



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held at the Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham on **THURSDAY 31 MARCH 2016 AT 7.30 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Couldrick', written in a cursive style.

Andy Couldrick  
Chief Executive  
Published on 21 March 2016

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

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## **Our Vision**

***A great place to live, an even better place to do business***

### ***Our Priorities***

**Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential**

**Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth**

**Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development**

**Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough**

**Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services**

### ***The Underpinning Principles***

**Offer excellent value for your Council Tax**

**Provide affordable homes**

**Look after the vulnerable**

**Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life**

**Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency**

**Deliver quality in all that we do**

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Keith Baker	Leader of the Council
Julian McGhee-Sumner	Deputy Leader and Health and Wellbeing
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Children's Services
Pauline Jorgensen	Resident Services
John Kaiser	Planning and Highways
Philip Mirfin	Regeneration and Communities
Anthony Pollock	Economic Development and Finance
Angus Ross	Environment

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
106.		<p><b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence</p>	
107.		<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February 2016.</p>	7 - 18
108.		<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest</p>	
109.		<p><b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Executive</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a></p>	
109.1	None Specific	<p>Chas Hocking has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question:</p> <p><b>Question</b> Bearing in mind the error in stating the reason for raising the car park charges, what confidence do I have in knowing that the council has made an accurate estimate of the numbers of people parking their cars in council car parks in the evenings and weekends? What figures did they use, how did they go about the</p>	

assessment etc. I would like to see the figures that were used. (I am not against raising charges, but I am against raising charges in the evenings).

109.2 Bulmershe and Whitegates; Coronation; Loddon; South Lake

Richard Dolinski has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question:

**Question**

Woodley Town Council, The Town Centre Management Initiative (TCMI) and local business owners are very concerned that introducing a flat rate fee of £1 for Sunday's and after 6pm in the evening will not achieve the additional income required from Woodley's car parks to balance WBC's books and deter visitors to the town centre. Recognising that additional income is required the Town Council and the TCMI suggested in its consultation response that it would be better to increase the hourly parking charge that has been frozen for many years under a Conservative led council from 70p an hour to 80p. This has multiple benefits in that the income from this approach would be extremely higher than the new evening and Sunday charges and is more acceptable to Woodley residents and businesses and demonstrates you have acted upon a consultation response. Would the lead member support this for Woodley, in consideration of the concerns of businesses and the fear of those living in the town centre that drivers would simply park in residential roads?

110.

**MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

To answer any member questions

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice

Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply

111.

**TO CONSIDER ANY REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

111.1 None Specific

Report of the Commuter Parking Task and Finish Group

19 - 62

**Matters for Consideration**

112. None Specific

**EVENING, SUNDAY AND SHUTE END CHARGES**

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113. Shinfield North; Shinfield South

**SHINFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

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114.	Shinfield North; Shinfield South	<b>SDL COMMUNITY FACILITY, SHINFIELD</b>	<b>103 - 126</b>
115.	None Specific	<b>COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES' BUSINESS</b>	<b>127 - 134</b>
116.	None Specific	<b>COUNCIL POLICY ON ACADEMIES</b>	<b>135 - 144</b>
117.	None Specific	<b>SHARED BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES</b>	<b>145 - 158</b>
118.	None Specific	<b>EXTENSION OF HEALTH VISITING, FAMILY NURSE PARTNERSHIP (FNP) AND SCHOOL NURSING</b>	<b>159 - 164</b>
119.	None Specific	<b>MODEL FOR COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFERS</b>	<b>165 - 172</b>

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.35 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Other Councillors Present**

Mark Ashwell  
Chris Smith  
Alison Swaddle  
Bob Wyatt

**102. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner. Councillor Bob Wyatt attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor McGhee-Sumner. In accordance with legislation Councillor Wyatt could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

The meeting was also informed that due to severe traffic issues Councillor Jorgensen had advised that she would arrive late for the meeting. Councillor Jorgensen arrived during consideration of Item 105.

**103. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**104. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Item 104, 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 Anthony Pollock also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 105 Optalis Contract, by virtue of the fact that he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Optalis. Councillor Pollock left the meeting during discussions and did not vote on the matter.

