

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 11.00 PM**

### **Members Present**

Councillors: John Kaiser (Mayor), Bill Soane (Deputy Mayor), Alistair Auty, Keith Baker, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Jenny Cheng, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Guy Grandison, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, David Hare, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Tim Holton, Graham Howe, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Barrie Patman, Ian Pittock, Anthony Pollock, Helen Power, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith and Shahid Younis

### **35. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Parry Batth, David Chopping, Kate Haines, Mike Haines, Philip Houldsworth, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Daniel Sargeant, Simon Weeks and Oliver Whittle.

### **36. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### **37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **38. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor presented awards to the first two recipients of the Mayor's Roll of Honour.

The first recipient was Sukhdev Kaur Bansal who had been running Punjabi language classes for children and adults in the local community for the past 35 years. The students were taught up to GCSE level and many had gone on to use their new language skills in developing successful careers.

The second recipient was Janet Woodruff who had been very active in the Shinfield community for many years. Janet regularly delivered the community newsletter to residents on the Shinfield Rise estate and was a keen supporter of a wide range of community activities in the area.

The Mayor also informed the Council of the following:

- The WBC Future Priorities for the Borough survey was running until 30 September 2018. This was an opportunity for residents to help shape the future of the Borough through the development of a new Borough Plan.
- Josie Wragg (Director of Localities and Customer Service) would be leaving the Council shortly to take up the role of Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor thanked Josie for her outstanding service.
- The Mayor's Masked Ball would be held on Saturday 9 March 2019 at Sindlesham Court in Winnersh.

### **39. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

#### **39.1 Jenny Lissaman asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

In the Wokingham District Local Plan 1996 - 2006 Policy WT 12: Additional Railway Stations states that: The Council will seek the provision of additional railway stations at Thames Valley Park, and other locations that can serve development and reduce car usage without resulting in net environmental degradation. Interchange facilities and car and cycle parking will be provided as appropriate to each location. Why was the principle of that policy dropped from WBC's 2010 Core Strategy?

#### **Answer**

I remember the Thames Valley Park station issue from when I did this role previously and I had various discussions with Mark Moon at the time. As I think you are aware, it was Network Rail that decided that they didn't want another stop either too close to Reading or between Reading and Twyford so, unfortunately, we were unable to get the station in place. However, there is a new station at Green Park which will be available next year and, if Grazeley is chosen as a Local Plan update site, there will be a station at Grazeley. There is nothing that I am aware of on the line through Wokingham to London or Guildford, nor is there anything on the line from Reading to Paddington.

That is the situation as far as stations are concerned. In connection with interchange and modal shift I would direct you to CP 6 and CP 10 in the 2010 Core Strategy which deals with the principles around interchange and modal shift. We are also undertaking work in relation to a potential park and ride at Coppid Beech. We have also been working on a bridge over the canal at Reading which I believe has had some problems with planning but would, in principle, provide a quicker bus service from Thames Valley Park and the Waterside Centre into Reading.

In Shinfield there are plans for round-robin bus services connecting the Shinfield Development into Reading and there have been improved bus services from Arborfield to Reading and also through to the new Lexicon development in Bracknell. I think we are providing and looking to provide opportunities for modal shift as well as new rail facilities where we can.

#### **Supplementary Question**

I was particularly interested, as I am sure you are aware, about the proposal for a station at Thames Valley Park which appears to have disappeared. You suggested that it couldn't have happened because there was no room on the rail network at that time for trains to stop in the business park even though this was part of the S106 agreement, as I understand, with Oracle, to provide a station. I would be interested to know where that money actually went as it certainly didn't go on the station. However, the reason I am asking the question is that, surely, the introduction of electrification together with the National Digital Railway Strategy (intended to provide more space on rail networks) have made stopping trains at a station in Thames Valley Park a possibility which should be properly investigated?

#### **Supplementary Answer**

As you say, I recall the Thames Valley Park station, the saga around it, and the £15m which was supposedly spent on it. I have no idea whether the Council even received it, so

I can't help you in connection with that one. I do not think, at present, that there are any plans from the rail operator or Network Rail in favour of a new station at Thames Valley Park. I have not heard of any discussions around this so I would suggest that it is not likely any time soon. I will ask the question as I talk to the rail operators and will let you know if I hear anything positive, but I will have to take it on that basis.

**39.2 Petra Angel asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question: and, in her absence the written answer was provided**

Please can the Council confirm what the current percentage of agency workers within Children's Services Department are?

Ms Lisa Humphreys was asked this question at a previous meeting but her response was that the national target was 80% permanent staff so Ms Humphreys avoided giving the desired answer. I understand that in 2015/16 the Children's Services were running at 37% agency staff usage which is 17% worse than national targets and that a commitment by Ms Felicity Budgen was given to the LGO to reduce this figure and focus on recruitment and training, however I believe the situation has got much worse. It is taking 8 months to compile a basic child assessment with workload pressures blamed - this is a fact. It is vital that the Council addresses this issue. It doesn't matter how good a social worker you are if you are having to undertake significantly more work because there are not enough staff, then this increases the chances of making a mistake. Unfortunately some serious mistakes have been made and which has resulted in children being put at risk.

**Answer**

Although the figures will vary year on year, the most up to date data we have is as follows:

The South East region as a whole reported an agency worker rate of 14.8%, and for England as a whole it was 15.8%. Within this aggregated percentage are the following local authorities figures:

- Reading 45.2% agency workers.
- Bracknell 9.5%.
- West Berkshire 19.0%.
- Windsor and Maidenhead 38.1%.
- Wokingham 22.0%.

There will always be some agency staff, to cover for example sickness or maternity leave.

In the last year, for a variety of reasons social workers' caseloads have increased from between 12 and 15 to the mid 20's, often more. It was imperative that we use agency staff to cope with the demand and these are now making inroads into the backlog of cases. Recruitment of new social workers is not a quick or easy thing, especially in the South East, shown by the figures above. But the move to recruit more permanent staff began earlier this summer.

**39.3 Paul Fishwick asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs launched a consultation during July and August 2018 related to the planned UK Clean Air Strategy and detailed National Air Pollution Control Programme that is due to be published in March 2019. Could you inform me what response Wokingham Borough Council gave to this consultation?

**Answer**

The Public Protection Partnership, which represents us in these matters, has not responded to this particular consultation as we provided a response to earlier similar consultations on the National Nitrogen Dioxide Action Plan. Previously we provided information on what measures to tackle air pollution have worked well and the challenges of implementation locally. This was requested from each authority to inform DEFRA's development of their strategy.

**Supplementary Question**

It is extremely disappointing that the Borough Council has not taken part in this consultation. It is actually different to the one on Nitrogen. This will help to shape the forthcoming strategies that the Government is looking to launch in March 2019. Air pollution in the UK kills approximately 45,000 people prematurely every year, so when will the Borough Council take air quality seriously by tackling the sources of these emissions especially Nitrogen Dioxide, which comes mainly from transport?

**Supplementary Answer**

The Borough Council does take air pollution very seriously. There are a number of monitoring sites in the Borough, as you are aware, so we can keep an eye on the levels. There are a couple of areas which were above the desired limits – in the centre of Wokingham and the centre of Twyford. There has been an action plan in place for each of these areas for the past year, so we are taking action in those areas to bring the levels down. We are monitoring across the piece and the latest information I have is that pollution levels are coming down.

As you are aware, the main issue with Nitrogen Dioxide relates to diesel vehicles. A lot of more modern diesel vehicles are fitted with devices to reduce the amount of Nitrogen Dioxide coming out of the exhaust. A lot of them are also fitted with particulate filters. The fuel economy of diesel vehicles has also gone up enormously in the last few years. All of this is pushing things in the right direction and the Government has a big initiative on electric vehicles. I think that we will see a lot of pressure for electric vehicles in the centre of major cities and towns. Bus companies can also do a lot to cut down on the amount of pollution by moving to electric or hybrid vehicles in appropriate places.

So we do take it very seriously and it is an issue that I am personally very interested in.

**39.4 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Earley is blighted by illegal and anti-social parking, with all of the associated problems. Existing and additional signage is necessary, but not sufficient. The Civil Parking Enforcement Officers who from time-to-time patrol in Earley are effective, but unable to visit problem locations as often as required. Could a full time Civil Parking Enforcement Officer be allocated exclusively and permanently to Earley to help tackle these serious parking problems?

