

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2015 FROM 8.00 PM TO 10.15 PM**

Present:- Parry Batth, (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Keith Baker, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, David Chopping, Gary Cowan, Michael Firmager, Lindsay Ferris, Kay Gilder, Guy Grandison, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, Nicky Jerrome, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Tom McCann, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Barrie Patman, Ian Pittock, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Chris Singleton, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane, Paul Swaddle, Simon Weeks and Bob Wyatt.

74. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 November 2014 and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 16 January 2015 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

75. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Alistair Auty, UllaKarin Clark, Mike Gore, Kate Haines, David Lee, Bob Pitts, Nick Ray, Rob Stanton, Alison Swaddle, Dee Tomlin and Shahid Younis.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tom McCann declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that his daughter was employed by a company involved with the Wokingham town centre regeneration project.

77. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

77.01 Question

Clive Jones asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Given the increasing level of risk associated with the council finances, will you guarantee that all the savings in the budget are achievable?

Answer

It would be extremely foolish of me to say that I guarantee that every saving will be achieved and at the level stated. I do not think anyone could possibly do that, as many are by definition future events with unknown outcomes at this stage.

What I can say however, is that year on year we continue to come up with substantial savings, totalling £31.3m over the last 5 years and including £8.3m for 2015/2016. We do this by continually finding more efficient ways of delivering services and continually seeking more cost effective solutions in what we do, whilst protecting our services valued by our residents.

We have an extremely strong track record in delivering our savings year on year which is borne out through our impressive financial management record and year on year financial year end results. This shows we not only achieve our financial targets but often exceed

them. It is this strong track record that enables the Council to have a robust all round financial position in times of austerity and cuts to our funding, whilst also achieving for this year a zero percent increase in Council Tax next year.

I believe we will rise to the financial challenges, including the efficiencies, presented in the 2015/2016 budget in the same way we have risen to the challenges presented in previous years; with sound, diligent financial management and effective financial controls.

Supplementary Question

If the savings are not achieved will you resign as Leader of the Council or would you expect your Executive Member for Finance to resign in your place?

Supplementary Answer

No.

77.02 Question

Shaun Hanna asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question:

I have looked in the Medium Term Financial Plan for information about funding for the Winnersh relief road, half of which is to be funded by the Council. I have not found any reference to the Winnersh relief road at all, even in the section which refers to the vision for the next 10 years. Where in the Medium Term Financial Plan is the Winnersh relief road and its funding shown?

Answer

This no doubt leads on from your question about the Winnersh relief road that you asked at the last Council meeting. I do welcome the opportunity to update the Council. As you kindly point out in the question, delivery of the Winnersh relief road is split into two sections.

The section between Lower Earley Way and King Street Lane (Phase 1) will be delivered by the developer of the Hatch Farm Dairies site.

The section between King Street Lane and the Reading Road (Phase 2) will be delivered by the Council.

The Council's 3 year capital programme and capital vision are only intended to represent what the Council funds directly. This being the case the Phase 1 of the Winnersh relief road was not included as it is being delivered by the developer, but I think if you look at the vision you will find that Phase 2 is in there.

We are currently in the process of commissioning the design work on Phase 2 of the road and we would hope to have a planning application ready for some time in 2016. Delivery of Phase 2 of the road is expected to be in conjunction with Phase 1. However this does not predicate the option of Phase 2 being delivered earlier subject to funding being available.

Supplementary Question

I think you have answered my supplementary which was when is work going to start on the planning and design because presumably funding needs to be set aside for that in this year?

Supplementary Answer

That is correct.

78. PETITIONS

There were no petitions received.

79. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor referred Members to the list of engagements attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor that had been circulated at the meeting.

The Deputy Mayor highlighted that the Mayor had invited all Members to attend a charity auction at the Martin and Pole auction house on 21 March at 19:00.

Members' attention was also drawn to the Mayor's award for January 2015 which had been awarded to Barbara Teague for services to school governance. The meeting was informed that Barbara had started as a Foundation Governor at Arborfield and Newland Junior School in 1989 and since that time had been heavily involved in the governance of the school including the amalgamation of Arborfield and Newland Junior School and Coombes Infant School to become the Coombes CE Primary School. She retired as a Governor at Christmas 2014 and the Deputy Mayor passed on the thanks of the Council for Barbara's many years of dedicated service.