**105. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

**105.1 Peter Humphreys asked the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities the following question:**

There have been a number of high profile planning disasters involving major projects in the Town, including:

- Wellington House now demolished which was part of a scheme to build a large civic centre complex that was abandoned;
- The proposed IDR including a roundabout surrounding the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Tudor House also abandoned due to public opposition;

- Having to spend £30m to build social housing to replace the shoddy damp ridden properties the Council built in Eustace Crescent and then subsequently demolished (that word again) as they were insanitary;
- A supermarket built on a greenfield site but later abandoned and left vacant for many years due to its poor location;
- Poor architecture at either end of Peach Street, allowed by the Planning Committee, but now demolished/about to be demolished;
- Hundreds, maybe thousands, recently planted trees about to be uprooted due to lack of joined up thinking in respect of the routes of the NDR and so on.

Would you please list what lessons the Council has learnt from these expensive failures and what guarantees can you give that such disasters won't be repeated with the schemes currently in the pipeline?

### **Answer**

An interesting series of questions here. First I just have a comment from my colleague here, who has been here a lot longer than I have in Wokingham, on your large civic centre complex. He has never been familiar with any large civic centre complex.

Let me pick up the rest. I am very interested in the choice of projects that you mention and your interpretation of them as expensive failures.

Take for example Eustace Crescent which sat within the 1950s Norreys Estate providing housing for 60 years, or Wellington House which was in use as a Council Office for over 40 years. Hardly failed projects.

The regeneration proposals are not isolated one off projects as many of the schemes you refer to; but are the culmination of years of strategic planning and research. Starting 12 years ago in 2004 with the start of the development of the Local Plan, the Core Strategy, the Managing Development Delivery document and the Town Centre Masterplan which set out how the Borough and the Town should change over the coming years. This planning process ensures that what we are building now will meet the needs and demands of both current and future residents.

All of these documents have been the result of extensive consultation with residents, local businesses, developers and, in regards to the Local Plan core documents, have undergone Examination In Public by the Planning Inspectorate prior to their adoption. Alongside this we have continued to consult on our regeneration proposals throughout the process of developing the designs, including major consultation events in 2011, 12, 13, 14 and 15. At each stage we have changed our proposals in response to feedback to ensure we are delivering the right scheme for Wokingham to be a success.

What these projects also demonstrate to me, is the continually changing face of modern life and business, and the need for the built form to respond to this.

That is why the Council has been careful to ensure that our regeneration proposals have been designed as flexibly as possible and can continue to adapt to future requirements.

Commercial spaces have been designed so the footprint can be continually altered to reflect current retail approaches, or even converted to alternative uses in many years to come if needs be.

Residential properties have been designed to meet the Lifetime Homes standard so they can continue to adapt to the life requirements of those living there and will allow them a good standard of living regardless of age and abilities.

We are also investing in making sure everything we build as part of the regeneration is built to a high quality and remains so for years to come. Things like using the right quality materials, the right contractors, and putting the right long term management agreements in place with tenants to ensure this can be achieved.

The Council has already successfully delivered the first phase of the regeneration proposals at Peach Place to such standards and has every confidence they can deliver the remaining phases to meet them as well.

This Council is committed to ensuring regeneration for its town centres.

### **Supplementary Question**

First off just on that point you made about the civic centre. I can find the documentary evidence of that.

I mentioned in this about the supermarket i.e. Tescos which was built on Elms Field and then they subsequently decided it wasn't a viable site and it was left vacant for many years as they retained the lease which wasn't a good piece of documentation on the Council's part when they drafted up the contracts. Subsequent to that Sainsbury's were offered a site on Elms Field and they then pulled out. Lidl was encouraged to go there and they didn't take up the option and indeed when Lidl didn't go to their current site at the Planning Meeting Councillor Deegan, who was sitting in your shoes in those days as head of regeneration etc, he actually said if Lidl go there then the supermarket at Elms Field would not be viable and that would ruin that project and now you are trying to encourage Aldi to go there. Why is that one going to work and if Aldi do not turn up does that mean that the whole scheme is again unviable and going to have to be abandoned and something else come up with?

### **Supplementary Answer**

An interesting combination you have got there – supermarkets, Tescos and I am glad you mentioned what it was as I couldn't for the life of me assume what it was going to be.