**Answer**

Since the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in October 2017 (405 days of operation), we have carried out 1,581 patrols in Earley with 938 Contraventions. This equates to 3.9 Earley locations visited per day of operation, so you have had your fair share of resources across the Borough.

Whilst we can never guarantee we will be at the right location every day we do what we

can with the resources available.

As part of the CPE contract, there is an opportunity for community groups and/or Town and Parish councils to fund additional patrols in their area. This is subject to the contractor being able to resource this, i.e. they have people available and I would be very happy to talk to you. However, there is a cost and we would be looking to Earley Town Council to contribute. If this is something you would like to discuss in more detail, the Parking Team will be able to assist. The cost of a full time person would be around £37k per annum. You may not want somebody full time, but depending on what you would like to spend your ratepayer's money on, we would be happy to assist you.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am told that Civil Parking Enforcement Officers try to visit a school in Earley once in a 5/6 week period. Given the ongoing extent of parking abuse around our schools and other locations, how can this be good enough?

### **Supplementary Answer**

As you have commented, there are a lot of issues in Earley and Civil Parking Enforcement Officers have to cover all of the area. If there are particular blackspots that you would wish me to pick up and, perhaps, get some prioritisation I would be very happy to do that. I then go back to my previous question – if there are a number of things that you would like more time on, let's have a conversation about how that can be dealt with and how we can fund it.

### **39.5 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

There are no litter bins on Barkham Road between Wokingham railway station and the bus stop on Barkham Road. The bins at each end of this stretch – on the railway bridge and at the bus stop – are small and are hidden from view if you're walking away from the town. There are also no bins between Wellington Road and Barkham Road, for people taking this route out of town over the Tan Hill crossing.

As a result, we have a litter problem along both of these routes. The bins are often overflowing on a Monday morning, and people living along Barkham Road get fast food wrappers, bottles and cans in their gardens. There is a similar litter problem along the Tan Hill shortcut, with litter including broken glass being dropped on the bridge and in the Ormonde Road park.

I have sent some photos showing the problem to the Councillor. Can the Council commit to reviewing this problem and providing adequate litter bins?

### **Answer**

Thank you for raising this matter. It is clear from your photographs that there is an issue and I have asked Officers to have a look at this. We will also review the litter picking frequency to see if adjusting that would help as well.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am concerned by the fact that we have got to the state where the bins are overflowing regularly which is not just unsightly, it could lead to public health issues such as rat infestations. Could the Councillor please tell me what systems are in place to monitor problems of this type and ensure that actions are taken in good time to prevent public hygiene problems?

### **Supplementary Answer**

The contractor empties bins frequently. In your case we have to ask if this is frequently enough. We will certainly have a look at that. There are over 1,000 litter bins around the Borough that we collect from. It is reviewed and, when issues such as these are raised, our Officers go out to look at the situation. They don't just leave it to the contractor. They look to see if the bins are in the right place and are the correct size. The help that people like yourself give is good.

### **39.6 Sarah Kerr asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question:**

How were the public consulted about the new layout of the Market Place, including the type and colour of stone, the disabled parking and loading layout, the lack of proper kerbs, the rather expensive looking golden studs, and in particular the use of the same colour paving stone for pedestrian crossings?

### **Answer**

There has been significant public consultation and engagement that has led to the new Market Place design, dating back more than ten years. The initial engagement took place in Wokingham Town Centre Workshops in 2007 that looked at the long-term vision for the town. Further detail was added through workshops that took place in January and June 2008 which led to the creation of the Wokingham Town Centre Development Guide (December 2008). One of the key principles that emerged from the public engagement was the need for an uncluttered public space that encouraged pedestrian access. Further public consultation (including a public workshop in September 2009) was held ahead of the production of the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (June 2010).

The Masterplan set out the key principles of the development and, through consultation, it was generally acknowledged that the former paving was poor quality, uneven and uncoordinated - in particular the red brick which was very slippery when wet – and generally clutter detracted from the historic character of the Market Place. Further engagement took place as the more detailed design evolved, involving various individuals and interest groups. An initial workshop in April 2015 was followed by three more detailed sessions in November 2017.

Two of the workshops were specifically for individuals and organisations representing those with various forms of disability including Guide Dogs for the Blind, learning disabilities group (CLASP), Wokingham Healthwatch and the Alzheimer's Society. The input from them was crucial in informing the design of the Market Place. For example, it highlighted the importance of retaining controlled crossings for people with visual impairments, which were retained in the design as a result. While level surfaces are preferred by most people with restricted mobility, people with visual impairments who rely on a guide dog or cane need a discernible change in level to identify the carriageway edge. Hence it was decided that crossing points (both signalised and courtesy crossings) would be level with the pavement and identified with tactile paving.

In terms of the choice of York Stone, this was selected following engagement feedback that highlighted general dislike of the old red brick and support for more natural material that would provide a neutral backdrop for the town hall and other historic buildings.

### **Supplementary Question**

You made reference to consulting people with visual impairments. The DfT has developed guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces and it actually states that: “contrasts in colour plus tone should be used to accentuate the presence of certain key features”. It also states that “older visually impaired people and people who have lost their sight from various medical conditions may have reduced sensitivity their feet and it is, therefore, important that textures warning of particular hazards are rigorous enough to be detected by most people”.

Was this guidance consulted during the design of the Market Place regeneration given that the blister studs are barely detectable for the average person through the soles of their shoes, the blister studs do not contrast much in colour from the surrounding area, the colour of the pedestrian crossings is the same as the pavement and the kerbs are the same grey colour as the rows of bricks lining the side of the road?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I can assure you that all the consultations that were carried out took all that into account and, indeed, we were advised by a number of groups that they wanted those tactile surfaces. At this stage, that is why we have gone forward with it.

### **39.7 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

Please will you tell me with a simple answer if the black boxes that are used throughout the Borough are recyclable?

### **Answer**

It is not possible for the black boxes to be processed through our kerbside collection service. We communicated this to customers when we extended our recycling service to include pots, tubs and trays earlier this year.

If, on the other hand, a resident has a specific problem disposing of a damaged black box then we will always help facilitate the removal if the resident contacts us.

### **Supplementary Question**

As you know, earlier this year I was a Member of this Council and I was not aware of any consultation or offer to the public to recycle black boxes. However, they are recyclable, having spoken to the company that manufactures them, if they are returned to the company or they are chipped they can be melted down and recycled. (I am not sure if re3 have the equipment to do this).

That, to me, would seem to be a very sensible thing to do with them. I have had a lot of questions from members of the public about this and they suggested that if it is because they are black we should change the colour. I don't think that this is the issue and the company don't think that it is the issue. I would suggest that the Council make more effort to make these boxes recyclable even if it means returning them to the manufacturer.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I agree, it would make sense if they were recyclable more locally. We will look at this for the future contract for the supply of black boxes. I think that you are right, it is not that they are black, it is the type of plastic that they are made of.

## **40. PETITIONS**

The following members of the public and Councillors presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out against each petition.

Mac Stephensen	Mac Stephensen presented a petition of 455 signatures requesting a speed reduction on Church Hill, Hurst.  <b><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport.</i></b>
Graham Dexter and Chris Heylinger	Graham Dexter and Chris Heylinger presented a petition of 4,000 signatures regarding proposed development in Barkham.  <b><i>To be debated at a future Council meeting</i></b>
Councillor Gary Cowan	Gary Cowan presented a petition of 1,688 signatures regarding proposed development South of Cutbush Lane and North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield and the wider issue of over development across the Borough.  <b><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning</i></b>

#### **41. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE FRANCIS HABGOOD AND THE AREA COMMANDER SHAUN VIRTUE**

The Council received a presentation from the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, Francis Habgood, and the local Police Area Commander, Shaun Virtue.

The first part of the presentation was submitted on behalf of Anthony Stansfeld, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). This gave details of the role of the PCC, the PCC's strategic priorities and the Police and Crime Plan for the period 2017/21. The presentation also gave details of progress made against each of the priorities during 2017/18.

The second part of the presentation gave details of the operational performance of Thames Valley Police and highlighted several key initiatives which were currently under way. This included the Hidden Harm Campaign, aimed at abuse related crimes such as modern slavery, online child abuse and honour-based abuse.

Following the presentations, Members asked a number of questions relating to:



- the use of police S61 powers in relation to traveller incursions;
- the effects of Government funding reductions on police services;
- the impact of the Government's reduction of the proposed salary increase for police officers, from 3% to 2%, on recruitment and retention;
- the capacity of the police to meet demand for services as evidenced by the reduced level of detection rates.

