary
Appendix B – General Fund Balance
Appendix C – Housing Revenue Account Monitoring Summary
Appendix D – DSG Monitoring Summary

Contact Stu Taylor	Service Finance
Telephone Tel: 07525 804116	Email stu.taylor@wokingham.gov.uk

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT June 2023

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

Department	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend	
	£,000	£,000	£,000	
Adult Social Care	66,217	66,517	300	The budget for 2023/24 was set with low net growth, high inflation pressures and continued increased demand for services are creating a small overspend against budget. Work will continue to attempt to mitigate and manage through the rest of the year.
Chief Executive	10,796	10,696	(100)	Through successful reduction of contractors and the holding of additional vacancies the CE directorate is forecasting an underspend of £100k at Quarter 1
Children's Services	43,022	45,168	2,146	The main drivers of the variance are from Placements and HTST. *Growing demand in complex placements is driving a higher cost per night than we have seen historically and planned in the budget. It was budgeted that WBC would remain at their 0.1% UASC child in care number, however we are currently lower than planned, this has resulted in lower UASC income where UASC child in care income exceeds costs which are used to offset former UASC care leaver costs which are significantly higher than income. *Demand continues to increase for HTST and is driven by SEN, whilst efforts are underway to deliver savings these are likely to have little impact this year. *Recruitment and capacity continues to be a challenge. Other local LAs are beginning to increase SW salaries to improve turnover and reduce agency works, we are yet to fully understand the full impact of this on our own workforce.
Place & Growth	53,899	54,147	248	Car parking income is forecast to be lower than budgeted predominantly due to delays in the implementation of new on street and off street parking proposals combined with the use of use of temporary staff. There are some favourable movements as a result of some additional grant income and vacant posts. Risks exist around the level of planning income, parking income as a result of changes within the service, garden waste income and the level of use of temporary accommodation.
Resources & Assets	6,390	6,655	265	Leisure income targets remain under significant pressure following the impacts of COIVD and more recently cost of living pressures. Property rental income also remains under pressure from the external market conditions. The reduced capital programme impacts the work of the property team which is currently being reviewed.
Net Expenditure	180,324	183,183	2,859	

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Estimated General Fund Balance - 31st March 2024

Note	£,000	£,000
1 Estimated General Fund Balance (as at 31/3/2023)		(£9,109)
Budgeted contribution to general fund (as per MTFP)	(£1,550)	
<u>Supplementary Estimates</u>	£0	(£1,550)
		£0
<u>Service Variance</u>		
Adult Social Care & Health	£300	
Chief Executive	(£100)	
Children's Services	£2,146	
Place and Growth	£248	
Resources and Assets	£265	
		£2,859
Estimated General Fund Balance 31/3/2024		(£7,800)

Notes

1. General balance as at 31/03/23 is estimated pending completion on the 2022/23 statement of accounts.
2. The General Fund Forecast is just under £8m however this needs to be taken in the context that it is early in the year and that work will continue throughout the year to contain costs and maximise efficiencies where possible to improve and firm up the year end position.

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

Report Date: June 2023

Service	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)	
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend		
	£,000	£,000	£,000		
Housing Revenue Account					
Capital Finance					
	Expenditure	4,232	4,232	0	
	Income	(20)	(20)	0	
	Net	4,212	4,212	0	
Fees & Charges / Capital Finance Charges					
	Expenditure	87	97	10	Utility rates continue be high and are putting pressure on Gas and Electricity costs.
	Income	(90)	(90)	0	
	Net	(3)	7	10	
HRA General Management					
	Expenditure	2,411	2,449	39	Staffing salaries supporting delivery of HRA priorities.
	Income	(102)	(102)	0	
	Net	2,309	2,347	39	
HRA Housing Repairs					
	Expenditure	4,496	4,362	(134)	Current staff vacancies resulting in underutilisation on salary budget.
	Income	(226)	(226)	0	
	Net	4,270	4,136	(134)	
HRA Housing Services					
	Expenditure	2,448	2,452	4	
	Income	(18,889)	(18,889)	0	
	Net	(16,441)	(16,437)	4	
Sheltered Accommodation					
	Expenditure	464	529	65	Utility rates continue be high and are putting pressure on Gas and Electricity costs.
	Income	(644)	(644)	0	
	Net	(179)	(114)	65	
Subtotal Excluding Internal Recharges		(5,833)	(5,849)	(16)	
Internal and Capital Charges		5,833	5,833	0	
Total		0	0	(16)	