Now you have mentioned Tesco yes they did have a lease as I recall, and I wasn't on the Council at that stage so I cannot comment, but I seem to recall that was down to a lease. I think lessons have certainly been learnt over the years since then very much so.

Sainsbury's well that was entirely down to their requirements. As you will probably recall we were not the only place in the country that they pulled out of at the time. They were going through a very rocky patch as many of the supermarket chains were at the time, and still are to some degree, and the size of their store was just not compatible with the market as it had changed and that is why they pulled out; and of many others. In fact I know Tesco also pulled out of some at the same time.

I am not quite sure that your appreciation of where Lidl came to, and your comments, are quite my appreciation of it. I am not sure that your appreciation of whether they were supposed to be going to Elms Field is correct.

You have now mentioned another supermarket chains but I am sorry but I cannot comment on who the supermarket chain will be that are coming to Elms Field as we still have to sign up with any supermarket that is coming and they will only be coming to this town, I can assure you, if they feel there is a future. The company we are negotiating with are looking at a 25 year lease at this stage – so that is the confidence they have in wanting to come to Wokingham.

**105.2 Gerald de la Pascua asked the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities the following question:**

WBC Executive decided last week it is better to re-locate the tennis courts in Elms Field at a cost of £320k than to refurbish the existing facility. The report presented at that meeting did not say how much this second option would cost, what is the figure?

**Answer**

There was no Executive Meeting last week so no decision could have been made as you suggest. The Executive decision on the 28<sup>th</sup> January however related to agreeing the payment of relevant planning contributions required by planning application 152125 for Elms Field.

Ordinarily as part of the planning application process the Council would enter into a legal agreement with a developer to ensure any required financial contributions are paid at correct points. The Council cannot enter into a legal agreement with itself so an alternative approach to making payments needs to be taken in regards to applications such as this. Under the Council's Constitution this means securing Executive approval to pay contributions of over £5million from the regeneration project to the Local Planning Authority.

The figure of £320,000 for the tennis courts is based upon a strict non-negotiable formula set by Sport England who set the costs of providing a flood-lit tennis court at £80,000 per court.

The proposals for Elms Field include removing the tennis courts from their existing site and providing money for their replacement elsewhere. This decision was made as part of the regeneration design process to create the right scheme for Wokingham town centre, which delivers the right mix of facilities and makes the best use of the land available in balancing development with a large area of open space.

The monies paid by the Elms Field development will contribute to the provision of tennis courts elsewhere within Wokingham and will allow for the delivery of top quality facilities in the right locations to meet residents' needs. The new courts will be significantly better and include lights etc. and its new location will be the subject of a consultation with our residents.

**Supplementary Question**

I wondered if there was a firm place where these might be and if there is an amount for the pitch and putt and if there are any plans to relocate that or any funds to compensate for that?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Well I have already given you the situation as far as where it is going to be located. There will be a consultation to establish where it is best to be placed and there are no plans on the pitch and putt.

### **105.3 Mike O'Riley had asked the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities the following question and due to his inability to attend the meeting a written answer was provided as set out below:**

With the slowdown in the global economy, the increasing debt ratio in the UK economy and the risk of a more gloomy economic outlook what plans are WBC making with respect to regeneration funding to significantly reduce Council and ratepayer exposure to speculative commercial property developments?

#### **Answer**

Throughout the regeneration process the approach to funding and delivering the scheme has been an important factor in decision making.

Providing value for money is at the heart of all of the Council's major projects and careful consideration has been given to the risks of investing money against the range of benefits which will be delivered for the town, its residents, workers, visitors and businesses

Benefits such as an improved variety and choice of shops and leisure facilities, improved public spaces and a fantastic town park with a bigger and better play area and services for the community events which make Wokingham a great place to live.

All of these are being delivered through the regeneration and at no cost to the tax payer.

We are confident that the proposals offer a safe investment for the Council and that any costs incurred through building are more than covered by the value of the completed assets, whether that be through selling on the investment to generate a profit, or retaining the scheme to generate ongoing income. The designs have been continually assessed and market tested to ensure this is the case.