The Chief Constable and Area Commander answered the questions and provided additional information on trends within the Borough area.

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor thanked Francis Habgood and Shaun Virtue for attending the meeting and answering Member questions on crime and community safety issues.

## **42. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION TERM SERVICE CONTRACTS RENEWAL**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 47 to 106, which gave details of the procurement process relating to the new Highways and Transportation Term Service Contracts.

The report recommended that the Council award the Professional Services Consultancy Contract and the Maintenance and Construction Contract to the two organisations set out in the Part 2 papers with a commencement date of 1 April 2019.

It was proposed that the two contracts be awarded for an initial term of seven years, extendable by a further period of up to three years, subject to satisfactory performance.

Members were reminded that, under the European Union procurement legislation, the award of the contracts would be subject to a mandatory 10 day standstill challenge period (known as the Alcatel period). During this period confidentiality had to be maintained about the Council's decisions. A media release would be published at the end of the Alcatel period.

It was proposed by Anthony Pollock and seconded by Keith Baker that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the procurement process, which commenced with stakeholder engagement in 2016 and soft market engagement with potential suppliers during 2017, be noted;
- 2) the formal procurement process, underway since January 2018, and the proposals for mobilisation be endorsed;
- 3) the Professional Consultancy Contract be awarded to the organisation named in the Part 2 papers, to be operational from 1 April 2019, for an initial term of seven years, extendable by a further period of up to three years, subject to satisfactory performance;
- 4) the Maintenance and Construction Contract be awarded to the organisation named in the Part 2 papers, to be operational from 1 April 2019, for an initial term of seven

years, extendable by a further period of up to three years, subject to satisfactory performance.

#### **43. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUT-TURN 2017-18**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 107 to 134, which gave details of the Council's Treasury Management operations during 2017/18.

The report stated that the Council had successfully implemented all the agreed prudential indicators during the year. This reflected sound management of the Council's finances in a challenging environment.

The Executive had considered the report at its meeting on 26 July 2018 and had recommended to Council that the Annual Report for 2017/18 and the actual 2017/18 prudential indicators, set out in the report, be approved.

Lindsay Ferris stated that his Group had serious concerns about the level of debt incurred by the Council and the cost of funding that debt. Consequently, his Group would vote against the recommendations in the report.

It was proposed by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by Anthony Pollock that the recommendations in the report be agreed.

Prior to a vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the recommendations in the report.

On being put to the vote it was:

#### **RESOLVED** That:

- 1) The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2017/18 be approved;
- 2) The actual 2017/18 Prudential Indicators, set out in the report, be approved.

The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Alistair Auty	Prue Bray	John Kaiser
Keith Baker	Rachel Burgess	Bill Soane
Laura Blumenthal	Gary Cowan	
Chris Bowring	Andy Croy	
Jenny Cheng	Carl Doran	
Richard Dolinski	Lindsay Ferris	
Guy Grandison	David Hare	
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Clive Jones	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	Ian Pittock	
Tim Holton	Helen Power	
Graham Howe	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Norman Jorgensen	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Pauline Jorgensen		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Charles Margetts		

Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Shahid Younis		

#### **44. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 135 to 136, which sought approval to the appointment of Carol Cammiss to the statutory role of Director of Children's Services.

The report stated that the Personnel Board had met on 6 September 2018 to undertake final interviews for the statutory role of Director of Children's Services. Following the interview process, the Personnel Board had agreed that Carol Cammiss was the most suitable candidate.

It was proposed by Pauline Helliard-Symons and seconded by Shahid Younis that the recommendation in the report be approved.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** that the Personnel Board's recommendation to appoint Carol Cammiss to the statutory role of Director of Children's Services, on a date to be agreed, be approved.

#### **45. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 137 to 150, which gave details of a formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in accordance with the Representation of the People Act, 1983.

The report stated that under S18 of the Act, as amended by S17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council was required to undertake a review within a 16 month period starting on 1 October 2018. It was proposed that a public consultation exercise take place between 1 October and 16 November 2018 followed by discussions with the Political Groups and the independent Member. It was anticipated that final recommendations would be submitted to the Council on 21 March 2019.

Attached to the report was a schedule setting out details of the current polling districts, polling stations and specific issues, if any, relating to each of the stations.

It was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that the recommendations in the report be approved.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) a formal review of all Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Borough be approved;
- 2) the decisions reached under this review be implemented for all elections from the beginning of 2020;
- 3) a Member/Officer working group be set up to administer and review the responses received, the composition of this group to be one Member from each of the political groups, the independent Member and two Officers from the Electoral Services Team.

#### **46. STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 151 to 178, which set out a Statement of Licensing Policy, in line with the Council's statutory duty under the Licensing Act 2003. Under the terms of the Act the Council had a duty to update the statement every five years.

The report stated that an updated statement had been considered and approved by the Licensing and Appeals Committee on 4 September 2018. In addition to reformatting and minor clarifications, the Committee had identified a number of material changes which were set out in the report.

It was proposed by Barrie Patman and seconded by Malcolm Richards that the recommendations in the report be approved.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** that the revised Statement of Licensing Policy, set out at Annex A to the report, be approved.

#### **47. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 179 to 214, which gave details of a revised Statement of Gambling Principles. Under the terms of the Gambling Act 2005, the Council had to publish a revised statement by the end of January 2019.

The report stated that the updated statement had been approved by the Licensing and Appeals Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2018. In addition to reformatting and minor points of clarification the Committee had agreed to a number of material changes which were set out in the report.

It was proposed by Barrie Patman and seconded by Malcolm Richards that the recommendation in the report be approved.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Statement of Gambling Principles, set out at Annex A to the report, be approved.

#### **48. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

**Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Leader of the Council**

May I start Mr Mayor by congratulating you on the launch of your Mayor's Awards this evening and, in particular, the first two recipients. Very worthy indeed. I would also like to thank the petitioners this evening. They really are far reaching issues that they have brought to us this evening and, perhaps, they need taking up with central Government too.

Before I go into the main topic of my speech tonight, I have great pleasure in announcing that I have appointed Pauline Jorgensen as my Deputy Leader of the Council. Councillor Jorgensen has a wealth of experience as an Executive Member and as one of the Directors of the Holding Company too. I am pleased to have her sitting by my side, and I am quite certain that she will keep me on the straight and narrow! Pauline has great experience at the Council but, also, outside in IT, HR and change management in a huge company which some of you may know. I shouldn't really be advertising, but it's BA.

It would be very remiss not to mention Josie Wragg this evening. It is Josie's last full Council meeting here. Josie is not going far, as we have heard, Slough, so I'm sure that we will be crossing paths in other meetings. I just wanted to say a huge thank you for everything you have done in your time here. You have been a truly dedicated Officer and you will be sorely missed. Huge good luck to you. I hope that you enjoy your new role. You really deserve it. Chief Executive is a just reward for all the hard work you have put in here. So congratulations.

At the last Council meeting, I spoke about our work on producing a new Council Plan. Over the course of this month, we have held engagement sessions with the public, seeking their views on our vision and priorities. So far, we've held three separate sessions at Dinton Pastures, Woodley and Twyford. Tomorrow, we will be out in Wokingham, and on Saturday we will be in Lower Earley. Details of the consultation are available on our website. I would urge Members to take flyers and copies of the Council Plan engagement document and speak to residents on the doorstep. I would like to say a big thank you to our Officers who have given up so much of their time going out to these pop-up days. They have given up much of their time at weekends to talk to residents and I would encourage anyone who has the time, especially on Saturday, to join the Officers.

There has been a lot of speculation in the press in recent weeks about my future as the Leader of this Council. So I thought that it would be a good time to stand here and talk about the decisions, what it is like being a leader, how difficult it is sometimes and to see what it's like to be on the side of what is right and fair even when those who are bereft of courage will buckle at the first sign of difficulty. Presiding in judgement over those who choose to stand up and be counted, when you stick your neck out sometimes requires some bravery, and it has been quite difficult over the past few weeks. We would not deserve to be leaders if I, or my Executive, or my Conservative Group were too afraid to do the right things, even when they are unpopular things to do.