Housing Revenue Account Reserves	£,000	£,000
HRA Reserves as at 31st March 2022		(1,083)
Planned Spend	(161)	
Net Variance	(16)	
2022/23 Forecast Net Spend against Reserves		(177)
HRA Reserves as at 31st March 2023 (Forecast)		(1,260)

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

Report Date: June 2023

Service	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend	
	£,000	£,000	£,000	
Dedicated Schools Grant Central School Services Block				
Expenditure	1,039	1,039	0	No material variances identified
Income	(1,039)	(1,039)	0	
Net	0	0	0	
Early Years Block				
Expenditure	12,615	12,615	0	No material variances identified at this time, however final 2022/23 funding confirmation expected from DfE in July. In addition, figures do not yet include impact of EY entitlement expansion being implemented from September, as details are awaited from the DfE.
Income	(12,615)	(12,615)	0	
Net	0	0	0	
High Needs Block				
Expenditure	36,585	38,255	1,670	Overspend reflects early impact of Safety Valve investment driving longer term interventions and benefits, with the main increase in forecast being increased number and spend on pupils supported in mainstream schools.
Income	(28,430)	(28,430)	0	
Net	8,155	9,825	1,670	
Schools Block				
Expenditure	138,780	138,996	216	Overspend reflects planned use of Growth Fund reserves held to support sufficiency planning
Income	(138,780)	(138,780)	0	
Net	0	216	216	
Total	8,155	10,041	1,886	

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TITLE	Shareholders Report
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance - Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To provide transparency in respect of Council Owned Companies

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to note:

- 1) The Housing companies' budget and operational position for 2022/23 financial year,
- 2) The Optalis budget and operational position for 2022/23 financial year

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to ensure awareness and transparency of the financial performance of the Council Owned Companies.

Housing

The Council recognised that the provision of good quality affordable housing as a priority for Wokingham and established a group of wholly-owned housing subsidiaries to develop and manage this need.

The housing group consists of Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL), Loddon Homes Limited (LHL) and Berry Brook Homes Limited (BBHL). Historically, once developed by WHL homes are sold within the group to Loddon Homes or Berry Brook Homes who act as landlords for the properties.

Loddon Homes provides Wokingham Borough Council with the additional flexibility to meet the housing needs of its residents of while generating a financial benefit for the Council which is available to be reinvested to fund essential Council services including new local housing.

Including homes of multiple occupancy, Loddon Homes have 170 tenanted spaces across all tenures: shared ownership, social rent, affordable rent, specialist supported housing, young person accommodation and independent living for older people.

The objectives of Berry Brook housing limited are similar, however this company is not set up under registered provider status which enables it greater freedoms and the ability to operate in private rented sector if and where appropriate. Berry Brook has an annual turnover of almost £1m p.a.

Adult Care Services

Optalis was established to be the Council's provider of choice for Adult Care Services. Its key objectives were to provide safe and good quality Adult Social Care Services commissioned by the Council at a good price providing financial benefits to the Council. To date a considerable reduction of commissioning costs have been achieved and following a merger with RBWM, the business continues to expand. This will enable Optalis to grow and create further financial returns through economies of scale and allow the company to generate additional streams of income.

Operational Update

Housing

An operational update is provided for each of the companies as at 31st March 2023.

Wokingham Housing Ltd

In January 2023 the collective boards made a strategic decision to close Wokingham Housing Ltd. This followed a period of small operating loss and reduction in expected future opportunities to develop housing through that approach.

The governance of the two remaining companies has been better aligned to allow a more joined up understanding and consideration of options and future direction.

Financial position;

Wokingham Housing Ltd - Profit & Loss			
	Full Year (2022/23)		
	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£k	£k	£k
Income	£0	£0	£0
Expenditure	£200	(£193)	(£393)
Operating (profit) / loss	£200	(£193)	(£393)

Income/Profit/positive variance - shown in brackets

The Expenditure budget includes residual costs in relation to; interest, professional support costs and liquidation fees. The actuals for the year are favourable to budget due to some retention balances not being required anymore. In addition, some interest costs have been reduced following a detailed review with WBC Holdings Ltd.