Further confidence can be given through the pre-letting of the scheme where we sign agreements with operators to let key units once built. We are in the process of finalising agreements with Premier Inn for the hotel and with two other excellent operators for the foodstore and cinema. Once these have all been signed we will already have guaranteed over 60% of the expected income. This is more than enough income to service any borrowing debt for funding the scheme.

Alongside this we are already being contacted by other businesses interested in taking up units across the regeneration schemes and are confident we will continue to pre-let other units in the scheme at the appropriate times.

I would add, that we have no intention of building anything until we have secured a reasonable number of pre lets; I would also point out that the designs proposed are sufficiently flexible to accommodate any significant changes in retail and the wider commercial demand

We spent over two years working closely with interested private developers to identify the right partner to aid us in regenerating Wokingham, finally selecting Wilson Bowden and

David Wilson Homes for their extensive experience in delivering excellent regeneration schemes across the country. David Wilson Homes going on to become a Joint Venture partner in the scheme who will be putting their own money into this development. Not something they would consider doing if they did not have confidence in the Council and the regeneration proposals we are delivering for the town centre.

In your question you refer to this as speculation but I would disagree.

This is the council investing in their local town, its residents, visitors and in its businesses.

This is the Council making sure Wokingham has the facilities to remain one of the best places in the country to live.

To me this is the Council stepping up and taking responsibility for making sure their towns have a long term sustainable future for years to come. Something that council's across the country should aspire to.

#### **106. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions received.

#### **107. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2016/19**

The Executive considered a report setting out the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways went through the recommendations in the report and highlighted that in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 council house dwelling rents would be reduced by 1% effective from 1 April 2016, which was subject to confirmation of the statutory starting date.

Councillor Baker commented that although it was laudable to reduce the rents by 1% every year for the next four years there would be a financial impact on the Council and this reduction added extra pressure on Council budgets.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council be recommended to approve:

- 1) The Housing Revenue Account Budget;
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be reduced by 1% effective from 1 April 2016 in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015, (subject to confirmation of the statutory starting date);
- 3) Garage rents be increased by 1.1% effective from 1 April 2016 in line with Council fees and charges;
- 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 have been gradually increased above inflation for four years to bring the rents in line by 1 April 2016. The increase for 2016/17 and future years will be based on RPI, and is estimated to be approximately 1% in 2016/17;
- 5) Tenant Service Charges are set in line with estimated costs;

- 6) The Housing Major Repairs (capital) programme for 2016/17 as set out in Appendix C.

### **108. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND STRATEGY 2016/19**

The Executive considered a report setting out the proposed Capital Programme and Strategy for 2016/19.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance proposed the following amendment to recommendation 1):

The following wording to be added to the end of the recommendation:  
*“subject to the 2017/19 and 2018/19 capital programme budgets for car park entry/exit barriers being reduced to zero pending further review.”*

This amendment was agreed by the Executive.

The Executive Member for Environment commented that with regard to the schemes within his portfolio it should be noted that this was a programme and not an allocation of funds. Equally any of these items would be subject to very robust challenge. It was not an amount to be spent up to and the timing of these projects was a best estimate of when the Council could proceed with any of them.

#### **RECOMMENDATION** That:

- 1) Council be recommended to approve the Capital Programme and Strategy 2016/19 subject to the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme budgets for car park entry/exit barriers being reduced to zero pending further review;
- 2) the allocation of the remaining un-ringfenced Large Scale Sites Grant from the HCA towards the delivery of 15/16 Strategic Development Locations (SDLs); to contribute to the generation in 2015/16 of a capital reserve of £2m be approved. This will be used to fund the 2016/17 programme;
- 3) the schemes which are listed in Appendix C be approved. These are funded by developer contributions (s106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to the extent of £12m and that this funding can be increased if further developer contributions become available. The total budget for these schemes is £38m in the 2016/19 Capital Programme.

### **109. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2016/19**

The Executive considered a report setting out the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2016/17.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance highlighted the importance of the Strategy, because of its links to the Capital Programme and how it would be financed and its links with the Council's investment strategy. The link was particularly important at the beginning of the financial year when, because of early payment of council tax, the Council had significant amounts of money on deposit which needed to be wisely invested in order to obtain the best return.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:** That Council be recommended to approve the following:

- 1) the Capital Prudential indicators, 2016/17- 2018/19;

- 2) the Borrowing Strategy 2016/17;
- 3) the Annual Investment Strategy 2016/17;
- 4) the Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity 2016/17;
- 5) flexible use of Capital Receipts; and
- 6) note a review of counterparties and the consideration of risk versus return is being reviewed and will be reported back to Executive in the year for consideration.