Under my leadership, we have had the courage to challenge the Government over the unsustainable housing numbers and we continue to do this. We have faced down Whitehall over negative Revenue Support Grant, the penalty our residents are facing for voting for sound financial management. We have kept up the pressure on the Secretary of State, Ministers and the Prime Minister over funding for children and adult social care too. We have chosen to invest the largest sum of money ever into our communities over the next three years. We have pressed on with reshaping the Council into an organisation fit for a digital age. We set up an investment strategy too so people in Wokingham Borough should never have to face the savage cuts thrust on people such as those on the residents of Reading. We have fought to keep the fundamentals that truly matter to people, making

the sometimes hard decisions on some of the other things we've gotten used to that other Councils aren't doing. And in our Council Plan, we've embarked on the most ambitious programme to redefine the relationship between citizen and local government, giving a voice to communities in a way that has never been done before.

We need to take our residents on a journey to being part of one community. Along the way, we must get on with the job of building a sustainable Council with services for a changing population, and entering into a new spirit of being enterprising and entrepreneurial. The path may be strewn with obstacles and the destination may not always be clearly in sight. Whether it's the town centre regeneration or our work to get in place a plan for sustainable housing for the future - sometimes amongst the pain it can be hard to see the fruits of what we are striving for. We may not always get everything right along the way. And we must seek to shake off the naysayers with a poverty of ambition as well as the fake prophets, the siren voices who push us towards a new Eden, straight over the edge into a pit.

We must never be too timid to think big. If we do not dare to be bold, we need never fear failure – nor ever know the triumph of success. I believe that we have a vision worth fighting for, and while I am Leader of this Council, I will continue to do battle every single day to deliver it for the most important people of all, the residents of Wokingham Borough.

### **Philip Mirfin, Executive Member for Regeneration**

It's an incredibly exciting time to be standing here talking to you as the Executive Member for Regeneration.

Our vision for Wokingham town centre as a vibrant market town that stands out from our larger neighbours is very much coming to the forefront as works begin to reveal themselves across the town. The new Market Place is now complete and residents can start to get a real feel for what we are trying to create and why regeneration is so important for Wokingham. With a far improved layout, lots of room for entertainment and plentiful seating to simply relax and enjoy the town centre, this new space is really coming into its own now. As could be seen last Saturday, it has become a place that is the perfect venue for events and bigger and better markets.

Peach Place moves forwards in leaps and bounds with the scaffolding coming down to reveal the new units, the footpath in Peach Street being resurfaced, shop fronts going in and the first of our new tenants champing at the bit to get access ready to trade for Christmas. Over the next few weeks we will start to release the names of the new businesses coming to Wokingham and, from the comments we have received about the types of operators they would like to see in the town centre, I'm confident that local residents will be pleased with what they hear. We have always been clear that we want a strong local independent offer within Peach Place, along with some great quality national names and niche businesses and this is exactly what we have achieved.

Elms Field continues apace with the steelwork already taking shape for the new hotel, Aldi, cinema and other retail units. No one will deny that the face of the high street is changing, but Wokingham continues to remain strong and to buck the national trends, with businesses continuing to remain interested in units in the town. I, for one, am proud to belong to a Council who are investing in their community and for their community.

### **Richard Dolinski, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing**

I am privileged to be invited to attend Adult Social Care team meetings. At these team meetings I learn a lot more about the challenges and also the outcomes, the very positive outcomes of our work. On the challenges I want to say thank you to the Liberals who have come to join us on a cross party working group looking at some of those difficult challenges. So thank you for coming forwards.

On the outcomes, I want to give you just one outcome this evening. That is a resident, G.D., who is a 78 year old resident who lives with his wife. G.D. has a diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease resulting in reduced mobility. He has become totally dependent on his wife's support despite the physical strain it puts on her. On receiving a referral, it was critical for our Occupational Therapists to build a good rapport as quickly as possible to develop trust with G.D. and his wife. Throughout the course of seven home visits the O.T. team focussed on solutions. They taught Mrs G.D. to avoid using verbal queuing and instructing as people with Parkinson's Disease struggle to multi-task, which increases freezing episodes. The O.T.s worked on developing confidence and used a strength based approach and modification of techniques which has resulted in G.D. regaining his confidence to walk again. Specialist equipment has been provided to help improve his mobility and his independence. In addition a carer's budget was agreed for Mrs G.D. which now allows her to use a taxi a couple of times each month so she can go shopping without having to struggle. More importantly, it has given her some time to herself.

There is a lot more I could say about the extraordinary work delivered by our Officers in meeting the targets and also positive outcomes for some of our most vulnerable residents. However, I will leave the final words to Mrs G.D.: "Occupational Therapy has given me my husband back".

### **Pauline Helliard-Symons, Executive Member for Children's Services**

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to the staff who turned out for our activity event for children in care at the end of August. Some of them gave up their day off to come. It was a great day enjoyed by everybody. It took place at the Oakwood Activity and Climbing Centre in my ward.

Secondly, I would like to report that yet again our students have achieved excellent GCSE and A level results, in A levels exceeding the national average once again. All four of our children in care in Year 13 who applied to university have secured places, that is 30% of the Year 13 children in care cohort going to university. They will be studying Mathematics, English, Art and Education. I am very proud of them all. It is a huge success for them to gain these places.

There has been a big increase in workload for the department over the last year. In particular, there has been a 32% increase in children in care since the 2017 data and a significant increase during last October and November. There has also been a big increase in the number of referrals coming to our social services staff since last September with up to 900 per month needing investigation. The number of cases our social workers are dealing with has doubled in the past year.

There are a number of reasons for these increases such as:

- an Act of Parliament in 2017 which made us responsible for children in care up to the age of 25, so there have been fewer children leaving care;
- 1,000 new houses in the Borough each year, with families of course;

- double the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers; and
- a greater awareness by partners, schools and police, for example, as we heard earlier, of what to look out for and report.

All of this, of course, is putting huge pressure on the Children's Services budget. But we have seen many success stories. We have worked ever closer with the NHS and the police. Permanent exclusions from school have fallen and this includes a decrease in their use by special schools. Overall absence rates remain low, which has helped our exam results. There has been joint working between the local authority and senior school leaders on behaviour management strategies. Fewer looked after children are placed more than 20 miles from their homes. The Ministry of Justice has match funded us after the approval of our Youth Justice Plan which includes the use of restorative justice and making young people aware of the impact of their offending behaviour.

Bovis Homes has transferred the land for the new Matthewsgreen primary school which received planning permission last February. Wokingham Borough has sufficient entitlement for two, three and four year olds, including the extended free 30 hour entitlement. Childcare provision has 95% of providers judged as "Good" or "Outstanding" by Ofsted.

These statistics are higher than the national norm and are very good news indeed. Unsurprisingly, therefore, parental satisfaction is high and parents feel that they have access to appropriate, high quality, provision for their children.

At the next Council meeting in November there will be a re-signing of the Children in Care Pledge that we make as corporate parents with our children in care. This will be signed by the Mayor and by members of the Children in Care Council.

Finally, I would like to welcome our interim Director of Children's Services, Jim Leivers, and thank him for the excellent work he has been doing to move on the work of our department, for the way he is involving Officers and giving them ownership of their work and, in particular, for the work he is doing in preparing us for a potentially imminent Ofsted inspection.

#### **49. STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES**

**Alistair Auty, Non-Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Ltd.**

From a WHL perspective, in the last financial year we delivered one quarter of all the affordable homes completed in the Borough, which was 123. This contribution is testament to the hard working team across all of our housing companies, led by Bill Flood. While I am sure that all would agree that this delivery of affordable homes is most welcome, the challenge is to deliver more year in year out.

Developing on Council owned land remains our priority, though I would like to see this move at a greater pace. The regeneration of the Gorse Ride estate will provide an additional number of homes in addition to the existing ones there and they will be of a higher standard. So it is an exciting project that we are pleased to be an integral part of.

Finally, as part of our evolution, we are evaluating non-Wokingham Borough Council owned land opportunities so we can continue to deliver more high quality affordable housing that our Borough residents both need and deserve.



### **Anthony Pollock, Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd.**

In connection with Optalis, I have some headlines. Customer satisfaction is at 87% which is ahead of the strategic objective of 80%. The company has been awarded Disability Confident Employer status by the Department of Work and Pensions. On the quality front, every inspection we have had in the last six months has been "Good", where they were previously "Requires Improvement", which is a 100% success rate.

Financially, we are performing ahead of budget, year to date, and we have won a new contract at Reading College delivering supported employment services. In the previous contract we had there, I think that we are one of the few operators of this service to the learning disability community to achieve almost 100% success in getting service users into employment. That is really important for them and really important for us.

