

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 25 JUNE 2015 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Keith Baker (Chairman), Julian McGhee-Sumner, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Philip Mirfin, Anthony Pollock and Angus Ross

15. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 May 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Item 23, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Optalis. Councillor Pollock remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Item 23, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that her husband was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

18.1 Peter Must asked the Executive Member for Planning and Transport the following question:

Question

In noting the paper proposing a Vision for the future in respect of travelling to Wokingham may I: - First point out that elements of this paper derive from previous Public Realm Workshops and consultation through an exhibition, these last being held in 2013. At a stakeholders' meeting on 22 April this year about the development of the Market Place and the surrounding street environment, we were told that a report following those engagements had been intended to be made available to the public and, on further enquiry, I was assured that it would indeed be put on the Council website and stakeholders would be told where to find it. This has not happened and I would urge the Executive Member to ensure the early availability of this long overdue and important public document.

Secondly, ask the Executive Member and the Executive to include in the decision taken about this Vision paper agreement that, in view of its importance as a matter of considerable significance, it be made available to the local community with a view to them knowing of and sharing in, or being able to critique, that vision, so that future discussions about the town centre public realm can be guided by it?

Answer

The Vision document seeks to set out a strategic approach to ensure that visitors to Wokingham have a choice about how they make their journey through a range of sustainable travel options and have a positive experience when they arrive.

It is a high level Vision document but all other third parties interest will of course be taken into consideration as we move forward with initiatives within the town. This is why we have not come up with a straight jacket policy. It is very flexible and will allow us to consider local comments as when they arise. The document is open and loose allowing local input as it develops.

Your question relates to the previous Public Realm work we undertook and I thank you for bringing to our attention that the LDA Public Realm and Design and Delivery Strategy is no longer available on the Council's website. The planning pages of the website have been in the process of being refreshed and now that they have been I will ensure that the LDA document is reinstated as soon as possible, however the information is available on request in the interim.

Supplementary Question

I am not certain that we are talking about the same document. I had assumed that just as there had been for the 2011 public realm engagement where the people that ran that session provided a report back to the public, that a similar report was going to be provided. It is this that I thought was available rather than a strategy document.

Supplementary Answer

I must admit that I am not aware of the original as at that point I was not involved, so I am not quite clear what the references of that were. This document will hopefully be agreed and I have spoken to Officers about it. We have got it in a format which will allow for its modification as we go through the regeneration of the Town Centre. That I feel is the best way rather than a very straightjacketed policy on car parks that the Council has tended to have in the past, this will allow input from other areas such as parish and town councils and other interested parties in the town.

Philp Mirfin, Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities also commented that:

I understand Mr Must that you have a meeting arranged with Sarah Morgan, Regeneration and Design Manager in the next couple of days. If there is further information you require, I would suggest that you put those questions to her. I understand she will be covering a lot of the points raised by your question anyway, but if there is anything further then it would be suitable to put additional questions in after that. But I think you will find that she will give you quite a lot of information around that subject when you meet her. However, if there is anything remaining please feel to contact to the Executive Member for Planning and Highways or myself.

19. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

19.1 Rachele Shepherd-DuBey had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question:

Question

I have been informed that the second part of the Loddon Viaduct repairs on the westbound carriageway are to be delayed. When the work took place last year during the school summer holiday period, this council stated that this was a major maintenance project that had to be done and was very complex and necessary. Can you be certain that by taking a decision to delay the work probably for a further year, you are not putting people's safety at risk?

In light of Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey not being able to attend the meeting the following written answer was provided.

Answer

The works on the Loddon Viaduct are essential to maintain the structure in a safe condition and to reduce the risks for users by upgrading the safety barriers.

When the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road project began we met with the contractor, Hochtief, and they told us of the need to close the A327 whilst they built a key part of the new road. The impact on the network of these works meant that the best time to close the A327 would be during the school holidays. This would overlap with the programme for the Loddon viaduct works and would result in two key routes through the Borough being closed or severely restricted at the same time.

Even during the school holidays the result of these simultaneous closures would mean considerable congestion for drivers and potential delays to emergency service vehicles.

Following a risk analysis of the proposals it was decided to proceed with the A327 in 2015 and postpone the Loddon viaduct works to summer 2016. We feel that the risks involved in this programme are acceptable and are unlikely to increase the risk to users of the A3290.

It needs to be borne in mind that the repairs to the Loddon viaduct will be in place for several decades and that this is a 12 month delay.

20. TRAVELLING TO WOKINGHAM TOWN CENTRE - OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Executive considered a report relating to a co-ordinated, strategic approach to travelling to Wokingham Town Centre to ensure that visitors would have a choice and flexibility in how they travel including a range of sustainable travel options.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways informed the meeting that the report set out how there would be a good quality environment for pedestrians, cyclists and space for motorists to park their cars. He stressed that a really important aspect of the vision was that it set out how the Council intended to deliver choice, but that it had to be recognised that the car remained the primary means of travel for many people. The policy recognised that the Borough had the largest rate of car and second car ownership in the United Kingdom.

Members asked that as the document was developed further and specific proposals put forward in respect of measures such as cycle ways, that appropriate consultation was undertaken with schools and parents so that their local knowledge could be applied and possible unworkable routes identified at an early stage. Councillor Kaiser stated that a major element of the Vision was that it was not a straightjacketed policy and allowed for appropriate consultation.

