



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in Council Chamber
- Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on
THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2023 AT 7.30 PM

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 11 October 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: Democratic.services@wokingham.gov.uk

The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:
<https://youtube.com/live/n8eYlssHwyM?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.

To: The Members of Wokingham Borough Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
56.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
57.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2023.	15 - 46
58.		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
59.		MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive any announcements by the Mayor.	
60.		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 Council. 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	
60.1	None Specific	David McMullen has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question: Question: A commitment to increased working from home has been a part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan agreed by this Council in 2020, 2021, 2022 and, hopefully, 2023. Could the Executive Member remind us of the environmental advantages that come from staff who can, work from home?	

- 60.2 None Specific Ann Dally has asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:
- Question:**
- Could the Council please let us know what information and support will be available to the approximately 1200 households currently receiving either legacy benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support) and/or tax credits during the first stage of the upcoming managed migration to Universal Credit, when people living in the Bracknell Job Centre area receive their Migration Notices from the DWP, and has the Council plans to update its (much improved) website to include information advising people to complete a benefit calculation to ensure they are getting their full entitlement to legacy benefits before moving onto Universal Credit and stressing when residents receive their Managed Migration Notice they need to make a claim for Universal Credit themselves by the 3 month deadline giving in this Notice or their benefits will end?
- 60.3 None Specific Jim Frewin has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:
- Question:**
- As a resident I applaud the recent communication highlighting that Wokingham has made £29million savings over the past 6 years. Can the Executive member of Finance kindly provide further detail on how and when these savings were achieved?
- 60.4 None Specific Natalie Wilson has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:
- Question:**
- In 2022 Wokingham Borough Council published a really good plan to make walking and cycling safer and easier, which I and many others contributed to. As a part of its very ill thought out 'Plan for Drivers', the Government has withdrawn the 2020 document, which expects councils to create a safe space for walking and cycling following high standards of design. What affect will this have on plans in Wokingham?

- 61. PETITIONS**
To receive any petitions which Members or members of the public wish to present.
- 62. None Specific PRESENTATION FROM GROUP MANAGER ANDREW STOCKWELL, ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**
To receive a presentation from Group Manager, Andrew Stockwell, on the work of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
RECOMMENDATION: To note the presentation from Group Manager, Andrew Stockwell, on the work of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 63. None Specific TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23 47 - 56**
To consider the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2022-23.
RECOMMENDATION:
That Council approve the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2022-23, which was considered by the Executive on 28 September 2023, and note:
- 1) that all approved indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy have been adhered to; with the exceptions of;
 - Internal borrowing ratio.
 - Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – General Fund.
 - Capital financing requirement – HRA.
 - 2) As at the end of March 2023, the total external general fund debt was £118m, which reduces to £68m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness) reducing interest costs in the current economic climate. This was an improved position from the forecast at mid-year stage of £81m net indebtedness and £72m at March 2022.
- 64. None Specific POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2023 57 - 74**
To consider the Polling Places Review report.
RECOMMENDATION:
That Council agrees:
- 1) to note that a formal review will be undertaken of all Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Borough, as required by legislation,

- 2) that the decisions reached under this review will be implemented for all elections subject to the approval at the Council meeting on 18 January 2024,
- 3) to the setting up of a small Member/Officer working group to review the responses from the consultation received. The working group to consist of one nominated Member from each of the three political groups.

65. None Specific

OUTCOME OF CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT

Following a complaint against Councillor Baker, an investigation was conducted into the allegations which centred on a May 2023 conversation between Councillor Baker and three Woodley Town councillors which the complainant alleged had not met the standards relating to “respect,” “unlawful discrimination,” and “disrepute” as set out in the Code of Conduct.

The investigators’ report concluded that, of the three allegations, two were not proven, but there had been a breach of one clause of Wokingham Borough Council’s Code of Conduct (paragraph 9.2.8.1 – “respect”).

Councillor Baker has been asked to make a written apology to the complainant and three witnesses which he has done and will also receive training on aspects of the Code.

In accordance with Rule 9.1.13.3 of the Borough Council’s Constitution, the decision notice was published on the Council’s website on 11 October 2023. A copy of the decision notice has been sent to the complainant, the Subject Member, and the Independent Person.