On the people front, staff turnover is below the national average, absenteeism and vacancies are below the national average, so, all in all, I believe that Optalis is delivering for us, Wokingham Borough and its residents, so I commend it to you.

### **Gary Cowan, Chairman of Loddon Homes Ltd.**

Loddon Homes' first shared ownership homes at Elizabeth Road (two units) and Barrett Crescent (two units) are very close to being sold and we expect sales income to be £115k more than estimated which is welcome additional income to the company. Loddon Homes continues to focus on ensuring that WBC Housing Services fill all of the vacancies quickly but there remain some vacancies at Fosters due to the need to identify residents who have both a care need and a housing need. At Loddon Homes' September Board Meeting this issue and loss of income were discussed. Consequently the Board has asked the Borough Council to formally relax the criteria for housing applicants.

Thanks to the many years of cajoling, from David Chopping, to set up housing companies to deliver much needed housing to our residents we have had several years of hard work culminating in our registration as a "For Profit" Registered Housing Provider. This achievement was the very first for a Council and is a truly amazing success story. My thanks must go to the professional staff along with Councillors Alistair Auty and David Chopping for their superb efforts in getting us where we are today. From small beginnings we have moved up a gear and are now on the cusp of a most exciting period in our evolution. That is to deliver to our residents much more affordable housing.

The Prime Minister's recent announcement of £2bn to housing companies and Councils will help to kick start Loddon Homes to bigger and better things. Sadly, I will not be leading the charge as I have offered my resignation as Chairman to the Loddon Homes Board. My reason is very simple. To continue I needed the assurance and comfort of the standard contract which other Non-Executive Directors have, plus the support of this administration. Sadly, for reasons that only the Conservative administration can answer, they saw fit not to renew my normal contract but have put me on a month-to-month contract with no discussion or debate. It seems to have nothing to do with competence or ability to do one's job, so I will leave it to others to guess the reason why. The lack of continuity created by the constraint it has placed on my independence as Chairman of Loddon Homes is insidious and has seriously hampered my ability to freely and independently function in the best interests of the company, the Council and, most importantly, the residents. Such arrangements for me when there are other Non-Executive Directors on longer contracts was not lost on me. It is with a heavy heart that I take this decision and, unlike others, I will

honour my contract by giving 28 days' notice in writing at the next Loddon Homes Board Meeting, thereby allowing continuity until my replacement is finalised.

My thanks to all who have had faith in me, especially all our residents who I will continue to serve to the best of my ability. They deserve the best. Sadly, I do not believe that they are getting it from this Conservative administration.

**Stuart Munro, Chairman of WBC (Holdings) Ltd.**

I would like to say thank you to Gary and I am sorry that you have got a bit confused. We have been looking at the strategy for our companies, I am talking as the Chairman of the Holding Company that represents the Council. We are looking at the strategy and how we can improve on what we've got. Just because your contract came to an end after two years it does not mean that anyone is picking on you. Just to get the record straight and to thank you for your contribution.

I would also say that when it comes to bringing forward some new sites for these housing companies to work on, I am pleased to state that, later this month, the Executive will be looking at the Wellington Road/Station Road site which is just down the road from here and also the Woodley Age Concern site. So we are starting to look at some of the Council owned companies that we have available.

Finally, I would like to say that, year to date, the income has reached over £1.5m reflecting a real growth coming from these companies and also the income from July was a third of £1m, so we are doing some of the right things. I am happy to take these other pieces that we have been discussing offline.

**50. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

**50.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question:**

In the light of the new NPPF announced by the Government this July does this Council by its actions to date on housing numbers agree with me that it has made a rod for its own and our residents' backs?

**Answer**

In simple terms, the answer to your question is no.

In tackling our statutory plan-making responsibilities, the Council has followed and continues to follow Government legislative and policy requirements, so we have planned for no more than we should have based upon these requirements.

Having always estimated housing need based on Government policy and guidance, we have been regularly challenged and tested on appeal and in not one of these instances has an Inspector said we have delivered too much housing. On the contrary, we have seen the numbers increase. It is demonstrably clear in this context that the Council has done its statutory duty, but that does not mean that it is right.

As regards to the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and associated guidance, the Government has, as expected, introduced a standardised methodology for

calculating housing need across England. It uses the national household projection for each local authority and applies an affordability adjustment based on median house prices and earnings. It is therefore entirely independent from any past housing estimates, so this is a change.

The NPPF requires our future policies to meet the housing need calculated by the standardised methodology, unless there is agreement with other local authorities for some need to be met elsewhere. In the three to four months that I have been involved, I have not heard from any other local authority coming running to us saying: "Can we have some of your numbers?"

Housing need would be recalculated annually as new data on house prices and incomes become available, and when the Government publishes new national household projections. The exact figure will therefore change regularly, bringing a challenge to how we plan.

A new set of national household projections is imminent. These are expected to show slower household growth, leading to a lower overall housing need across England, and potentially a lower figure for Wokingham Borough.

Whilst confirming the standardised methodology, however, the Government has indicated that adjustments will be considered. This is in order to ensure the output of the methodology meets the Government's well publicised 300,000 additional homes per year target. I am sure that all Members, on behalf of our residents, would join me in stating that this situation, which brings continued uncertainty, is wholly unsatisfactory and undermines our efforts to plan properly for the long term.

### **Supplementary Question**

It is interesting that there were two petitions tonight on housing numbers and there is already a further substantial petition within the process. Stuart Munro did refer to Government legislation and policy, but I would challenge that. I would say that Wokingham Borough Council never challenged the housing numbers that were imposed on them, or after the Core Strategy was agreed. It never challenged the numbers. When will the smoke and mirrors end and when will this madness end? Everything that is being done in this chamber is being done without consultation and it is a disgrace.

### **Supplementary Answer**

The answer is that we are just about to go and talk to all the residents about the Local Plan. We did fight appeals on the numbers. We are not accepting the numbers. I know that members of my group will support me here and we had the Member Steering Group with our colleagues. We think that the numbers are ridiculous, but we are waiting until we have all our facts together. We intend to challenge those numbers.

### **50.2 Chris Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Can I have an update on the resurfacing of Redhatch Drive?

### **Answer**

The Council's Highways Maintenance Programme sets out to address those schemes that are priorities for delivery within any financial year. However, this programme is published in draft and will always change following detailed assessment of each location.

I can confirm that we plan to accommodate the resurfacing of Redhatch Drive in this year's Structural Maintenance programme. The Structural Maintenance programme will commence from the second week of October. The works on Redhatch Drive are currently expected to be carried out during the week commencing 15 October, weather permitting. The resurfacing will take one day to complete under a full road closure and residents will be notified in advance. There will be further minor works after the resurfacing to replace road markings and adjust iron works.

### **Supplementary Question**

It is good news that Redhatch Drive is back on the programme after being delayed from August, but there have been several communication issues around highways in Hillside. Will the new contract improve the communications we are seeing around these issues?

### **Supplementary Answer**

As I said earlier, as a result of the new mapping system and its access from both computers and mobile phones, I think you will find that your residents will be better informed, not only about road resurfacing but also about times when utilities have to do works on the network. So, in short, yes.

### **50.3 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Wokingham has its own process for applying for a Blue Badge online, which requires you to have an account on the Council website and to fill out an enormous form. A number of people have reported issues with the form. There is a national process available on the Gov.uk website which is far more straightforward to use. I have been told that at some stage Wokingham plans to stop having its own process and to use the Government one instead. How quickly can that be made to happen, so that people who need Blue Badges can have an easier time applying for them?

### **Answer**

I think that this answer has been missed in the system, so I will have to give you a written answer.

Note: The following written answer was subsequently provided:

Customers can currently access the Blue Badge service via several channels: Online via the WBC or Gov.uk website, face to face, over the telephone, or if requested via a paper form.

The Department for Transport (DfT) require local authorities to request certain details from customers when applying for a blue badge, and the form they provide is lengthy (20 pages). In developing the online system, we reviewed all of the questions and made sure that customers were only presented with the questions relevant to them, dependent upon their answers.

The online form that we currently use times out if people do not complete the form in a timely fashion. This is to protect personal data should they be using a shared computer. We were looking to introduce a 'Save' option so that customers could revisit the form before submission. However, we have been informed by the Department of Transport that they are introducing a new online system in January 2019 – this is as result of extending the Blue Badge scheme to those with hidden disabilities from January 2019. This means that we will need to review the whole process, including integration with the DfT system so

that inefficiencies do not arise from manual re-keying of lengthy applications. We will be directing customers to the DfT system in the future, and currently this is in the development stage, but are working to the January timescale set by the DfT.