**110. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/19 - REVENUE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2016/17**

The Executive considered a report setting out the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/19; including the Revenue Budget Submission for 2016/17. It was noted that the Medium Term Financial Plan covered both the revenue and capital budgets required to deliver the priorities of the Council over the next three years.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council be recommended to approve the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/19, including the budget submission for 2016/17.

**111. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2015/16**

The Executive considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2015-16 which highlights the Council's treasury position as at 30 September 2015, sets out the treasury decisions taken so far during 2015/16 and shows that the Council has complied with the Strategy and the prudential indicators that were set prior to the financial year.

**RECOMMENDATION** That:

- 1) the mid-year Treasury Management report for 2015/16 be noted;
- 2) the actual 2015/16 prudential indicators within the report be noted; and
- 3) the report be recommended to Council for approval.

**112. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2017/2018**

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposed School Admission Arrangements for 2017/18 which will apply to all state funded schools within the Borough (including free schools and academies but not special schools) and includes the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. It was noted that although the Council had no legal requirement to co-ordinate in-year admissions all schools in the Borough, except one, chose to be part of the in-year admission scheme.

The Executive Member for Children's Services highlighted the changes being proposed to the current admission arrangements which included:

- Clarity around families and not just children with medical and social needs;
- Changes to residency requirements i.e. parents who own more than one home;
- Wording relating to crown servants;
- Management of waiting lists;
- Increasing the designated area of Nine Mile Ride Primary School to bring it in line with a small area of the Borough that was not previously included;

- Prioritising 2-year olds who were already in nursery or getting free funding into the admissions policy; and
- A new timetable for co-ordinated schemes.

It was further noted that all the proposed changes had been consulted upon and no comments had been received during the consultation period.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the 2017/2018 admission arrangements for community and controlled schools and co-ordinated admission schemes, as set out in the annexes to the report, be agreed.

### **113. PROPOSED COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER - LEASE OF EAST PARK FARM DRIVE LEISURE FACILITY TO CHARVIL PARISH COUNCIL**

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals for the transfer of the lease of East Park Farm Drive Leisure Facility to Charvil Parish Council which would enable the Borough Council to maintain ownership of the land and protect and preserve the public open space; whilst at the same time empowering local people through the Parish Council to deliver the management of local facilities.

Councillor Mark Ashwell, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities informed the meeting that Charvil Parish Council had expressed an interest to take responsibility for the future management of East Park Drive Leisure Facility and Park by way of a long lease and shared income basis in lieu of a standard rent. The proposed agreement would see a phased transfer of the current WBC budget for the Park to Charvil Parish Council over the next four years with a reduction of 20% each year. This would make the venue self-sufficient within a five year timeframe.

The long term lease would also enable Charvil Parish Council to improve the facility and develop an increased and more diverse usage. In addition the financial security received from WBC would reduce the risk whilst they make the property sustainable and self-financing. It was noted that the Council would retain the asset for the long-term via a two year break clause.

Members were pleased with the proposal and felt that it was a positive example of working together with the community.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the transfer of East Park Farm Drive sports and leisure facilities under a Lease for 30 years to Charvil Parish Council (CPC) as highlighted within the red boundary in Appendix 1 and on the terms set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

### **114. ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY (28 MYLNE SQUARE)**

The Executive considered a report relating to the acquisition of property at 28 Mylne Square in order to provide much needed additional affordable rented housing for the Borough.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways explained that the property had been funded from the Housing Revenue Account and retained Right to Buy receipts which if this money had not been spent in line with the contract with the Department of Communities and Local Government would have had to be repaid at 4% above base rate.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the retrospective acquisition of 28 Mylne Square as set out in this report; funded from retained Right to Buy receipts and the Housing Revenue Account be agreed.

#### **115. ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY (20 BILLING AVENUE)**

The Executive considered a report relating to the acquisition of a property at 20 Billing Avenue which would provide additional affordable housing in the Borough.