Berry Brook Housing Limited

Detailed work is currently underway to review the financial viability of all the current schemes which will inform future focus for cost effectiveness.

Financial position;

Berry Brook Homes Ltd - Profit & Loss			
	Full Year (2022/23)		
	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£k	£k	£k
Income	(£934)	(£928)	£6
Expenditure	£1,062	£668	(£394)
Operating (profit) / loss	£128	(£260)	(£388)

Income/Profit/positive variance - shown in brackets

Similar to Wokingham Housing Ltd, the actuals for the year are favourable to budget due to some retention balances not being required anymore. In addition, some interest costs have been reduced following a detailed review with WBC Holdings Ltd.

Please note, the draft accounts for 2022/23 are currently being finalised and agreed by the company boards. The figures in the table may therefore change slightly. Any agreed updates from the companies will be reflected in the next report.

Loddon Homes Limited

As with Berry Brook, a detailed financial viability review is underway across the current schemes. There are currently a number of future development opportunities at the early stage of consideration, with key sites for affordable homes identified and the potential business case and market analysis in progress.

Financial position;

Loddon Homes Ltd - Profit & Loss			
	Full Year (2022/23)		
	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£k	£k	£k
Income	(£1,261)	(£1,307)	(£46)
Expenditure	£1,050	£1,109	£59
Operating (profit) / loss	(£211)	(£198)	£13

Income/Profit/positive variance - shown in brackets

The outturn figures show a performance close to budget, with the slight underachievement projected at year end due to accrued repairs and management fees. Overall turnover and profit is lower than previous years due to shared ownership sales in the previous year.

Please note, the draft accounts for 2022/23 are currently being finalised and agreed by the company boards. The figures in the table may therefore change slightly. Any agreed updates from the companies will be reflected in the next report.

WBC Holdings Ltd

The board with oversight for the companies overall position

Financial position;

	Wokingham Holdings Ltd - Profit & Loss		
	Full Year (2022/23)		
	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£k	£k	£k
Income	(£844)	(£278)	£566
Expenditure	£930	£831	(£99)
Operating (profit) / loss	£86	£553	£467

Income/Profit/positive variance - shown in brackets

Most of the Expenditure and Income is in relation to interest charges from the Council and to the subsidiaries. Expenditure also includes the cost of professional support such as Legal and Finance. During the last quarter, following a detailed review, interest income due from Wokingham Housing and Berry Brook Ltd have been reduced, a corresponding benefit in a reduction in interest payable has been recorded in those companies offsetting the impact of the change in WBC Holdings.

ADULT CARE SERVICES GROUP

Optalis Limited

1. Operational Report

Optalis continues to perform well in all operational areas.

The refurbishment of the Loddon Court respite service has been successfully completed. This was a joint project between Optalis and WBC which has resulted in the transformation of the main building into a high-quality facility which is already winning plaudits from customers, families and staff. In view of the improved quality of the facility, the commercial prices charged to external (non-WBC) customers have been increased in line with market rates.

Recruitment continues to be the main operational focus to ensure a reduction in the use of agency workers, enabling Optalis to deliver high quality care provision to customers while being the council's provider of choice.

2. WBC Financial Report

Financial performance across the year was challenging.

The national workforce issues affecting adult social care continued to drive the need to use agency workers to ensure safe working. This was the main reason for the Optalis

provider services overspend, together with the cost of bringing forward the 2023/24 pay-uplift for support worker staff. The overspend was mitigated by a small underspend on central management costs and the release of WBC retained earnings from the Optalis P&L. The company slightly improved its financial position in the final three months of the year, reducing the projected net overspend from £407k as previously reported at December to £374k.

Full year outturn to 31 March 2023

Service	Budget £,000	Actual £,000	Variance over / (underspend) £,000
WBC Provider Services*	£9,534	£10,170	£636
Central Management	£897	£835	(£62)
Total	£10,431	£11,005	£574
Use of Retained Earnings			(£200)
Net Total			£374

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See other financial information	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See other financial information	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See other financial information	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

The Council will benefit from reduced costs in commissioning services, the interest and management charges to WBC (Holdings) Ltd and future profits paid out as dividend. These will be factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan under the appropriate service.