Between January - August 2018, 952 customers have applied successfully online – which is 56% of all applications – the remaining customers have had support from the team, either face to face, over the telephone or paper (13 paper applications received this year to date). We have received huge amounts of very good feedback about the application process, and the option to move away from the lengthy paper form. Our system gives customers an instant decision, in most cases, (the Government system does not) which helps to manage the volume of 180+ applications that we receive into the team each month. This is set to rise with the introduction of the new hidden disabilities criteria. Customers currently receive badges far quicker than before as there is less processing to do when it reaches us. Since 2016, when the system went live, we have received a very low number of complaints – maybe two or three – but have always been able to resolve them to the customers' satisfaction.

It is really important that we are accessible to all, so will continue to listen and act on customer's feedback where we can, to make sure their experience is a good one.

#### **Supplementary Question**

We are changing our processes, to use the Gov.UK site ultimately. How much effort has been put into looking at using other sites and resources other than providing information and processes ourselves, in order to save resources?

#### **Supplementary Answer**

We provide it ourselves where it is most appropriate and if it is more appropriate to use something else we will do that.

#### **50.4 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources the following question:**

I have grave concerns about how finances at Wokingham Borough Council have been managed over the last 12 months or so.

Do you think it is appropriate for a Council that is under financial pressure to have used an open ended contract which included no specific financial figures, to have forgotten the end date of a contract and continued to send/receive invoices for up to 6 months, to have used Section 106 monies which were destined for one part of the Borough (e.g. the northern parishes and used elsewhere in the Borough e.g. in Wokingham) without any reference to anyone and to have produced business cases which included inaccurate and incomplete information simply to make their case look better than it was?

#### **Answer**

Could I please ask Councillor Ferris to clarify which contract he is referring to so that I can give an accurate and specific answer?

#### **Supplementary Question**

My question related to a number of contracts including the joint Wokingham Borough Council/Wokingham Town Council contract covering the recent Market Place refurbishment. So my question is: "Can you confirm how much of the contingency, above the £3.8m originally allocated to the project, has already been used by each Council?"

### **Supplementary Answer**

I can answer part of the question but will have to give you a written answer about the contingency amounts. In terms of the two Councils, Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Town Council, who, as you know, have been working together collaboratively in partnership since 2016 with a view to implementing the Vision of creating high quality public realm, as set out in the Town Centre Masterplan.

This has been produced through a process to deliver a high quality piece of public realm, albeit following delays which were largely due to ground conditions. The scheme was based on the extensive public participation in preparing relevant documents and policies, all of which were funded by developer contributions. The contract was with Balfour Beatty and it was an NEC engineering and construction contract based upon the standard template for this type of work. It contained both an end date and an agreed price so I am not sure about the source of your comment about the contract being open ended in your question, as now I know it relates to that.

With regard to the S106 monies, any such strategic contributions to facilities available to all residents of the Borough are legitimately spent in accordance with the relevant agreements for the purposes to which the money was allocated. This is the case in respect of the agreements to which, I believe, you refer. Allocation was made through our business as usual procedures. We allocate S106 contributions to the key priorities of the Council as set out in the Capital Programme.

Previously, a number of the contributions I believe you are referring to were allocated to the Twyford Station Masterplan project but, unfortunately, as I am sure you know, this project was not ready to progress. Due to the end dates on these developer contributions expiring, these allocated funds would have ended up going back to the developer if they had not been used. So, this time, it was agreed that the developer funds would be put towards the Wokingham town centre regeneration project. In this instance, I hope you will agree that this was a good use of the money and that this was reasonable financial management rather than simply handing the money back to the developer.

### **50.5 Clive Jones asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Will you join me in congratulating WBC staff and the local police on the professional way in which they dealt with recent traveller incursions across the Borough?

### **Answer**

I heartily agree with you and am pleased with the way the Officers have dealt with the traveller incursions.

The WBC team deals with incursions as quickly and efficiently as possible, primarily with the Thames Valley Police but also other stakeholders such as Parish and Town Councils, private landowners and businesses affected by incursions. As you are aware Wokingham Borough Council, as the Chief Constable stated earlier, has introduced an updated policy which takes into account the joint protocol with the Thames Valley Police, a positive step in joint working.

As I would have said in my Executive statement, if I had managed to give it, the Borough has seen quite a few disruptive traveller incursions over the summer. This is very frustrating for residents and the removal and clear up process is expensive and time consuming for the Council. Where the police do not use their S61 powers, Borough

Officers are taking an increasingly robust approach to the issue and are now using non-court bailiffs, rather than the courts, to accelerate the process of removal. The non-court bailiffs are more expensive but it is actually quicker and removes nuisance from the residents quicker.

So I am hoping that having used it a couple of times we will get better and better at dealing with traveller incursions. I must say, however, that nobody would particularly mind travellers but for the mess. It is the mess and damage and criminal damage that is the problem.

### **Supplementary Question**

Often police officers put themselves in dangerous situations when dealing with traveller incursions. I actually witnessed it myself in Earley just a few weeks ago. Do you agree with me that the failure of the Government to properly fund the police service (the Chief Constable confirmed tonight that he has lost £100m, which is 25% of his budget) has resulted in manpower shortages that contribute to making it increasingly difficult for the police to deal with traveller incursions in a timely manner?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I also know about that particular incursion as I live just down the road from it. I can assure you that I was straight on the email to the Police and Crime Commissioner to see what could be done about it to support the police. Actually, even at 11pm he did respond to the email. Since then I have brought up the question with Kit Malthouse, who is the new Housing Minister, to see what can be done to actually give the police more powers to do something about incursions.

I think that a lot of it is to do with deterrence rather than physically moving people on. The reason I think the police are reluctant to move people on is that they just move to another place and they have to be moved on again. I think that the important thing with the legislation is to have some deterrent effect so that people don't arrive in the first place and so do not create criminal damage. So I think that the real issue is deterrence and legislation, not necessarily the number of police.

### **50.6 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

In Hawkedon the roads are often gridlocked at rush hour. With the development of Winnersh and Shinfield, along with making the M4 a Smart Motorway, this is only going to get worse. Are there any developmental plans to help this situation, in both the short and long term?

### **Answer**

The Smart Motorway on the M4 will add 1,800 car movements an hour when it is completed. This will remove congestion but, I am afraid, only in 2022. However, in theory, because there will continue to be three lanes each way, the current capacity of the M4 will be maintained during the construction process for the Smart Motorway. The other issue you allude to is traffic growth arising from new housing and general growth. However, when the Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 the proposed developments, which you referred to, were designed to mitigate their own impacts including developments at Winnersh and Shinfield. The Council is in the process of delivering a programme of £124 million in major road infrastructure which includes the Winnersh Relief Road (Phases 1 and 2), the Eastern Relief Road in Shinfield, the Arborfield Relief Road and the Northern and Southern Distributor Roads which do not contribute much in your area, or mine, but for

other Members here are very relevant. This infrastructure is being delivered to support this housing and the highway network but the full benefits of this, unfortunately, will not be realised until everything is completed which will be a few years hence.

The Council recognises that building capability of roads is not a long term sustainable option and that the promotion of alternatives to the private car will reduce the pressure on the network. Therefore, through each new development, we are promoting the sustainable 'My Journey' initiative and delivering sustainable transport infrastructure.

The Smart Motorways that Highways England are delivering are designed to provide additional capacity and improve journey times on the Major Route Network that runs through Wokingham Borough.

Prior to the Core Strategy, a higher level of houses were being delivered through a piecemeal approach with no supporting infrastructure to assist with growth of congestion. The Strategic Development Locations are enabling improvements within development areas and on the surrounding highway network which is a significant improvement.

### **Supplementary Question**

I asked you particularly about what events could happen around Earley and Lower Earley and, certainly, the new traffic lights, just down from Winnersh have worsened rather than improved the situation. What is the Council going to do about the fact that people are sitting there for hours, certainly half an hour, as it is getting ridiculous.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am well aware of the struggles with the road network, particularly at peak times. As you are aware, the dualing of Lower Earley Way, between those lights you refer to and the roundabout, is planned to commence shortly. Once that has been completed I think that it will improve things a little. However, I think that, generally speaking, we need to let the Winnersh Relief Road Phase 1 bed in and we need to get the Winnersh Relief Road Phase 2 constructed. Then, I think, some of the issues you are currently experiencing will improve.