As with the previous agenda item Councillor Kaiser explained that the property had been funded from the Housing Revenue Account and Right to Buy receipts which would also have had to be repaid if they had not been spent in line with the contract signed in 2012 with the Department of Communities and Local Government.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the retrospective acquisition of 20 Billing Avenue as set out in this report; to be funded from retained Right to Buy receipts and the Housing Revenue Account be agreed.

#### **116. COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES' BUSINESS**

*(Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in this item)*

The Executive considered a report relating to the activities of the Council Owned Companies including the budget monitoring position to 31 December 2015 and the operational update to 31 January 2016.

The Leader of Council clarified that the Wokingham Housing Business Plan was actually presented at the previous meeting but was inadvertently left out of the recommendations and therefore was not approved at that meeting. Councillor Baker highlighted the business development section of the report which had grown as the reputation of Optalis had increased.

Councillor Pollock paid tribute to the work being carried out by the Holding Company which was a good demonstration of working together to gain new business.

**RECOMMENDATION** That:

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the month ending 31 December 2015 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 31 January 2016 be noted;
- 3) the Wokingham Housing Remit Document be approved;
- 4) the Optalis Remit Document be approved;
- 5) the Wokingham Housing Business Plan (as previously presented to the Executive at the January 2016 meeting) be approved;
- 6) the Optalis Business Plan (as set out in the Part 2 document) be approved.

#### **117. OPTALIS CONTRACT**

*(Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item)*

The Executive considered a report seeking authority to issue a second contract to Optalis to provide adult social care services on behalf of the Council.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That a new contract be issued to Optalis from 1 July 2016 for a period of up to five years.

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Commuter Parking Task and Finish Group – Management Response</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	John Kaiser, Executive Members for Planning and Highways

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Tackle the problem of commuter parking on residential roads, improve accessibility of railway stations and encourage sustainable and active travel modes in accordance with the current local transport plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive note the report of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Commuter Parking Task and Finish Group and determines the recommendations from the scrutiny review that it wishes to accept, and those it does not.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to examine the problem of commuter parking on residential streets. The Terms of Reference outlined the key points to be examined:

- To consider the desirability of car parking keeping pace with the demand for rail travel and how that might be provided.
- To consider the balance of parking restrictions and their enforcement when weighed against encouraging modal shift from cars.
- To consider feeder buses to railways stations and, in particular, orbital bus services as suggested in Wokingham Borough Council’s adopted Park & Ride Strategy.
- To enquire on progress towards the targets for active transport in LTP3.
- To consider and understand the effect of commuter parking on residents near railway stations.

The report of the Task and Finish Group is attached as Appendix A. The Group made a series of recommendations based on its consideration of the evidence it took. This report provides the management response to those recommendations.

## Background

The recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group are reproduced in the table below with the management response in the opposite column.

Recommendations (Paragraph)	Officer response
<p><b>1 Pricing of Council operated car parks (7.5)</b> Council run car parks near railway stations primarily required to service local needs should have a time restriction or a pricing mechanism to discourage their use by commuters.</p>	<p>The Council's existing pricing policy is based on having a consistent charging regime across the Borough and is not determined from demand. If the Council wishes to consider the suggested approach this would require a review of this existing pricing regime.</p>
<p><b>2. Parking Provision (8.6)</b> We support the decision to seek to implement CPE.</p>	<p>The CPE implementation project has been established and is on programme to implement CPE in 2017.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> That the Council considers some form of metered parking in selected roads near railway stations which are used for commuter parking where road safety issues allow.</p>	<p>On street car parking charges are not currently proposed. Controlling on street parking through the use of charges could give greater control of parking. If the Council wished to consider such an approach in selected areas it is recommended that the proposals are progressed in consultation with local town and parish councils and local residents and businesses.</p>
<p><b>4. Active Transport (9.5)</b> That the Council should continue to work with the TOCs to increase and improve cycle storage at all stations.</p>	<p>The principle of improving facilities to encourage sustainable and active travel modes is set out in the current local transport plan.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> That the suggested cycle routes from Woodley and Charvil to Twyford Station should be progressed.</p>	<p>These routes would make a considerable contribution to improving the cycle network in the Borough but are, at present, unfunded.</p>
<p><b>6. Ticketing (10.7)</b> The Council should maintain a watching brief on Smart Card development.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><b>7. Crowthorne Station (11.9)</b> That the Council requests that Bracknell Forest Council considers removing the 2 hour time limit on 16 spaces in the car park on Dukes Ride at the entrance to Wellington Business Park.</p>	<p>This matter can be taken up with Bracknell Forest Council</p>
<p><b>8.</b> That GWR explores with Wellington College the possible availability of a small part of Derby Field to expand the station car park at Crowthorne.</p>	<p>This is a matter between 2 private companies but the issue can be raised with them to progress</p>