At the invitation of the Deputy Mayor, Angus Ross addressed the meeting and passed on the best wishes of the meeting to the Mayor who was absent from the meeting.

Councillor Ross then informed Members that he had attended the annual awards ceremony of the British Association of Landscape Industries, (BALI) where the designer and architect of the Dinton Pastures Children's Play, Adam White, the constructors Davis White and the Council as the client had been recognised by the Association. The citation from the Association had referred to the very high levels of professionalism, workmanship and client satisfaction associated with the project. A plaque awarded at the ceremony was presented by Councillor Ross to the Council and he congratulated the Council's Officers who had worked on the project. Councillor Ross closed by commenting that it was great to see so many residents enjoying the play area even in February.

80. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND ASSOCIATED REPORTS

The Council considered four reports which together comprised a single Agenda item:

- the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2015/2018 as set out on Agenda pages 27 to 37;
- the Capital Programme and Strategy 2014/2017 as set out on Agenda pages 38 to 49;
- the Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15 as set out on Agenda pages 50 to 85;
- the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/2018 - Revenue Budget Submission 2015/2016 Agenda pages 86 to 89, subject to the tabled statutory resolution, Updated Parish Precepts 2015/2016 and Updated Council Tax by Band and Parish 2015/2016.

The Mayor reminded Members that a total of 90 minutes would be set aside for debate.

Keith Baker, Leader of the Council, made a statement on the 2015/2016 budget, together with his budget proposals. (Attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes).

Prue Bray, the Leader of the Opposition, then made her Budget statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, (Attached at Appendix 2 to these Minutes).

Following these speeches, debate on the four reports comprised within the item began.

During the course of this debate it was proposed and tabled by the Lindsay Ferris that the recommendation under 67.02 Capital Programme and Strategy be amended as follows:

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That Council approve the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2015/16
- 2) ***Overview and Scrutiny will review the Capital Programme 2016/2018 and report back to the July Council meeting.***

The proposed amendment was seconded by Tom McCann.

After debate the proposed amendment to Item 67.02 was put to the vote and was declared by the Deputy Mayor to have been lost.

Following the loss of the amendment, the debate on the substantive items continued.

80.01 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2015/2016

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 27 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Housing Revenue Account Budget be approved;
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be increased by an average 3.34% effective from 1 April 2015;
- 3) garage rents be increased by 2.4% effective from 1 April 2015;
- 4) it be noted that a review of the Shared Equity Rents in 2011 had determined that rents had been kept artificially low in previous years and not increased in line with the terms of the leases. Therefore rents for shared equity properties will gradually increase above inflation for four years to bring the rents in line by 1 April 2016. The increase for 2015/16 will be between 6% and 13% (£3 and £11 per month) depending on the property;
- 5) Tenant Service Charges are set in line with estimated costs;
- 6) the Housing Major Repairs (capital) programme for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix C be approved.

80.02 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND STRATEGY 2015/2018

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Anthony Pollock that the Capital Programme and Strategy 2015/2018 be approved as set out on Agenda page 38.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Capital Programme and Strategy 2015/2018 be approved.

80.03 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015/2016

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 50 be approved

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the following elements be approved:

- 1) The Capital Prudential indicators, 2015/16-2017/18;
- 2) The borrowing strategy 2015/16;
- 3) The Annual Investment Strategy 2015/16; and
- 4) The Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity 2015/16.

80.04 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/2018-REVENUE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2015/2016

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Anthony Pollock that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/2018, including the Revenue Budget Submission 2015/2016 and the Statutory Resolution setting out the 2016/2016 Council Tax levels be approved subject to the following tabled amendments:

- 2015/2018-Revenue Budget Submission 2015/2016 – Updated Statutory Resolution, Appendix A, (replacement Agenda pages 88 to 89);
- Updated Parish Precepts 2015/2016, (replacement MTFP page 95);
- Updated Council Tax by Band and Parish, (replacement MTFP page 96).

After further debate, the Deputy Mayor reminded Council that under ‘The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014’ councils were required to hold recorded votes in relation to council tax decisions, including any amendments.

Consequently a recorded vote was taken on the proposed amended recommendations for Item 67.04 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/2018 – Revenue Budget Submission 2015/2016.