### **50.7 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question:**

My residents have raised concerns with regard to the safety of the new pedestrian crossings in the town centre Market Place. The crossings themselves are the same colour as the surrounding pedestrian area. There are significant concerns that children will mistake the crossings for a pedestrian path, as the roadway is not sufficiently distinct from the pavement. Was the colour of the crossings raised as a safety risk during the design phase and, if so, what were deemed to be the mitigating factors before the designs were approved?

### **Answer**

In the interests of brevity at this time of night I would refer you to the answer I gave to Sarah Kerr earlier on which, I think, covers all the points you have raised.

### **Supplementary Question**

Considering the number of concerns that have been raised about this, including a petition regarding the safety of the crossings, what action will the Council Executive take to allay these concerns, such as changing the design to make the roadway distinct from the pavement?



### **Supplementary Answer**

It is fair to say that there is a safety audit being carried out on the new setup in the Market Place and, until we have the results, I cannot comment at this time.

### **50.8 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing the following question:**

Can you inform us as to what the Council is doing following the announcement of the planned closure of Liberty of Earley Care Home in several months' time?

### **Answer**

WBC has a Market Failure Protocol (operated jointly with Optalis). The purpose of the protocol is to set out roles and responsibilities in the event of Market Failure in an Adult Social Care service. This includes having good knowledge of the provider market in this area, offering assistance to a provider if it is facing closure and what happens when a provider closes.

The Director of Adult Social Care has nominated her Deputy Director to oversee and coordinate the closure process. The Director will ensure that there is sufficient resource available both in terms of staff and finance to safely and appropriately support individuals and to coordinate an appropriate response.

An announcement to staff at Liberty of Earley Care House was made on Monday 10th September. A letter went out to families to arrive on the same day. This was followed by a residents' meeting on Tuesday 11th. WBC were in attendance at the residents' meeting and will support individuals, hopefully with a family member present, to fully discuss the situation, including options and preferences. The Optalis Self Funder Broker will offer support to secure Extra Care or other residential homes.

### **51. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING**

At this point in the meeting, 10.01pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), the Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. This was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Charlotte Haitham Taylor.

Upon being put to the meeting, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

### **52. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS**

#### **52.1 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

In Twyford we have been pressing for a community hub and new library and have consistently been told that there is no money available. Up to £200k of S106 money has been diverted from the northern parishes which could have been used towards that facility in Twyford. Would the appropriate Executive Member like to comment?

### **Answer**

As you know, there have been a number of meetings over the years to try to resolve that issue as far as Twyford is concerned. That process has certainly not reached a conclusion as yet. So, at present, there is no long term solution, appreciating that the current library is less than ideal and could do with a better facility.

**52.2 Shahid Younis asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Regarding the installation of a pedestrian crossing in my Bulmershe and Whitegates ward across Spitfire Way, linking the Redrow estate to the other side of the road. The funding was agreed under S106. According to the original agreement it was supposed to be completed before the start of the school term in September. Clearly this has not happened. Please can you provide an update as to when the installation will start?

**Answer**

As you are aware, I have only recently taken over this portfolio and this item appears to have slipped through the net. Apologies for that. I would expect to have this in place within 12 months.

**52.3 Andy Croy asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Residents in my ward are concerned about the state of the Council leadership. I am looking at the benches in front of me. There is no Executive Member for Finance. There is no Deputy Executive Member for Finance. There is no Member for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council. It is like a Marie Celeste Executive. What can you do to reassure residents in my ward that you have the necessary leadership powers to restore some direction for this drifting ship?

**Answer**

I think that Members should be reassured by the fact that we nearly have a full bench here this evening and the state of the leadership is very strong. I think you will see that we have got good support in terms of the leadership by the number of different things we have taken through this evening which have not only been supported by our own party but have been supported cross party as well.

I was really pleased this evening to announce my new Deputy Leader and I will be pleased to announce the new Finance Member in the coming weeks along with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council Member. I will keep you abreast of those details as soon as I have them. In the meantime, watch this space.

**52.4 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

Please can you explain what the Council is doing to improve Southlake and the surrounding areas?

**Answer**

A number of things have been going on around Southlake over the last few years, so I will list them:

- Work to deal with the odour from the lake in 2016;
- Repaired sections of the pathway to include the play area and sections up to the picnic area to prevent standing water during wet periods;
- As requested by the engineers, reshaped the bund and dam as it had been walked on and flattened;
- Peripheral works to maintain the integrity of the base of the bund/dam;
- Cleared the pond area of vegetation and, in August, cleared all the litter from the area;
- Numerous tree works have been carried out around the lake, specifically on the bund/dam;
- Repairs to the surfacing of the play area;

- Lake treatment in 2017 by the Countryside Service;
- Significant clearance behind the dam screening to remove vegetation and rubbish;
- Secured funding to resurface the pathway from the bund to the picnic area, with the works planned to be carried out before the onset of winter;
- Hedges around the children's play area are also due to be cut this week.

So, as you can see, a fair number of items.

**52.5 Ian Pittock asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

WBC and some local representatives are looking at a potential rebuild of the California crossroads in Finchampstead South, my ward. We had a meeting last night where we considered the latest design and WBC is now planning an exhibition for December. This needs to be turned into a proper public consultation which differs from an exhibition. According to R v Brent London Borough Council in 1985, consultation must be carried out at a "formative" stage. I also refer you to Para 3.1.5 of the Council's Constitution.

The pace of design work means that we are now in danger of moving beyond the formative stage without a public consultation having occurred. I am keen that we avoid a repetition of the mismatched timing of the design and public consultation stages relating to the school crossings. Will you please ensure that a proper public consultation occurs rather than just an exhibition?

**Answer**

I am happy to look at it. I am afraid that I'm not quite up to speed on all the details of it, although as I have said before: "I remember it from last time". So it is not something that is new although I believe that some of the more grandiose plans that were kicking around 10 years ago have been slightly changed. I am happy to work with you and other local colleagues on the project and I take your point about consultation.

**52.6 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

Residents have approached me about a rumour of a threat to the Silverdale Centre. Could you reassure residents and squash what I hope is a fictitious rumour and that those responsible for spreading the rumour discuss matters with the relevant Councils before deliberately spreading panic with residents?

**Answer**

The Silverdale Centre in Earley, as you are aware, has a lease in place between the Maiden Erlegh School and Wokingham Borough Council relating to the property. For the last three to four years Earley Town Council has operated the centre and continues to do so. Since taking over the centre Earley Town Council has invested a lot of time and money in the facility and has improved things.

The facility is now a valuable and well used addition to the centres in Earley, for example with the bike workshop and music sessions going on there. So it is a very important part of the community. Wokingham Borough Council is not aware of any threat of closure of the facility. Whoever is spreading the rumours, and I think a Liberal leaflet has gone out – let's be clear about that. So if they are aware of any issue that shows that there is a threat of closure, perhaps they could be kind enough to let me have that information so we can act on it. If not then they are stirring and creating worry unnecessarily for people.

Last night at Earley Town Council we also discussed this facility at the Policy and Resources Committee. Earley Town Council, as with Wokingham Borough Council, is not aware of any threat of closure of that facility.

**52.7 Carl Doran asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Will the Executive Member for Highways and Transport join me in congratulating two residents in my ward, Angie Burnish and Shirley Boyt, who campaigned so successfully for the return of the 19a and 19c subsidised bus services?

**Answer**

I recall when I first took over this role that there were changes to that service. I think that there were probably more people involved than just those two in the campaign. I think that everyone who was involved in the campaign around bus services that are relevant and appropriate to the local community deserve to be congratulated, particularly as we got a better result at the end of the day which, I think, is the important piece.

**52.8 Tim Holton asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

There are a number of roads in Hawkedon which are in desperate need of resurfacing. As this Council tonight has approved the Highways and Transportation Term Service Contracts, would I be correct in thinking that it would give the Council greater opportunity to undertake additional work. If so, please can I make the case for my ward to be first in line?

**Answer**

I have a feeling that there are 53 other Councillors in this Chamber who have similar aspirations. I would point out that we do assess the quality of the roads and identify those roads that need to be resurfaced or patched or repaired on a technical basis, so as to avoid political favouritism. However, I am sure that your ward has great need and I am happy to confirm that the additional resources that I look to squeeze out of the new contract will be available to deal with those roads with the highest priority for resurfacing or repairs. If that is Hawkedon then I am sure that it will be you.