<p><b>9.</b> That Bracknell Forest Council is asked to work with GWR to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Crowthorne Station.</p>	<p>This matter can be taken up with Bracknell Forest Council</p>
<p><b>10. Wokingham Station (11.13)</b> That SWT is asked to ensure that the design for partial decking in the Wokingham station car park allows further expansion.</p>	<p>This matter can be raised with SWT but it is understood that the design for the deck has been completed and so it is unlikely any changes t that design will be made prior to construction in April 2017.</p>
<p><b>11.</b> That the Council considers, in conjunction with the bus operators, the viability and reliability of through bus services from Arborfield to Twyford Station via Wokingham.</p>	<p>We will continue to work with bus operators to deliver viable commercial services that improve transport options for residents across the Borough.</p>
<p><b>12.</b> That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Wokingham Station.</p>	<p>The principle of improving facilities to encourage sustainable and active travel modes is set out in the current local transport plan.</p>
<p><b>13. Winnersh Station (11.16)</b> That the Council explores the possibility of a joint use car park for Forest School and the station and, were that possible, how parking would be managed.</p>	<p>Whilst the idea is welcomed this is not a current scheme in the work programme and as such there is no resource available to explore this concept.</p>
<p><b>14.</b> That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Station.</p>	<p>The principle of improving facilities to encourage sustainable and active travel modes is set out in the current local transport plan.</p>
<p><b>15. Winnersh Triangle Station (11.22)</b> That the Council equalises charges for the car park at Winnersh Triangle for both bus and train users.</p>	<p>The Council's current policy is to normalise car parking charges across the Borough and also to ensure that park and ride is self-funding. The current charging regime for bus users is commensurate with other park and ride schemes in the UK. These policies would need to be reviewed if the proposal is accepted.</p>
<p><b>16.</b> That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Triangle Station.</p>	<p>The principle of improving facilities to encourage sustainable and active travel modes is set out in the current local transport plan.</p>
<p><b>17. Earley Station (11.27)</b> That the Council works with Earley and Woodley town councils to identify options to increase the availability of car parking near Earley Station including some form of metered parking on selected roads.</p>	<p>Whilst the idea is welcomed this is not a current scheme in the work programme and as such there is no resource available to explore this concept. See comment under 8.6 above re on street car parking charges.</p>

18. That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Earley Station.	The principle of improving facilities to encourage sustainable and active travel modes is set out in the current local transport plan.
<b>19. Wargrave Station (11.32)</b> That the Council, with Wargrave Parish Council, examines the option of removing the double yellow lines on Station Road between the station parking area and the public parking.	Whilst the idea is welcomed this is not a current scheme in the work programme and as such there is no resource available to explore this concept.
<b>20. Twyford Station (11.41)</b> That all parties including the Council, GWR and Twyford Parish Council work together to ensure that residents of the Borough are able to access rail services at Twyford.	The Council is continuing to explore options for improving access to Twyford station.
21. That the Council seeks professional consultancy advice on the practicality of Park & Ride services and connecting buses to serve Twyford.	Whilst the idea is welcomed this is not a current scheme in the work programme and as such there is no resource available to explore this concept.
22. That Bracknell Forest Council is asked what plans, if any, they have for connecting buses from their new housing in the Binfield area.	This matter can be taken up with Bracknell Forest Council.