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
Mark Ashwell	Prue Bray	Parry Batth
Keith Baker	Lindsay Ferris	
Chris Bowring	Kay Gilder	
David Chopping	Nicky Jerrome	
Gary Cowan	Tom McCann	
Michael Firmager	Beth Rowland	
Guy Grandison	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	
Mike Haines		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
John Halsall		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Tim Holton		

Philip Houldsworth		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Ian Pittock		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Chris Singleton		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Paul Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Bob Wyatt		

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2015/2018, including the revenue budget submission for 2015/2016 be approved;
- 2) the Statutory Resolution that sets out the 2015/2016 Council Tax levels, (Appendix A) as tabled at the meeting, be approved and that it be noted that at its meeting on 29th January 2015 the Special Council Executive Committee calculated the following amounts for the year 2015/16 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012:-
 - (a) 65,157.2 being the amount calculated by the Council, (Item T) in accordance with regulation 31B of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012), as its council tax base for the year.
 - (b) Part of the Council's area.

Arborfield and Newland	1,259.5
Barkham	1,440.1
Charvil	1,392.4
Earley	11,671.1
Finchampstead	5,653.7
Remenham	317.5
Ruscombe	495.6
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,039.6
Shinfield	4,621.2
Sonning	805.9

Swallowfield	957.0
Twyford	2,944.0
Wargrave	2,078.7
Winnersh	3,800.7
Wokingham Town	14,042.0
Wokingham Without	3,073.3
Woodley	9,564.9
	65,157.2

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates.

- 3) Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2015/2016 (excluding Parish precepts) is £81,199,554.
- 4) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2015/2016 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011:-
 - (a) £302,945,499 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils
 - (b) (£218,186,542) being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act
 - (c) £84,758,957 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 4(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year (Item R)
 - (d) £1,300.84 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by 1(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the 'basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £3,559,403 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the table below).

	2015/16			2014/15			Council
	TAX	PARISH	PARISH	TAX	PARISH	PARISH	Tax
	BASE	PRECEPT	BAND D	BASE	PRECEPT	BAND D	Change
		£	£		£	£	%
Arborfield and Newland	1,259.5	86,280	68.50	1,259.5	86,289	68.51	(0.01)
Barkham	1,440.1	38,342	26.62	1,427.8	38,342	26.85	(0.85)
Charvil	1,392.4	39,451	28.33	1,382.2	38,572	27.91	1.53
Earley	11,671.1	747,387	64.04	11,664.5	735,213	63.03	1.60
Finchampstead	5,653.7	122,410	21.65	5,653.7	122,408	21.65	0.00
Remenham	317.5	21,420	67.46	309.3	21,420	69.25	(2.58)
Ruscombe	495.6	9,766	19.71	487.9	9,766	20.02	(1.55)
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,039.6	22,500	21.64	1,022.8	22,500	22.00	(1.62)
Shinfield	4,621.2	277,919	60.14	4,591.3	264,470	57.60	4.41
Sonning	805.9	34,400	42.69	787.5	31,459	39.95	6.85

Swallowfield	957.0	18,540	19.37	956.3	18,303	19.14	1.22
Twyford	2,944.0	58,598	19.90	2,944.0	58,599	19.90	(0.00)
Wargrave	2,078.7	154,937	74.54	2,077.7	152,841	73.56	1.32
Winnersh	3,800.7	107,801	28.36	3,800.7	107,801	28.36	0.00
Wokingham	14,042.0	665,195	47.37	13,600.5	625,492	45.99	3.00
Wokingham Without	3,073.3	143,925	46.83	3,073.3	143,925	46.83	0.00
Woodley	9,564.9	1,010,532	105.65	9,459.9	1,030,349	108.92	(3.00)
Total / Average	65,157.2	3,559,403	54.63	64,498.9	3,507,749	54.38	0.45

- (f) £1,246.21 being the amount at 4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 4(e) above by the amount at 2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relates.
- 5) That it be noted that for the year 2015/2016 the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley has issued a precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is due to approve its precept on 23rd February 2015, and the provisional precept supplied has been used in the calculation of the council tax figures shown below.
- 6) That the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2015/2016 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL TAX 2015/2016