Councillor Kaiser confirmed that as the Council moved forward with the Vision it would be considering the eventual position in 2026 by which point it was anticipated that the Northern Relief Road and Southern Distributor Road would have opened. With regard to car parking around railway stations he referred to the proposed redevelopment of Carnival Pool and that it was also hoped that there might be a car parking development at Twyford Station. With regards to Park and Ride facilities he commented that as they developed he felt that consideration should be given to them being multi-destination park and ride locations.

Various Members also made reference to the desirability where possible of ensuring clear physical separation between cyclists and motorists in the provision of cycle ways and that the cycle way along Lower Ealey Way was a good example of this.

RESOLVED: That the approach outlined in Travelling to Wokingham Town Centre – Our Vision for the Future, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be endorsed.

21. CHANGES TO CHARGING FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Executive considered a report relating to Changes to Charging for Adult Social Care Services available under the Care Act 2014.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing emphasised that the report was an addition to that previously considered by the Executive in February. He asked that the Executive note that the recommendations arose out the implications of the Care Act and that the Council was under significant financial pressure. He also asked Members to note that the effect of the changes would only take effect when a person had assets other than their homes of more of £23,250. If a house was included, the Council could take that into account, up to a level of 70% equity loan to value with a family taking that decision on behalf of the person needing care.

It was confirmed that in relation to recommendation 6c), a decision around whether or not to extend the equity review limit would be taken in consultation with the client affected or their carer. Such a request would be initiated by the client or their carer.

RESOLVED: That further to the Government's introduction of the Care Act 2014, the Executive agrees to introduce new social care charges for social care customers in Wokingham Borough. The Care Act requires the Council to review all of its charges for care services. The recommendations set out at 1) to 4) below are consistent with current practice; recommendation 5) is a new charge; and recommendation 6) updates current practice to be Care Act compliant. The recommendations are as follows:

- 1) That, in accordance with current practice, the council does not set a maximum charge for non-residential services;
- 2) That , in accordance with current practice, the council does not include any further disregards within the financial assessment other than those determined by the Department of Health;
- 3) that no charges for services provided to the carer will be introduced prior to April 2016 and then only by decision of the Executive;
- 4) that, in accordance with current practice, respite services continue to be treated as being provided for the cared for person and not the carer;
- 5) That for new Self-funders an administration charge for non-residential services is introduced from 1st July 2015. The charge to be £260 set up and £194 annually

thereafter (both amounts exclusive of VAT). However for existing customers the effective date of the Annual charge will be 1st October 2015

- 6) That for Deferred Payment Agreements (DPA) effective from 1st July 2015:
- a) an administration charge is introduced to be £755 or £600 plus disbursements at set up, and £261 or £172 plus disbursements annually thereafter (both amounts exclusive of VAT); and
 - b) an interest rate equivalent to the maximum set by the Department of Health is applied to all new agreements; and
 - c) the Council set an equity review limit of 70% of the asset value. However the Director of Health & Wellbeing could increase this to 80% as an exception to be determined on a case by case basis; and
 - d) the only acceptable security should be property related; and
 - e) the Council set the maximum rental income that can be retained at 50%. However the Director of Health & Wellbeing can increase this on an exceptional basis; and
 - f) that the DPA policy at Appendix D is approved.

22. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SPECIAL EVENT TEMPORARY CLOSURES ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The Executive considered a report relating to the procedure for dealing with Special Event Temporary Closures on Public Rights of Way. The procedure, as recommended by a Working Group established by the Executive in 2014, sets out how the Council would consult on future applications for closure for events held on high profile recreational routes such as the Thames Path and the Blackwater Valley Path.

The Executive Member for Environment highlighted that the procedure had been developed in light of experience resulting from the annual temporary closure of a right of way for the Henley Festival and the outcome of a working party looking into how local ward Members and local residents could be provided with additional comfort regarding the process followed. However, the recommendations within the report would be applicable to all similar requests for temporary closures, not only for the Henley Festival.

RESOLVED: That for applications for temporary closures on rights of way on the Thames Path and the Blackwater Valley Footpath for special events the following policy will be adopted:

- 1) prior consultation will be carried out with the following groups: The Ramblers' Association, The Open Spaces Society, Natural England, the relevant Parish Council and the ward member/s for the area through which the path is situated; and
- 2) the decision as to whether a closure will be made will be taken by the Executive.

23. COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES' BUSINESS

The Executive considered a report setting out the budget monitoring position and an operational update for the financial year 2014-15 of the Council Owned Companies.

The Leader of Council highlighted the following changes in Directorships which would be incorporated into the next report.

- That Councillor John Jarvis had replaced Councillor Gary Cowan as Non-Executive Director on Wokingham Housing Limited;

- That Councillor Gary Cowan remain a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes Ltd, the Council's registered provider and become its Chairman.

Councillor Charlotte Haitham-Taylor referred to the issue of turnover of staff within Optalis as set out in report and reported on the some of the successful strategies used to recruit staff within Children's Services and initiatives such as Elevate. However, affordable housing for staff including teachers close to schools remained an issue and she felt key worker housing might be one focus area to help with recruitment and retention.

Councillor Keith Baker commented that this issue of key worker housing and the link with affordable housing was one which the Executive Member for Planning and Highways would be investigating. Anthony Pollock responded that the issues that Optalis faced in recruiting staff were recognised and did represent a real challenge which was being looked into. As such the potential impact of affordable housing for staff on modest incomes was acknowledged.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the financial year 2014-15 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the financial year 2014-15 be noted.