RECOMMENDATION: The Council notes that Councillor Keith Baker was found to be in breach of the Member Code of Conduct.

66. None Specific

PETITION DEBATE

The following petition containing in excess of 1,500 signatures, which is the threshold to trigger a debate at Council, was submitted at the Council meeting held on 21 September 2023:

‘We call on Wokingham Borough Council Liberal Democrat Group to reverse their reductions to litter

bin provision across the Borough. Their proposed changes would reduce the number of bins available and empty them less frequently. Litter bins in the Borough are already overflowing and the impact of these reductions would not lead to a cleaner and greener environment.'

Statement from the Chief Finance Officer:

The direct financial implications associated with this motion is a cost of £80k per annum.

The Chief Finance Officer comments are purely an assessment of the Financial Implications associated with the Motion as written and are not an opinion on the policy direction or intention contained within them.

67.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions.

A period of 30 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.

67.1 None Specific

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Residents Services the following question:

Question:

At the September 22 Council meeting last year, I asked a question on whistleblowing. Councillor Baker asked a question on some Officers not answering requests for information but actually not even acknowledging such requests.

The CEO replied that plenty of all Officers do reply which I acknowledge. Plenty suggests not all.

Councillor Sarah Kerr added that she did recognise this problem across a number of departments.

To date, 13 months later I have not had a reply to my question. I have no idea if Councillor Baker has either and I have no update on how the Customer Excellence Programme has resolved this problem which she stated was a problem across several departments.

All I have heard from Councillor Sarah Kerr is a public

allegation that and I quote “We have been told about some instances of behaviour on the part of councillors, and I mean councillors plural, towards officers that has fallen short of the standard we would expect”.

Can I be updated on progress in the problem of answering questions as 13 months seems a bit unreasonable time to wait for an answer?

67.2 None Specific

Mike Smith has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question:

According to a recent report by the House Builders Federation, (Section 106 Agreements and unspent developer contributions in England & Wales – 10 Sept 2023) which is based on a FoI requested responded to by 50% of all English and Welsh Councils, - that over £2.8 billion is currently unspent – this equates to each Council currently sitting on £8.2 million of unspent developer contributions and much is in danger of not being used within the relevant time frame.

Please could the Leader of the Council reassure us that all Developer Contributions are allocated and will be spent within any deadlines and therefore not have to be handed back to Developers?

67.3 None Specific

Jackie Rance has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question:

-
On what date was the £10 million loan sent to Woking Council and what were the terms of the loan, namely repayment date, interest rate and repayment schedule?

67.4

Jane Ainslie has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question:

The Home to School Transport Policy for 2024 has now been agreed. It changes transport provision for young people over 16 with SEND to promote Personal Transport Budgets instead of defaulting to Council Operated Transport such as taxis.

There will always be some young people for whom a Personal Transport Budget won't be appropriate. Parents are concerned that suitable travel arrangements for those young people will be delayed because they will be required to go through an appeal against having a Personal Transport Budget first.

What reassurance can you offer them about the process that will be used for determining transport options for these young people?

67.5

Rebecca Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question:

In the Wokingham newspaper on the 5th October the Executive Member for Finance said "We have 10 libraries in Wokingham Borough Council – there's a requirement to provide a library service, but not at that level." This has understandably concerned many residents who use the library service. The previous Conservative administration opened new libraries and increased opening hours whilst saving money, by reducing costs.

Can the Executive Member for Finance please identify which libraries could be closed or have their hours reduced?

67.6

None Specific

Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question:

Can the Executive Member for Finance give an update on how much money the Council has managed to save in its running costs by moving staff to Shute End's basement and Ground Floor, closing the 2nd floor and partially closing the 1st floor, and how much did the move cost?

67.7

None Specific

Laura Blumenthal has asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:

Question:

The Council launched its anti poverty strategy in May 2022. Over the last year and a half, please can you share how many residents have been lifted out of poverty and prevented from falling into poverty?

67.8 Shinfield South Catherine Glover has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

Under an S106 agreement with Taylor Wimpey entered into in 2014, provision was made for a footpath along the lower section of Hyde End Lane, to allow pedestrians to walk safely from the new estates around Fullbrook Avenue to Oakbank School and Ryeish Green leisure centre.