Valuation Bands								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Wokingham Borough Council	830.810	969.270	1,107.740	1,246.210	1,523.150	1,800.080	2,077.020	2,492.420
Thames Valley Police Authority	109.130	127.320	145.510	163.700	200.080	236.460	272.830	327.400
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	40.440	47.180	53.920	60.660	74.140	87.620	101.100	121.320

Aggregate of Council Tax Requirement for each parish and the borough for each part of the Council's area:-

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Arborfield & Newland	876.48	1,022.55	1,168.63	1,314.71	1,606.87	1,899.02	2,191.19	2,629.42
Barkham	848.56	989.97	1,131.40	1,272.83	1,555.69	1,838.53	2,121.39	2,545.66

Charvil	849.70	991.30	1,132.92	1,274.54	1,557.78	1,841.00	2,124.24	2,549.08
Earley	873.50	1,019.08	1,164.66	1,310.25	1,601.42	1,892.58	2,183.75	2,620.50
Finchampstead	845.24	986.11	1,126.98	1,267.86	1,549.61	1,831.35	2,113.10	2,535.72
Remenham	875.78	1,021.74	1,167.70	1,313.67	1,605.60	1,897.52	2,189.45	2,627.34
Ruscombe	843.95	984.60	1,125.26	1,265.92	1,547.24	1,828.55	2,109.87	2,531.84
St. Nicholas Hurst	845.24	986.10	1,126.98	1,267.85	1,549.60	1,831.34	2,113.09	2,535.70
Shinfield	870.90	1,016.05	1,161.20	1,306.35	1,596.65	1,886.95	2,177.25	2,612.70
Sonning	859.27	1,002.47	1,145.69	1,288.90	1,575.33	1,861.74	2,148.17	2,577.80
Swallowfield	843.72	984.34	1,124.96	1,265.58	1,546.82	1,828.06	2,109.30	2,531.16
Twyford	844.08	984.75	1,125.43	1,266.11	1,547.47	1,828.82	2,110.19	2,532.22
Wargrave	880.50	1,027.25	1,174.00	1,320.75	1,614.25	1,907.75	2,201.25	2,641.50
Winnersh	849.72	991.33	1,132.95	1,274.57	1,557.81	1,841.04	2,124.29	2,549.14
Wokingham Town	862.39	1,006.11	1,149.85	1,293.58	1,581.05	1,868.50	2,155.97	2,587.16
Wokingham Without	862.03	1,005.69	1,149.37	1,293.04	1,580.39	1,867.72	2,155.07	2,586.08
Woodley	901.24	1,051.44	1,201.65	1,351.86	1,652.28	1,952.69	2,253.10	2,703.72

Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements for each part of the Council's area:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Arborfield & Newland	1,026.05	1,197.05	1,368.06	1,539.07	1,881.09	2,223.10	2,565.12	3,078.14
Barkham	998.13	1,164.47	1,330.83	1,497.19	1,829.91	2,162.61	2,495.32	2,994.38
Charvil	999.27	1,165.80	1,332.35	1,498.90	1,832.00	2,165.08	2,498.17	2,997.80
Earley	1,023.07	1,193.58	1,364.09	1,534.61	1,875.64	2,216.66	2,557.68	3,069.22
Finchampstead	994.81	1,160.61	1,326.41	1,492.22	1,823.83	2,155.43	2,487.03	2,984.44
Remenham	1,025.35	1,196.24	1,367.13	1,538.03	1,879.82	2,221.60	2,563.38	3,076.06
Ruscombe	993.52	1,159.10	1,324.69	1,490.28	1,821.46	2,152.63	2,483.80	2,980.56
St. Nicholas Hurst	994.81	1,160.60	1,326.41	1,492.21	1,823.82	2,155.42	2,487.02	2,984.42
Shinfield	1,020.47	1,190.55	1,360.63	1,530.71	1,870.87	2,211.03	2,551.18	3,061.42
Sonning	1,008.84	1,176.97	1,345.12	1,513.26	1,849.55	2,185.82	2,522.10	3,026.52
Swallowfield	993.29	1,158.84	1,324.39	1,489.94	1,821.04	2,152.14	2,483.23	2,979.88
Twyford	993.65	1,159.25	1,324.86	1,490.47	1,821.69	2,152.90	2,484.12	2,980.94
Wargrave	1,030.07	1,201.75	1,373.43	1,545.11	1,888.47	2,231.83	2,575.18	3,090.22