Legal Implications arising from the Recommendation(s)

None

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

Companies are working alongside officers to align approach with the councils commitment and strategic direction

Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session

N/A

List of Background Papers

None

Contact Mark Thompson

Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6555

Service Business Services

Email

mark.thompson@wokingham.gov.uk

TITLE	Bohunt Wokingham School Sixth Form: Update and Budget
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson
LEAD MEMBER	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Children's Services - Prue Bray

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The report is required because of changes to the project as a result of external factors. The outcome is that students in the rural south west (Finchampstead, Arborfield, Swallowfield and Barkham) will be able to take A level courses locally.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive

- 1) Notes the progress made on the Bohunt Wokingham School to date, and
- 2) Requests that the options to bring 6th form education to Bohunt and a further report on the timescales and costs be reported back to the Executive in Autumn.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 7th March 2022 the Council's Executive approved the proposal to part fund a scheme to create a new sixth form, create additional Year 7 places and enhance inclusion at the Bohunt Wokingham School. At the time, the project was intended to provide a 300 place sixth form, opening in the near future (2022 or 2023) with costs split between the council (£3.7m) and the Bohunt Education Trust (BET) (£2m).

This report will update members on progress with the scheme and set out the next stages.

The original financial budget for the accommodation is not sufficient to deliver a new build expansion to the school. This follows more detailed design work and costings of the initially proposed scheme taking into account significant inflation costs. As an alternative to a new build expansion, the Council is investigating the possibility of providing sixth form accommodation in an alternative building in proximity to the existing school. This building is not in the control of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) nor BET and therefore it's deliverability is not guaranteed, but the Council is working with the owner to understand the feasibility of this, including timescales.

While the options are being explored, the school has informed the Department of Education (DFE) that it has not been possible to secure the commencement of a 6th form offer from September 2023 as originally proposed. The council are working to provide information assisting the students affected by this to find alternative sixth form places available in Wokingham area.

BACKGROUND

The Bohunt Sixth Form scheme was approved on 7th March 2022 by Wokingham's Executive. The report that led to this decision contains the background to the project. This report is solely concerned with progress since that date.

However, since March 2022 estimated building costs have increased significantly. This reflects the impact of high inflation rates, the necessity to ensure the building proposals fully reflect Department for Education premises standards and design, costing, supervisory and project management costs.

The design and development work has been undertaken at a time of unprecedented building cost inflation. The current expansion option, which provides up to an additional 150 places for 11 to 16 years olds as well as the 300 place sixth form, is estimated to cost £10.5m. This is an increase of £4.8m, above the current agreed project budget of £5.7m (£3.7m from WBC and £2m from the Bohunt Education Trust).

Following this review, and after consultation with the Bohunt Education Trust (BET) options now need to be considered to see what provision can be made within the available budget. Should this not be deliverable costed schemes will need to be assessed for their value for money accompanied alongside an assessment of affordability for both the Council and the Bohunt Trust.

As this report was being finalised for publication, the BET Board confirmed their willingness to contribute £5m to the project. This proposal and any requirements of the board will need to be carefully considered alongside the options appraisals.

The need to review options means that any new build premises could not be completed for September 2024. While Bohunt could provide sufficient accommodation for the first year of the 6th form in the current facilities, the DfE was notified by the school that they could not offer 6th form entry this year as there was no certainty there was sufficient accommodation for both the first and second years.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of options available:

- To maintain WBC's current financial contribution (build a smaller building).
- To increase WBC's financial commitment recognising the decision of the Bohunt Trust to contribute £5m and subject to the affordability of the capital programme.
- To explore alternative existing accommodation to cover the period until the new accommodation is ready or to make it a permanent sixth form site.

Strengths and weaknesses of each proposal are set out below:

To maintain WBC's current financial contribution: A building of the size that could be built with the available budget would not provide the necessary accommodation for a 300 space sixth form and the 150 places for year 7-11 so it would not represent value for money on the investment made. There would be a high risk that the project could not proceed, as the Trust might be unable to justify a multi-million pound uplift in their planned contribution from their reserves.

