

# Agenda Item IMD16

## INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2023/16

<b>TITLE</b>	Appointment of Member to the Highwood Management Conference
<b>DECISION TO BE MADE BY</b>	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Children's Services - Prue Bray
<b>DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME</b>	20 July 2023 LGF4 at 11am
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)**

To appoint a Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) member representative to the Highwood Management Conference for the 2023/24 municipal year.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Deputy Leader of the Council appoint Councillor Tony Skuse to the Highwood Management Conference for the 2023/24 municipal year.

### **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The reports sets out the background to the formation of the Highwood Management Conference, and provides context as to the need to appoint a second Member.

## **Background**

The Conference was set up in 1965 by a legal agreement between Berkshire County Council, Wokingham Rural District Council, the Parish Council of Woodley and Sandford, and the Parish Council of Earley. It was set up as an annual meeting to *“consider matters affecting the open spaces (Highwood) and advise the Rural District Council and the Parish Councils as to the measures to be taken to secure the most effective use of the open spaces by the public”*. All parties to the agreement have the right to appoint two members to attend the Conference which should be held annually.

Following the dissolution of the County Council in 1998, the ownership of the Highwood Local Nature Reserve passed to Wokingham District Council (now Wokingham Borough Council). At that time the authority took the opportunity to reconsider the method of consulting with the local community about the management of Highwood.

Reports on suggested changes were considered by the Highwood Management Conference and Woodley, and Earley Town Councils in 1998. The change was to manage the site with a more formally constituted Friends Group (as happens at other sites managed by the Countryside Service) and Woodley and Earley Town Councils agreeing to withdraw from the 1965 Agreement to establish the Highwood Management Conference. The Conference did not support the suggestion that Highwood should be managed in the same way as other site, and Woodley and Earley Town Councils did not support any change.

In January 1999, the WDC Environmental Services Committee resolved that “The views of the Highwood Management Conference be noted and that, other than in exceptional circumstances, meetings of the Conference continue to be facilitated on an annual basis.”

## **Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)**

The two largest Groups at WBC are entitled to appoint one Member each to the Conference. At WBC’s Annual Council meeting on 18 May 2023, Councillor Laura Blumenthal was appointed on behalf of the Conservative Group. At the time, the Liberal Democrat Group had not put a nomination forward.

Since the Annual Council meeting, the Liberal Democrat Group has resolved to nominate Councillor Tony Skuse as their representative. Whilst the nomination belongs to the Liberal Democrat Group, they are entitled to put forward a nomination for any Member of the Council, regardless of their political grouping, so long as that Member is content with such a nomination.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	R
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	R
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	R

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
Appointment of WBC representatives to the Highwood Management Conference promotes partnership working.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comments
Monitoring Officer	No comments
Leader of the Council	No comments

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
None

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