



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in Council Chamber
- Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on
THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.30 PM

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 10 January 2024

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/J-HH-EBpbb0?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.
89.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
90.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 November 2023.	19 - 52
91.		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of discloseable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any non-registrable interests relevant to any matters to be considered at the meeting.	
92.		MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive any announcements by the Mayor.	
93.		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	
93.1	None Specific	Paul Stevens has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question: Question: During recent heavy rainfall the sewage pumping station at Arborfield has been discharging untreated sewage directly into Barkham Brook. Earlier this year, Thames Water was fined £3.3m after it discharged millions of litres of untreated sewage into two rivers near Gatwick in 2017, killing	

more than 1,400 fish.

Can the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure explain how it is proposed to stop Thames Water from dumping untreated sewage into local waterways?

93.2 None Specific

Moses Iyengunmwena has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

With the planned change to bi-weekly bin collection, I am concerned about whether the Council now has more realistic figures of the cost-effectiveness of the change and want to ask if the Council has considered the likely environmental impact due to increased rodent infestation and the associated costs of dealing with and managing the health implications on the residents?

93.3 None Specific

John Sephton has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Road cleaning, footpath cleaning, verge cutting etc. for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 was not carried out in accordance with the schedule stated in the consultation document issued 2023, this would have resulted in savings for those years. What was the saving over these two years?

93.4 Norreys

James Wyper has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

My question is on behalf of Ashridge Park, a grassroots football club that hires facilities at Montague Park and Cantley Park. Prior to March 2023 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) charged VAT on all Sports Pitch bookings, but an exemption (VATLP19200) on bookings in blocks of 10 or more meant that we did not pay (and WBC did not collect) VAT on most bookings. In March 2023 HMRC ruled that bookings were not liable for VAT. WBC has continued to charge users at the VAT-inclusive rate, keeping the benefit of the tax cut for themselves. However, because the exemption that we used to take advantage of now longer applies, we are paying thousands more (20%) than last year for the same

facilities. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Cantley that both parties signed in 2021 caps annual price rises at 3% until 2026. We first queried this with WBC in June 2023 and have yet to receive a substantive response.

I would like to ask the Executive Member if they accept that by retaining the VAT savings for themselves, and greatly increasing the costs that the club is paying, the Council is in breach of the SLA and what their plans are to remediate this?

93.5 None Specific

Guy Grandison has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Can the Executive Member please give me an update as to the progress of the Playing Pitch Strategy that was committed to come in January of 2023?

93.6 None Specific

Philip Meadowcroft has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question:

During the first nine months of 2023 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) made £75 million worth of loans to cash-strapped local authorities.

WBC Councillors and Officials have repeatedly emphasised to me that these loans, including the £10 million lent last June to the bankrupt Woking Borough Council, were underwritten or guaranteed by the Treasury.

They have referred me to sections 6 to 13 initially (then just Sections 6 and 13 only) in the Local Government Act 2003 in support of their entrenched belief that Treasury guarantees for these loans actually existed.

Nowhere, however, in Section 6 or 13 do the words "guarantee" or "underwritten" or "Treasury" or "Government" appear.

Councillors and Officials appear to be persisting in misleading and deceiving Full Council, and the Wokingham residents and council taxpayers they represent, with false and misleading statements justifying their actions which they cannot actually show and prove to be true.

term empty properties which have been empty and unfurnished for a period of one year (currently applied after two years).

3) Agree an additional premium of 100% for properties occupied periodically (Second Homes) which are unoccupied but furnished from 1st April 2025.

97. None Specific

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25

83 - 88

To consider a report regarding the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATION That the Council agree the proposed Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme for 2024/25:

- 1) a local CTR scheme for 2024/25 is adopted on the same basis as the 2023/24 with a growth of **£100k** included in the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in order to maintain support in line with Council Tax increases and to reflect increases in central government welfare payments (6.7%).
- 2) that the full disregard currently allowed for War Widows and War Disability Pensions is continued from 1st April 2024 in respect of the Prescribed and Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Housing Benefit schemes.
- 3) that funds be made available to the hardship fund, known as Section 13a (S13a) scheme, for those who cannot pay their council tax liabilities.
- 4) Members to note the linkages to the broader Tackling Poverty Strategy of both the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the S13a scheme.