Therefore, this option is not recommended.

To increase WBC funding alongside Bohunt Trust’s increased contribution: This was put forward as reflecting a better balance between the interests of both parties. While both the Trust and the council have a long-standing ambition to open a sixth form on the site, the Borough has no immediate need for sixth form places. The council must balance the need here, against other potential uses for the limited capital resources at its disposal and how affordable any additional accommodation might be.

To investigate opportunities for permanent provision of sixth form in alternative accommodation. As an alternative to a new build expansion, the Council is investigating the possibility of providing sixth form accommodation in an alternative building in proximity to the existing school. This building is not in the control of WBC nor BET, but the Council is working with the owner to understand the feasibility of this, including timescales. There is a risk with this option that a significant amount of time could be invested in the feasibility of this option for it to not prove deliverable, and then there would be further delay to delivering the expansion option. Equally the use of the building may impact on community space provision and engagement on a combined joint use of the building would need to be carefully considered. Partners, including the parish council would need to be engaged.

Recommendation: Whilst this option cannot be guaranteed as the building is not in the Council’s nor BET’s ownership, it is recommended that this feasibility work continues to a conclusion (either feasible and affordable, or not deliverable) in Autumn.

Overall recommendation

- 1) Continue to investigate the provision of sixth form in an alternative building
- 2) In parallel work up detailed costings for a new build extension recognising the additional contribution put forward by the Trust and confirming what additional contribution would be required by the Borough Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0 - £5.25m depending on option chosen	No – The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	No	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	No	

Other Financial Information

As noted above BET have increased their contribution to £5m.

Legal Implications arising from the Recommendation(s)

To be provided before submission

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
No consultation required

Public Sector Equality Duty
Equalities assessment to be appended

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*
The school expansion project will comply with carbon neutrality requirements

Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
Report to Executive on 22nd March 2022

Contact Piers Brunning	Service Education and SEND
Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6084	Email piers.brunning@wokingham.gov.uk

TITLE	Local Development Scheme 2023
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 July 2023
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalico
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan - Lindsay Ferris

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The purpose of this report is to consider the adoption of a Local Development Scheme (LDS), the document which sets out the work programme for the local plans that are intended to be prepared over the next three years and when there are opportunities for engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive adopts the Local Development Scheme 2023, attached as Enclosure 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Decisions on planning applications are plan-led, with decisions made in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a document which sets out the work programme for the local plans, the part of the development plan the Council prepares, and when the key opportunities for engagement will be.

The recommended LDS, attached as Enclosure 1, proposes that work will be progressed on one local plan - the Local Plan Update (LPU). The LPU will set out the long-term strategy for managing development and provides an opportunity to refresh planning policy so that they reflect ambitions which go above and beyond current policies, such as achieving zero carbon development, greater levels of net biodiversity gain and greater levels of affordable housing.

Details of other policy documents are not required to be set out in a LDS, however for clarity, the recommended LDS makes reference to the intention to progress a review of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule.

BACKGROUND

Decisions on planning applications are plan-led, with decisions made in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Wokingham Borough comprises two types of plans - local plans which include strategic policy and neighbourhood development plans which include non-strategic policy. Local plans are prepared by the Council, whilst the preparation of neighbourhood development plans is led by the parish/town council.

Adopted local plans are:

- Core Strategy, adopted 2010.
- Managing Development Delivery, adopted 2014.
- Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, adopted 2023.

A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a document which sets out the work programme for the local plans the Council intends to prepare over the next three years or so, and when the key opportunities for engagement will be.

Analysis of Issues

Following the successful completion of the Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan earlier this year, the recommended LDS sets out that work will be progressed on one local plan over the next three years – the Local Plan Update (LPU).

The LPU will set out the long-term strategy for managing development, including the allocation of land to support that strategy. Importantly, progressing the LPU also provides an opportunity to refresh planning policy so that they reflect ambitions which go above and beyond current planning policies, such as achieving zero carbon development, greater levels of net biodiversity gain and greater levels of affordable housing.

Details of other policy documents are not required to be set out in a LDS, however for clarity, the recommended LDS makes reference to the intention to progress a review of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule.