Hyde End Lane is a one-way rural lane, with no footway, used as an exit route from the new estates towards the M4, locally judged to be dangerous.

The cost of the path was to be shared between Taylor Wimpey and WBC. Taylor Wimpey installed their section earlier this year and we understand that they offered to complete the path in return for a notional payment from WBC. This suggestion was declined.

There is considerable local anger that the path is incomplete. A petition with 400 signatures has been gathered locally. The Council's failure to complete the path was the lead story in Wokingham Today on 28 September. Could the Executive member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways say when the work will be undertaken and give an undertaking that the path will be completed at the very latest by the beginning of the new school term, which is 4 January 2024?

67.9 None Specific Caroline Smith has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Residents Services the following question:

Question:

I have just had solar panels and battery storage installed on my home which we purchased via the Solar Together Berkshire scheme. I was amazed at how quickly installation took place and how competitive the price was. The return on investment appears to be in the region of eight years and it is having a marked impact on the electricity we import, reducing it by around 25% and what we are not using is exported which is about 28% of what we have generated - this is only in the last two weeks.

I'd like to understand how the scheme is doing across the Borough and how well it has been received?

67.10 None Specific

Michael Firmager has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question:

Last week two separate emails went out to staff to quell concerns that the Council was planning mass redundancies after the Executive Member for Finance casually mentioned in the local paper that the Council would be cutting back on non-statutory council services including "making some staff redundant". Would the Executive Member for Finance like to take this opportunity to apologise for causing such concern among staff, and for throwing out comments without further detail before any consultation?

68.

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS

An opportunity for Members to ask questions in relation to the latest circulated volume of Minutes of Meetings and Ward Matters. 20 minutes is permitted for this item.

69.

STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

To receive any statements by the Leader of the Council and Executive Members.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.23 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 20 minutes, and no Member shall speak for more than 5 minutes.

70.

STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES

To receive any statements from Directors of Council Owned Companies.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.24 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 10 minutes, and no Director, except with the consent of Council, shall speak for more than 3 minutes.

71.

MOTIONS

To consider any motions.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.11.2 a maximum period of 30 minutes will be allowed for each Motion to be moved, seconded and debated,

including dealing with any amendments. At the expiry of the 30-minute period debate will cease immediately, the mover of the Motion or amendment will have the right of reply before the Motion or amendment is put to the vote.

71.1 None Specific

Motion 508 submitted by Prue Bray

‘Wokingham Borough Council has been under increasing financial pressure due to continued underfunding by the government over more than 20 years. High inflation, high interest rates, and increasing demand for statutory services have made the pressure worse.

In order to ensure that we make the best use of finite resources, that services are as sustainable as possible for the future, and that the most vulnerable in our community are protected, this council endorses an approach to decision-making by the Executive that is based on:

- recognising our responsibility to act in the interests of the community and the climate
- operating as one organisation
- practicing fiscal responsibility
- seeking to maximise income from external sources such as grants
- working constructively with partner organisations of all kinds
- pursuing a collective vision for the area, formed with the community
- taking into account the needs of less well-off and vulnerable residents
- planning for the long term
- making decisions that are informed by evidence
- maintaining good quality prevention and early help services -
- providing efficient and effective access to services and information for residents
- observing the principles of openness and transparency
- welcoming internal overview and scrutiny, enabling all councillors to contribute.’

Statement from the Chief Finance Officer:

There are no direct financial implications in supporting this motion.

The Chief Finance Officer comments are purely an assessment of the Financial Implications associated with the Motion as written and are not an opinion on the policy direction or intention contained within them.

71.2 None Specific

Motion 509 submitted by Pauline Helliard Symons

‘While recognising concerns about clean air and congestion, there has to be a balance with supporting the local economy, therefore this Council is committed not to introduce ULEZ charges in any part of the Borough of Wokingham.’

Statement from the Chief Finance Officer:

There are no direct financial implications in supporting this motion.

The Chief Finance Officer comments are purely an assessment of the Financial Implications associated with the Motion as written and are not an opinion on the policy direction or intention contained within them.

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