Winnersh	999.29	1,165.83	1,332.38	1,498.93	1,832.03	2,165.12	2,498.22	2,997.86
Wokingham Town	1,011.96	1,180.61	1,349.28	1,517.94	1,855.27	2,192.58	2,529.90	3,035.88
Wokingham Without	1,011.60	1,180.19	1,348.80	1,517.40	1,854.61	2,191.80	2,529.00	3,034.80
Woodley	1,050.81	1,225.94	1,401.08	1,576.22	1,926.50	2,276.77	2,627.03	3,152.44

- 7) in the event that there are any changes to the provisional precept of the Fire Authority, arising from their precept setting meeting being held on 23 February 2015, the Director of Finance and Resources be delegated authority to enact all relevant changes to the MTFP, Statutory Resolution and council tax levels.

81.00 HOUSING STRATEGY 2015-18

The Council considered a Housing Strategy as set out on Agenda pages 90 to 125 of the Agenda. The Strategy had been considered by the Executive earlier that evening and recommended for adoption by the Council.

It was proposed by John Kaiser that the Housing Strategy 2015-18 be adopted and this was seconded by Bob Wyatt.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Housing Strategy 2015-2018 be approved.

82.00 ADOPTION OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) CHARGING SCHEME

The Council considered a Community Infrastructure Levy, (CIL) Charging Scheme as set out on Agenda pages 126 to 152. The proposed scheme had been considered by the Executive earlier that evening and recommended for adoption by the Executive.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Examiner's recommendations be accepted by the Council;
- 2) the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Appendix A (incorporating the Examiner's recommended modifications) is adopted to come into effect for all planning applications approved on or after 6th April 2015;
- 3) the 'Regulation 123' List of Infrastructure Projects for which CIL may be used at Appendix B is approved for publication;
- 4) the Instalment Policy at Appendix C is approved for publication;
- 5) the use of agreements (or other mechanism) to secure CIL in relation to mitigation measures required in order to make the development acceptable and to ensure that the Council complies with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (in relation to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directive) be agreed;

- 6) the Strategic Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways, be authorised to agree minor amendments to the Charging Schedule and supporting documents prior to publication to assist the clarity of the documents.

83.00 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2014/2015

The Council considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2014/2015 as set out on Agenda pages 153 to 177. The report had been considered by the Executive earlier and recommended to the Council for approval.

Anthony Pollock proposed that the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2014/2015 be approved by the Council and this was seconded by Keith Baker.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2014/2015 be approved.

84.00 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Council considered proposed changes to the Constitution as set out on Agenda pages 178 to 211. The proposed changes had been recommended to the Council for agreement by the Constitution Review Working Group.

It was proposed by Paul Swaddle and seconded by Prue Bray that the proposed changes to the Constitution be agreed.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the following amendments to the relevant sections of the Council's Constitution, as put forward by the Constitution Review Working Group, be agreed:

a) Section 4.2.2.1 – Timing and Order of Business

The following to be added to the Council's order of business:

“o) to receive statements from the Council Owned Companies.”

b) Chapter 4.4 – Committees of the Council – Audit Committee

A number of minor amendments as set out in the report.

c) Chapter 5.4 – Executive Procedure Rules

Rule 5.4.37 to be amended as follows:

“Rule 5.4.37 Scope of Questions

*The Chief Executive and/or **Leader** may reject a question if it: ...”*

d) Chapter 8.4.2 Meetings of the Licensing and Appeals Committee

First sentence to be amended as follows:

*“The Licensing and Appeals Committee shall meet **at least four** times per municipal year, as scheduled in the Timetable of Meetings, as agreed by Council.”*

e) Section 9 – Ethics and Corporate Governance

Revised versions of the following documents as attached at Appendix A to the report:

Chapter 9.4 – Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy

Chapter 9.5 – Whistleblowing Policy and Guidance

Chapter 9.6 – Anti-Bribery Policy

Chapter 9.7 – Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Chapter 9.8 – Prosecution and Sanction Policy

85.00 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2015/2016

The Council considered the proposed Timetable of Meetings for the 2015/2016 Municipal Year as set out on Agenda page 212.

It was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the 2015/216 timetable of meetings be approved.