It should be noted that the recommended LDS has been prepared at a time where national planning reforms have been proposed. Whilst this means that the Council may have to react to reforms in the future, there are clear benefits in ensuring planning policies remain effective.

BUSINESS CASE

Need for the decision

Maintaining up-to-date local plans is a requirement of national planning policy. Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to set out the local plans which are to be prepared, their scope, and the timetable for preparing them in a LDS.

Risks

Maintaining up-to-date local plans ensures that planning policies continue to be effective in managing decisions by the Council, and where these are appealed, by Planning Inspectors. Without effective planning policies, it would not be possible to manage where and how new housing and other types of development take place. This could lead to development being allowed in poor locations, being of lower quality, and in places where infrastructure cannot be improved to help deal with the impacts, e.g. pressures on roads, schools and community facilities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

The costs of preparing and adopting the recommended LDS are contained within the local plan special item budget.

In order to achieve a sound local plan, there are costs associated with gathering evidence, site investigation work and the statutory examination.

Cost estimates have been made for the full plan-making process. These costs are regularly monitored. Whilst there are some uncertainties around estimated costs, particularly those associated with the examination, the estimates shows that the allocated budget is sufficient.

Legal Implications arising from the Recommendation(s)

Maintaining up-to-date local plans is a requirement of national planning policy. Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to set out the local plans which are to be prepared, their scope, and the timetable for preparing them in a LDS.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

The recommended LDS has not been subject to consultation. The LDS does however ensure that residents and others are able to understand when there are opportunities for engagement.

Public Sector Equality Duty
This report relates to programme for the preparation of local plans and not the scope or approach of policy. As such an equality assessment has been screened out.

An equality assessment has and will continue to be undertaken to support the preparation of local plans themselves, with views on the assessment capable of being made as part of the consultation process.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*
There are no direct implications for climate change as a result of the recommendation of this report.

The LPU itself will contain a suite of proposed planning policies that seek the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy.

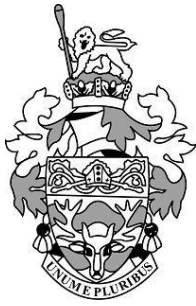
Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session
Not applicable.

List of Background Papers
National Planning Policy Framework, 2021
Planning Practice Guide: Plan-making, 2021

Contact Ian Bellinger, Ian Church	Service Place Commissioning
Telephone 07795 197 675	Email ian.bellinger@wokingham.gov.uk, ian.church@wokingham.gov.uk

Local Development Scheme 2023-2026

July 2023



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. [Introduction](#)

[What is a Local Development Plan Scheme?](#)

1.1 This Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out our work programme for the local plans we aim to prepare over the next three years or so. Once adopted, these documents form part of the 'development plan' for the borough which forms the starting point for considering planning applications.

1.2 The LDS explains:

- What local plans we will work on.
- What will be in the plans and where they will apply.
- How long it will take us to prepare the plans.
- What kind of plans they are.

1.3 As well as local plans, we prepare other plans, policy documents and schedules, notably:

- Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

1.4 The detail on these other plans and strategies is not required within the LDS, however we intend to review and consult on a new SCI and also review CIL.

2. [Our current development plan](#)

2.1 In this section we give more detail about our current development plan.

[The development plan for Wokingham Borough](#)

2.2 The development plan for Wokingham Borough includes all 'adopted' local plans and any 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs).

2.3 Adopted local plans are:

- Core Strategy, adopted 2010.
- Managing Development Delivery, adopted 2014.
- Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, adopted 2023.

2.4 Made NDPs at the time of writing are as follows:

- Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan, made 2017.
- Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, made 2020.

2.5 NDP which have been submitted to the council for examination at the time of writing are as follows:

- Twyford Neighbourhood Plan.

- Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.

3. [Plans we will work on](#)

3.1 In this section we give more detail about the local plans (i.e. development plan documents) we aim to prepare and the key stages they will go through.

[Local plans](#)

3.2 Between 2023 and 2026 we will

- Complete and adopt the Local Plan Update.

3.3 The Local Plan Update (LPU) is a local plan that covers the area of Wokingham Borough. As a local plan, the LPU will become part of the development plan upon its adoption, replacing the adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery plans.