98.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2023-24

89 - 98

To consider a report that demonstrates that the Council's treasury function has effectively managed the Council's debt and cash balances to support the funding of the delivery of the Council's key priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

Council is recommended to note:

- 1) that the Treasury Management Mid-Year report was considered and agreed by the

Executive at their meeting on Thursday 30 November 2023;

- 2) that all approved indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy have been adhered to; with the exceptions of;
 - Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – General Fund.
 - Capital financing requirement – Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
 - External borrowing - HRA
- 3) As at the end of September 2023, the forecast for the total external general fund debt is £129m at March'24, which reduces to £110m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness) reducing interests costs in the current economic climate.

99.	None Specific	POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2023-24 To consider a report regarding the Polling Places Review. RECOMMENDATION: That Council:- <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Notes the consultation responses made in respect of the review of polling districts and polling places as provided at Appendix 1.2) Approves the adoption of the polling district boundaries and final proposals for polling places as detailed in Appendix 2.3) Requests that the Electoral Registration Officer makes the necessary amendments to the polling districts to take effect from publication of the revised register on 1 February 2024.4) Notes the continuing delegation to the Returning Officer to designate polling places in accordance with section 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983.	99 - 130
100.	None Specific	TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2024/25 To consider the 2024/25 Timetable of Meetings. RECOMMENDATION: That Council agrees the 2024/2025 Timetable of Meetings.	131 - 136
101.	Remenham,	RUSCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN	137 - 150

Wargrave and
Ruscombe

To consider a report regarding the Ruscombe
Neighbourhood Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council agrees to

- 1) Make (adopt) the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan so that it forms part of the statutory Development Plan, pursuant to Section 38A(4) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- 2) Publish the Decision Statement pursuant to Regulation 19 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the Regulations”) in order to give effect to the above recommendation; and
- 3) Delegates to the Director of Place & Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan, and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to make any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual corrections to the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents.

102.

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.

102.1 Emmbrook;
Norreys;
Wescott

Keith Baker has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

Can I first say thank you for providing free parking for the Winter events held in Wokingham and Woodley. The Wokingham event required the closure of several roads in order to provide space for stalls and rides. Clearly closure of these roads required advertising and time commitment from Officers in carrying out the legal process to close these roads.

What was the total cost of these highways actions and who paid for those costs – the Borough Council or Wokingham Town Council?

- 102.2 None Specific Jackie Rance has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:
- Question:**
In October, as part of an interview with the Executive Member for Finance, the Bracknell News said that the Council needed to “find savings or extra income of £15million for its budget next year”. In Wokingham Today, she gave the figures of £11.7m and £13.1m, totalling £24.8m. Yet the MTFP reports presented to Community and Corporate O&S as recently as December say the Council needs to find £20m over 3 years. Which of these figures is correct?
- 102.3 None Specific Shahid Younis has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:
- Question:**
Why was 8am to 9am, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, during term time only chosen by Wokingham Borough Council as the time to offer women's only swimming?
- 102.4 None Specific Laura Blumenthal has asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:
- Question:**
There is anxiety among local charities and residents about Wokingham Borough Council's plan to stop funding the One Front Door service this summer. The funding pays for Citizens Advice Bureau Wokingham staff and services to help residents who find themselves in financial difficulty. The service costs £90,000 a year to run and the Council ringfenced £250,000 a year ago to support financial hardship projects, of which not a penny is planned to help continue One Front Door. With the Administration not supporting this service who will be helping these struggling residents?
- 102.5 Barkham Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:
- Question:**
I wanted to raise a question about future parking provision in the Arborfield garrison development in the area around the sports facilities. Residents have shown me figures that before development there were 232 spaces, and the current plan has 65 being

maintained after development. This lack of parking will see gridlock in the area and visitors using the sports facilities parking all over neighbouring roads rather than in off road car parks. Will the Executive Member commit to meet me and members of the Arborfield community to develop a plan to increase the amount of car parking and avoid this problem?

103. 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.

104. 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.

105. 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.

106. 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.