It was then proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that the Timetable of Meetings be amended to include an additional Council meeting on 21 January 2016.

Paul Swaddle raised a point of order under Rule 4.2.12 (s) of the Council's Rule of Procedure that the proposed amendment should not be accepted on the basis that the Council had considered the issue of an additional Council meeting within the last six months and therefore the amendment was in breach of Rule of Procedure 4.2.11.4 which prohibited the consideration of Motions if they were substantially the same as a Motion considered at a meeting of the Council within the last six months.

86.00 ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

At this point, 9.55 pm the meeting was adjourned for a short period whilst advice on the constitutionality of the amendment was sought.

87.00 RECOMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING

At 10.00 pm the meeting recommenced.

88.00 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2015/2016 CONTINUED

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that the proposed amendment to the Timetable of Meetings 2015/2016 was considered to be an allowable amendment on the grounds that the proposed amendment was more specific than had been considered at the Extraordinary Council meeting of 29 January 2015.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was declared by the Deputy Mayor to be lost. Following the loss of the amendment, the substantive Motion to approve the Timetable of Meetings 2015/2016 as set out in the Agenda was put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That the timetable of meetings for 2015/2016 Municipal Year be agreed.

89.00 OUTCOME OF CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT

The Council considered the result of a Code of Code complaint as determined by a Hearing Panel on 18 December 2014 which had determined that Councillor Chris Singleton had failed to follow the Wokingham Borough Council Code of Conduct.

It was noted that the Constitution required that the matter be reported to the next meeting of the Council following the date of the hearing.

It was proposed by Pauline Helliard-Symons and seconded by Paul Swaddle that it be noted that Councillor Chris Singleton had been found to be in breach of the Members Code of Conduct.

Prue Bray commented that whilst the decision notice in relation to the Hearings Panel had been published on the Council's website it was not easy to find without knowledge of the Council's processes. She made the general point that it in the interests of openness and transparency such decisions should be placed in an area of the website that could be easily searched for.

Upon being put to vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council notes that Councillor Chris Singleton had been found to be in breach of the Member Code of Conduct.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Council

If you need help in understanding this document or if you would like a copy of it in large print please contact one of our Team Support Officers.

Speech by Councillor Keith Baker, Leader of the Council

This is my first budget following the transfer of the leadership role from Councillor Lee to myself. Nothing prepares you for the complexities in setting a budget in such a difficult financial scenario. In keeping with a long standing tradition I am sure you will be familiar with the fact that Wokingham is the lowest funded authority in the country.

The Officers and my fellow Executive Members have managed to work their magic for yet another year which has resulted in a council tax freeze for next year. I would like to personally thank them all for their supreme efforts. As recent statistics have shown, wages are growing at a faster rate than inflation and this freeze will mean a little less pressure on their disposable income.

This budget is a great platform for increasing prosperity for residents which will in turn contribute to the future of this Borough. For some time this Council has had a clear vision and that is to make our Borough “a great place to live and an even better place to do business”. Core to that vision are a number of threads as follows:

1. To facilitate the regeneration of our towns and villages; as witnessed by the first planning application for Peach Street
2. Create an environment that allows business to thrive; this is occurring by the continuous development of key industrial areas like the Thames Valley Park or the part of Green Park that has the windmill. Incidentally these areas are actually in our Borough and not in Reading!
3. Continue to work with our partners to maintain our outstanding educational achievements; evidenced by improving grades and major building investments like Bulmershe School
4. Deliver well designed developments and strong communities; this is happening through a huge commitment to engagement with residents and their associated organisations. The Strategic Development Location, (SDL) Forums are extremely well established and it is fantastic how local residents are keen to participate in them. It is amazing to see 100 to 200 sometimes even more people regularly attend the Arborfield one for example;
5. Ensure financial viability despite annual funding cuts; no services have been cut whilst freezing council tax and freezing the precept support grant passed onto Parish and Town Councils.
6. Invest in prevention services that maintain our residents' independence; as witnessed through our extensive involvement in the Health and Wellbeing Agenda.

Tonight you will hear from my fellow Executives Members the details of what we have achieved and what we continue to do to ensure that we make our Borough one of the best places to live in the country. All this has been done after making £8m savings and efficiencies this year which over the last 5 years makes a total of £31m. All achieved without any cuts to services for next year. I believe this is a testament to the ongoing efficiency and careful financial management of the Council by a committed Conservative administration and committed Officers.