3.4 The LPU will set out the spatial strategy for the borough up to 2040. It will show where and how much growth can happen across the area. It will set rules for managing development and show what sites can be developed. The LPU will not substantially address matters relating to minerals and waste development.¹

3.5 The LPU is being prepared to comply with the legal and regulatory framework and national planning policy and guidance, that governs the preparation of local plans.

[Other plans and policy documents](#)

3.5 In addition to local plans, there are several other types of policy documents that are adopted by the council and used to guide decisions on planning application. The programme for preparing these other types of documents is not a requirement for this LDS, however reference is made here for completeness.

3.6 Between 2023 and 2026 we will:

- Review and adopt a new Statement of Community Involvement.
- Review and adopt a new Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.

3.7 A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how we will engage in the preparation of local plans and when assessing planning applications. The council's SCI was last reviewed and published in March 2019.

3.8 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge per square metre which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area to help deliver the infrastructure needed to support growth. CIL only applies in areas where a local authority has consulted on, and approved, a charging schedule which sets out its levy rates. We adopted the current CIL charging schedule in 2015. These

¹ The council has adopted a specific local plan focusing on minerals and waste matters - the Central & East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan 2023.

rates will continue to apply, adjusted for inflation, until a new CIL charging schedule has been adopted in due course.

4. [Programme for preparing our local plans](#)

4.1 In this section we give more detail about the process for preparing local plans and the programme for the local plans we aim to prepare.

[What process do local plans have to go through?](#)

4.2 Local plans are prepared in accordance with a legal and regulatory process. The process includes consultation with the community and stakeholders. Following its preparation, a local plan is subject to examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

4.3 The four main stages in the preparation are:

1. The pre-production stage, including evidence gathering on key issues and development options, and consulting statutory bodies on the scope of the sustainability appraisal.
2. The production stage, including public and stakeholder consultation on the development issues and options, the scope of the local plan and the consideration of consultation responses. This can be undertaken through several public consultations.
3. The submission and examination stage, where the local plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State and subject to scrutiny by an independent Planning Inspector who will assess it for its the legal compliance and soundness. The examination process is likely to include a further consultation on potential modifications to the local plan.
4. Finally, the adoption stage, where the local plan formally becomes part of the development plan.

[Programme for the Local Plan Update \(LPU\)](#)

4.4 This assumes that we will consult on the LPU starting in late autumn 2023 followed by submission of the plan and examination in 2024.

4.5 Please note that following the submission of a local plan, the format and timing of the examination is dependent on the availability of a Planning Inspector and the approach they choose to explore the issues raised in response to the Proposed Submission Plan Publication. The timings shown below for the examination and subsequent stages are therefore indicative only and may vary.

Table 1: Programme for the preparation of the Local Plan Update

Stage	Date completed / anticipated
Issues and options consultation	August 2016
Spatial options consultation	November 2018
Draft Plan consultation	February 2020
Revised Growth Strategy consultation	November 2021
Proposed Submission Plan Publication	November 2023
Submission	March-June 2024
Examination hearings (stage 1)	August 2024*

Examination hearings (stage 2)	January 2025*
Inspector's post hearing letter	April 2025*
Modifications consultation	July 2025*
Inspectors report of examination	November 2025*
Adoption	December 2025*

*The submission of the plan is projected to be within the window March-June 2024. The indicative dates for stages following submission are estimated based on submission in March 2023. Submission later within the window would require an equivalent adjustment.

5. [Background and supporting information](#)

5.1 This section sets out the key inputs to the preparation of local plans.

[Strategic policy context](#)

5.2 We use the following to guide us on the strategic policy context:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- A range of other strategies prepared either by the Council, or by partner organisations that need to be taken into account in the preparation of local plans.

[Technical studies](#)

5.3 It is important that we have a robust but proportionate technical evidence base to inform the development of local plans and their proposals.

5.4 This can include studies on different areas and different topics, and also includes a sustainability appraisal.

[Community and stakeholder feedback](#)

5.5 It is important that we have good conversations with the community and stakeholders about the content of local plans. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the way that we aim to do this.

5.6 It is important that these conversations have the right depth and focus, matching the scale of the issues and proposals being considered.

[Approval of local plans](#)

5.7 Formal approval of final documents takes place via the council's Executive and Council.