106.1 None Specific

Motion 511 submitted by Prue Bray

'This Council notes the key conclusions from the

Marmot Review “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” that

- Reducing health inequalities is a matter of fairness and social justice
- There is a social gradient in health – the lower a person’s social position, the worse their health
- Health inequalities result from social inequalities. Action on health inequalities requires action across all the building blocks of health and wellbeing.
- Focusing solely on the most disadvantaged will not reduce health inequalities sufficiently. To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal (for all), but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage.
- Action taken to reduce health inequalities will benefit society in many ways, including economic benefits
- The fair distribution of health, well-being and sustainability are important social goals. Tackling social inequalities in health and tackling climate change must go together

and the 6 policy objectives, known as the “Marmot principles”, which are

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

Wokingham Borough Council is an affluent borough but not everyone in the borough is thriving, overall wealth can obscure the pockets of deprivation and relative inequalities that persist in the Borough.

Many of these principles are reflected in the work of the Council and building an approach based on drawing together what already exists will begin the journey to becoming a “Marmot Borough”.

Council asks the Director of Public Health to proceed

with the work to shape this approach with the aim of becoming a Marmot Borough focused on the principles outlined above, reporting on progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Council asks that during the course of this approach, where there are any financial implications for the Council, these are to be reported to the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.'

Chief Finance Officer comment:

There are no direct financial implications arising from 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.

106.2 None Specific

Motion 512 submitted by Rebecca Margetts

'This Council believes that residents should receive the infrastructure and amenities they are promised when they buy a new home and that developers and this Council should be held accountable for their legal obligations within S106 agreements.

This Council will produce a quarterly report detailing performance against financial, programme and other obligations of all parties within S106 agreements of which this Council is a party. The report will be issued to all members of this council and relevant community groups.

Increasing transparency on performance against commitments will provide confidence to communities that promises will be delivered on. This Council will learn the lessons from delays in the delivery of the Arborfield Green Village Centre and other facilities and amenities across the Strategic Development Location (SDL).'

Chief Finance Officer comment:

There are no direct financial implications arising from 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.

106.3 None Specific

Motion 513 submitted by Ian Shenton

'Climate change, intensive agriculture, and unsustainable use of resources are causing significant pressures on nature's biodiversity locally and nationally. The result is a risk to local wildlife and longstanding habitats; simply put it is the decline of nature all around us.

In response, this Council formally declares an Ecological Emergency and will:

1. Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions to ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both together are maximised.
2. Add ecological implications to those for climate in committee and Council reports.
3. Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by
 - a. Adopting robust biodiversity policies
 - b. Incorporating biodiversity measures into the Borough Design Code.
 - c. Ensuring that all our planning guidance documents reflect the importance of biodiversity.
 - d. Striving to enable the development of a 20% mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for Wokingham through the new local plan.
4. Re-establish the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum to allow the Council to collaborate effectively with local partners and the wider community.
5. Retain and update the Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan including an audit of habitats and condition across the Borough with a highlight report each year and a progress report presented to full Council every 5 years.
6. Work with local, county, regional and national

partners to produce a County wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Wokingham Borough.

7. Promote habitat creation and restoration in the right places and with the right species, ensuring robust connectivity between them and guided by the County Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan.
8. Manage Council services, buildings and land where appropriate in a biodiversity-friendly manner, taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
9. Provide advice for local communities and businesses on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.
10. Seek funding sources for any of the above actions that cannot be accommodated within the existing budget envelope.'

Chief Finance Officer comment:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion, subject to any works that cannot be met within existing budgets being funded through new sources of biodiversity related income.

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.

106.4 None Specific

Motion 514 submitted by Andrew Mickleburgh

'This Council notes:

- Care experienced people can face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
- Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment, and in the criminal justice system;

- Care experienced people may encounter inconsistent support;
- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for children looked after by us as an authority;
- All corporate parents should act as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people, and consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- Councillors should be champions of the children in our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;
- The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.

This Council therefore resolves that:

- It recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination;
- It recognises the Council's duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
- Future Council's decisions, services and policies be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic;
- In the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment;
- This Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic;
- It calls upon other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, until such time as it may be introduced by

legislation;

- The Council will continue to proactively seek out, listen and respond to the voices of care experienced people when developing policies, incorporating their views.'

Chief Finance Officer Comment:

There are no direct financial implications arising from 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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