**52.9 Helen Power asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:**

I have been getting constant and numerous contacts from Evendons residents concerned about rat problems across the ward. I believe this to be a problem that is plaguing not only Evendons but many other parts of the Borough. Leaving this growing and widespread issue for individual households to sort out is not working. Will you look into a better policy and solution to this environmental health issue as a matter of urgency please?

**Answer**

As you are aware it is not a service that the Council provides these days, so it is for residents to deal with their infestations locally. The Public Protection Service can provide advice but that is as far as that goes. If we were to look at anything more widely then it would have to be a policy decision for this Council. We will look at it, but that is the current policy.

**52.10 Abdul Loyes asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

Re the former Woodley Age Concern site. Firstly, can you provide an update on what is

happening on the site? Secondly, can you please reassure me that ward Members will be kept fully briefed on any future developments?

**Answer**

As you have seen in the earlier statements, that site will be brought forward to the Executive for potential development. If that is approved it will be a mixture of social housing of various different sorts. I will give you more details afterwards. I can absolutely reassure you that we will be very interested in making sure that all the Woodley Members are engaged in this. It is a really important thing to do. It will be good to get more affordable housing for our residents. It is very important to the local housing supply. The local authority companies have been doing a great job. We want to do more of that and yes we will be very keen to talk to you and your residents, of course, about the requirements they might have.

**52.11 Prue Bray asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Re the Minutes of the Executive on 28 August. That was an extraordinary Executive Committee which considered the Council Plan engagement document. As part of that document there were a number of public consultation sessions. Could you tell me please how many people have turned up to each of those sessions?

**Answer**

I don't have the exact figures tonight but I think that at Dinton Pastures it was between 70 and 90. Twyford had a good turnout as well and also Woodley in the precinct. Tomorrow is Friday so we expect the numbers in Wokingham town centre to be similar, maybe even more. In Earley, the stand will be at ASDA on a Saturday morning so we expect there to be a significant number of people going through there.

The locations have been picked on purpose on days that attract a huge number of people. As I said in my speech before, we want to encourage as many people as possible to participate. So please do try to promote it as much as possible by circulating the leaflets. If you have any other ways in which you can promote it to the end of the month, please do get in touch.

**52.12 Imogen Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Back in the autumn of last year, residents of Meadow Road in Emmbrook submitted a petition to the Highways Team on proposed parking restrictions for a Traffic Regulation Order. They have been waiting over nine months for yellow paint to appear on their road and they are still waiting. An application for TRO changes has also been put in for Caroline Drive which is blighted with commuter parking. There is also one for the Terrace and a few other places as well. Please can you explain why we have petitions with the agreement of residents and why it is taking so long to see the changes being implemented?

**Answer**

Actually I would have talked about this if I had time for my Executive statement, so thank you for the opportunity to explain. As Members are probably aware, the whole TRO system was amended a couple of years ago. Effectively, we have one master TRO. A decision was taken to allow the new system to bed in for 12 months and, therefore, no changes have been made for the first 12 months of this new system. I have been working with the relevant Officer to batch up the 90 or so amendments to this TRO which then need to be published in the newspaper and comments received. If there aren't any comments we will implement. If there are comments we have to review them.

I will get the details and you can talk to me offline. I will find out where they are in the process. If the residents don't object to them we will get them in more quickly. If people do object to them then we will have to go through a process and revisit it. It is in process. I expect it will probably be completed by Christmas, this current batch. So, hopefully, having done the technical bit of advertising and consultation, we may get some of them done before Christmas, otherwise it will be early in the New Year.

**52.13 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

The possible development of Chalfont Woods, also known as Area DD, is of interest to both Hillside and Hawkedon residents. Will you please confirm that the publishing of the public consultation about the development will include a leaflet to be delivered to every home in both Hillside and Hawkedon wards, giving the date, time and location of the public meeting or meetings? The leaflet to be delivered to those homes with at least three weeks' notice.

**Answer**

I can assure you that there will be a letter to all affected residents, which will give them plenty of time to come along. The plan is to have a "planning for real" exercise. As you know Area DD has always been zoned for development. It was zoned for development even when the Liberals were in charge of this Council and, during that period, the Liberals actually put forward a proposal that showed development and then backed off. I have the Minutes from the meeting. You obviously decided that it wasn't a good idea, the Council having proposed it in the first place.

This land has always been zoned for development. We would like to talk to residents through a planning for real process about what the options are for this land. I would also like to point out that this is not the development of woodland. This is development of scrubland which was zoned for development from the point when Lower Earley was first planned. There has been a lot of misleading literature put out about the development of Chalfont Park.

**53. MOTIONS**

**53.1 Motion 407 submitted by Gary Cowan**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion, submitted by Gary Cowan and seconded by Lindsay Ferris.

"This Council will evaluate its existing policies on trees to ensure its policies are fully open and transparent. The new policy recognises that many trees may be subject to some tree work and it is not practical to consult on all works undertaken. For example pruning works carried out is unlikely to cause significant public concern, however the felling of any trees can be contentious. Felling trees without prior consultation due to health and safety issues is understood but where the felling involves any loss of tree/s for any other reason whatsoever the public must be formally consulted on the proposed works and the reasons why it is necessary

The Council must maintain proper records of all trees felled. For trees which are to be felled including trees protected by TPOs, or those situated in Conservation Areas, or in association with development proposals and planning permissions this Council will put in place a statutory consultation processes and current Council policies will be amended to reflect these changes as soon as it practicable".

In the ensuing debate a number of Members stated that the proposed Motion had merit but would benefit from clarification on the wording in relation to the practical implications of the proposals for existing Council policies and procedures. Consequently, it was suggested that the Motion be withdrawn and be re-submitted with revised wording to a future meeting.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Motion 407 be withdrawn and be re-submitted, with revised wording, to a future meeting of the Council.

### **53.2 Motion 409 submitted by Pauline Jorgensen**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Guy Grandison.

“This Council believes that the successful operation of a public transport system in our area requires co-operation between neighbouring local authorities.

This Council believes that Reading Buses would benefit from an increased diversity of voices and oversight from neighbouring authorities to Reading Borough whose areas Reading Buses operate in. Therefore, this Council calls on Reading Buses to allow representatives from local authority areas (other than Reading Borough), in which the bus company operates, to attend board meetings of the company in an observer status – ensuring the views of residents in areas including Wokingham Borough are heard and listened to”.

It was moved by Lindsay Ferris and seconded by Prue Bray that the Motion be amended by inserting the words in Bold as follows:

“This Council believes that the successful operation of a public transport system in our area requires co-operation between neighbouring local authorities.

This Council believes that Reading Buses would benefit from an increased diversity of voices and oversight from neighbouring authorities to Reading Borough whose areas Reading Buses operate in. Therefore, this Council calls on Reading Buses to allow representatives from local authority areas **including ward members where a specific issue has been raised by local residents** (other than Reading Borough), in which the bus company operates, to attend board meetings of the company in an observer status – ensuring the views of residents in areas including Wokingham Borough are heard and listened to”.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that the propose amendment was accepted.

The amended (substantive) Motion was then put to the vote and was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

Prior to the vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed Motion.

The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Keith Baker	Rachel Burgess	Gary Cowan
Laura Blumenthal	Andy Croy	John Kaiser
Chris Bowring	Carl Doran	Bill Soane
Prue Bray		
Jenny Cheng		
Richard Dolinski		
Lindsay Ferris		
Guy Grandison		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Tim Holton		
Graham Howe		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Dianne King		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Ian Pittock		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED:** “This Council believes that the successful operation of a public transport system in our area requires co-operation between neighbouring local authorities.

This Council believes that Reading Buses would benefit from an increased diversity of voices and oversight from neighbouring authorities to Reading Borough whose areas Reading Buses operate in. Therefore, this Council calls on Reading Buses to allow representatives from local authority areas including ward members where a specific issue has been raised by local residents (other than Reading Borough), in which the bus company operates, to attend board meetings of the company in an observer status – ensuring the views of residents in areas including Wokingham Borough are heard and listened to”.

### **53.3 Motion 410 submitted by Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey**

Due to time constraints the Motion was not considered and, in accordance with Rule 4.2.8.1 was deemed to have fallen.



**53.4 Motion 411 submitted by Prue Bray**

Due to time constraints the Motion was not considered and, in accordance with Rule 4.2.8.1, was deemed to have fallen.

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