But this only relates to the revenue budget. Let me turn to the Capital budget and see what capital investments are planned. Over the next three years the plan is to invest £335m. This clearly shows an ambition and determination to invest in the Borough and to improve the lives of all in our community. This means an investment of £96m for next year

which includes £27m for Children Services and £21m for Health and Wellbeing. Both of these are well ahead of the investment for the Town Centre regeneration. We are investing in affordable housing, schools, extra care housing and other specialist housing for the needs of our community. We are investing in sustainable new communities with the infrastructure and amenities that they need to thrive and we have stopped the majority of inappropriate backland developments.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to our Enforcement Officers who have been outstanding over the last year. They have been consistently winning planning appeals and taking developers to both civil and criminal courts and gaining convictions. They have put a strong marker down to anyone who wishes to flout our policies and the law to say we are not going to let you get away with such actions. My thanks also to all the ward Members who have been fully involved in these actions. They have had a strong part to play as well.

You will hear more about some of the specific projects from the relevant Executive Members later.

Our Economic Development Officer has been very busy over this last year continuing the program started last year where unemployed residents receive training to understand how to set up their own businesses. The aim is for them to become more independent and to realise their potential by taking control of their lives rather than remaining dependent on unemployment benefits. These individuals will be the small businesses of tomorrow and a few of them will become big business within the next decade. Their initiatives will not only help themselves but ultimately become a gateway for others to get onto the employment ladder.

We will continue to help our residents retain their independence through support to stay in their own homes instead of moving into residential care. The provision of excellent specialist housing for those with learning disabilities will give them homes for life in the community which are near to their family and friends.

Our companies continue to stabilise and develop with process changes already in place including the additional constitutional reporting to council which we will debate under agenda item 71. A prime example is Wokingham Housing Limited which will have investments of £12m in each of the next two years primarily for the development of the replacement for Eustace Crescent and Fosters in Woodley.

This is indeed an ambitious, bold and achievable budget, but we owe it to our residents to invest in our community to help them steer out of financial difficulties to a more prosperous and brighter future. Each year it is getting harder and harder to keep the council tax low, but we will continue to do this to the best of our ability. However, we are now moving into a political environment that has never been experienced before with political uncertainty to the fore. Who knows what the landscape will be after May and the financial changes that may bring.

I would like to close by saying that we have the lowest known staff to resident's ratio which means we have good productivity from our staff. We are also have one of the highest tax collecting councils. All this on the back of being the lowest funded authority in the country.

Speech by Prue Bray, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

I want to thank Officers from all over the Council who have worked hard to supply the answers to the large number of detailed questions we have been asking over the past 13 days.

The reason why all those detailed questions had to be asked in the last 13 days is that is how short a period we have had access to the budget papers. I think we heard from Councillor Keith Baker how difficult and complex it is to prepare a budget, think how difficult and complex it is to assess what the administration has done in 13 days. We knew what the level of government grant was, because that is a figure published in December. We were briefed in January on where the pressures are, and also had an idea of some of the major building projects that were in the pipeline. But until 13 days ago we had no access to any information whatsoever about how the administration is planning to spend the council's money from next April.

Most other councils do not operate in this manner. As an example, in Reading, the council openly published possible budget options and their implications in detail as long ago as September. It is not just opposition councillors who are shut out of the process. So are the public. But, Hallelujah this may be the final year that this is the case, because in answer to a question from Councillor Lindsay Ferris at the Executive earlier today we were told that there is going to be some kind of consultation and open discussion on the budget next year. So let us hope

Point of clarification from Councillor Keith Baker: I did not actually say it would be next year. Hopefully it will be next year, but there are a lot of things to discuss.

Continuation of Speech from Prue Bray, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Oh dear Councillor Baker you have just spoilt my entire evening. I thought that finally we were going to get somewhere. Let us hope that it will be next year, otherwise you will be listening to me say this again. Let us hope that whatever engagement there is sensible and at the right level.

A couple of days ago on twitter a Conservative councillor suggested I was patronising for saying that some information about cost should be included in the Carnival Pool area consultation that is going on at the moment. On the contrary, it is patronising to believe that the public are not capable of understanding figures, and well beyond patronising to consult the public as if they can have whatever they want, even when it may turn out to be un-fundable pie in the sky.

When you have only had the budget papers for a few days, it is extremely difficult to get fully to grips with what the administration has put in them. And that is probably the point. The Conservatives look on this budget meeting as some sort of political game: how to disadvantage the opposition. The irony is that as revenue funding gets tighter and tighter it is less and less in the Conservatives' own interests to keep the budget secret. Doing so means that everything in the budget is down to them, not just the good things, supposing there are some, but all the bad things too.

So let us have a look at what is in the budget. One of the things is a long list of savings for next year— a list of over £8m. Some are savings of hundreds of thousands of pounds on big ticket items such as adult social care, and residential placements for children, but

there is a very long tail that goes all the way down to things like £15,000 extra from car park charges at the country parks, and £1,000 from library printing costs. Some of this long list of savings – both the big ones and the small ones - are going to be very hard to deliver. It is very unclear to us that they are all achievable. In the case of social care it is not just we that have doubts. At last week's Health and Wellbeing Board in the Agenda was included a response to a Local Government Association survey on the Care Act. In response to a question which says '*How confident is your council that there is sufficient money within its budget for implementation in 2015/2016?*' the answer was '*Not at all confident*'.

Because we do not believe that all these savings are necessarily achievable, although we do think that Officers will do their best to achieve them as they always do and would like to salute the Officer core who are as was said are in the lowest funded unitary authority in the country with the lowest ratio of staff to residents in the country and extremely under pressure and we do wish them to know how much we appreciate the hard work that they do for this Council. But nevertheless this is going to be a tough budget to deliver. We do not think it is achievable and we cannot support the revenue budget submission.

The really disappointing thing for us is that this still looks like a budget based on shaving costs. Indeed, I think that Councillor Baker referred to efficiencies already this evening. We thought that the Conservatives were beginning to understand that salami-slicing services is unsustainable, because if you are salami slicing eventually you run out of sausage. The Council needs to think more radically: more sharing with other councils to save costs and provide resilience; delivering services in different ways through partnership working and use of technology. Wokingham Housing Limited has already been briefly referred to, it may be beginning to find its feet, although we still have some concerns. But otherwise we can see few signs in this revenue budget of progress in the direction of the radical change that is needed. Councillor Baker referred to the political uncertainty. Nobody knows what is going to happen in May or what colour of government we are going to have or in fact, what coalition government we are going to have. It is going to be very tough, but we need to respond to that with radical change not with more salami slicing.

And there is the Capital Programme – and specifically the Wokingham town centre regeneration. This time last year we were discussing a total cost of regeneration of £95m – of which approximately £15m had already been spent, leaving £81,901,000 to be spent. That is an exact figure by the way that I totted up from elements published in last year's Medium Term Financial Plan. From looking at this year's figures, including carry forwards and what has been spent in the meantime, that £81,901,000, which was far too much already, has grown to a quite staggering £124,029,000. That's an increase of £42,128,000 or over 50%. I will say that again. Over 50%. The Wokingham town centre regeneration has become Frankenstein's monster, growing out of control. So much scrimping and saving in the service budgets and yet caution has been thrown to the wind with regard to capital spend.

Earlier on I referred to being attacked on Twitter for suggesting that the public should be informed of costs when being consulted on the possibilities for the Carnival Pool area. All becomes clear now, does it not? The Conservatives are way past caring about the cost of regeneration. They have started believing in the magic money tree.

The latest idea is a boutique cinema on Elms Field. Lovely idea, but is it commercially viable? Who knows? The next thing you know it will be a branch of Harrods with a gold plated statue of the burgers of Wokingham in front of it. Is there no-one in the

Conservative group who thinks it is time to get this back under control? Is there no-one in the Conservative group who can engage sensibly with residents on what they actually want from their town? Is there no-one in the Conservative group who cares about the way all the resources of the Council are being sucked into this sprawling monster of a scheme, leaving the rest of the Borough with nothing for the foreseeable future? No regeneration for any of the other towns or villages.

Never mind what else is in the capital programme, there is no way on earth we are going to vote for a 50% increase in the cost of the regeneration of Wokingham town. This capital programme needs a serious rethink.