## Analysis of Issues

Issues as identified above

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

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

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
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Agreed recommendations will be progressed as resources become available within existing budgets. Where additional resource is required to progress any of the proposals or particular priorities are identified then a further report will be brought to Executive
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<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
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None
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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None
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<b>Date</b> 16 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 1

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**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report and recommendations arising from a  
review by the  
Commuter Parking Task and Finish Group**

**Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**December 2015**

## **Task and Finish Group Membership**

Councillor David Sleight (Chairman)  
Councillor Lindsay Ferris  
Councillor Michael Firmager  
Councillor John Jarvis  
Councillor Norman Jorgensen  
Councillor Malcolm Richards  
Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

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## Executive Summary

The number of passenger using rail services has doubled over the last 20 years and this growth in demand shows no signs of abating with travel from Wokingham increasing by nearly 6% over the last 12 months with only some of the new housing stock occupied. Planned enhancements to rail services, most notably from Twyford, are likely to increase the demand for travel further.

Parking is limited at stations and, with the exception of Winnersh Triangle, the capacity of car parks has largely remained unchanged. Railway owned car parks exist only at Crowthorne, Wokingham, Twyford and Wargrave with the responsibility for their operation being with the train operating company. No railway owned car parks exist at Winnersh, Winnersh Triangle or Earley stations. The shortfall in station parking and the charges therein results in commuter parking in residential roads. While this has been a particular problem in Twyford, it is now replicated at other locations. Planned additional housing in Wokingham Borough and in Bracknell Forest is considered likely to increase pressures on parking near railway stations.

Policy direction including that in the Borough's Local Transport Plan encourages modal shift from cars to more sustainable transport including rail. A 3 pronged approach to the problems posed by commuter parking is suggested: alternative provision of access to stations by cycle, bus or parking provision; effective enforcement of restrictions by the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement; and, finally, to continue to be consistent in the application of parking restrictions. We suggest and recommend that some form of metered parking on public roads near railway stations should be considered.

There are no easy answers to providing more parking at or near railway stations but, where practical, car parking capacity should be enhanced. Recommendations are made for the 6 railway stations in the Borough plus Crowthorne as to how some additional parking could be achieved. Twyford is both the most difficult to identify solutions for and the most critical that solutions are implemented if that station is to fulfil its full potential. It is recommended that all parties meet to identify possible solutions.

The report accepts the important role of connecting buses if overall journey times can be competitive and connectational reliability achieved. We had no evidence that a "Park & Ride & Ride" solution was practical or operated successfully anywhere in the UK. Consequently it is recommended that professional consultancy advice is obtained on this concept. Finally, it is recommended that Wokingham Borough should be indifferent as to whether users of the expanded car park at Winnersh Triangle travel by bus or train and charges for car parking should be the same for both bus and train passengers.

### List of recommendations.

**Recommendation on pricing of Council operated car parks (7.5)**

Council run car parks near railway stations primarily required to service local needs should have a time restriction or a pricing mechanism to discourage their use by commuters.

**Recommendations on Parking Provision (8.6)**

- We support the decision to seek to implement CPE.
- That the Council considers some form of metered parking in selected roads near railway stations which are used for commuter parking where road safety issues allow.

**Recommendations on Active Transport (9.5)**

- That the Council should continue to work with the TOCs to increase and improve cycle storage at all stations.
- That the suggested cycle routes from Woodley and Charvil to Twyford Station should be progressed.

**Recommendation (10.7)**

The Council should maintain a watching brief on Smart Card development.

**Recommendations at Crowthorne Station (11.9)**

- That the Council requests that Bracknell Forest Council considers removing the 2 hour time limit on 16 spaces in the car park on Dukes Ride at the entrance to Wellington Business Park.
- That GWR explores with Wellington College the possible availability of a small part of Derby Field to expand the station car park at Crowthorne.
- That Bracknell Forest Council is asked to work with GWR to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Crowthorne Station.

**Recommendations at Wokingham Station (11.13)**

- That SWT is asked to ensure that the design for partial decking in the Wokingham station car park allows further expansion.
- That the Council considers, in conjunction with the bus operators, the viability and reliability of through bus services from Arborfield to Twyford Station via Wokingham.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Wokingham Station.

**Recommendations at Winnersh Station (11.16)**

- That the Council explores the possibility of a joint use car park for Forest School and the station and, were that possible, how parking would be managed.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Station.

**Recommendations at Winnersh Triangle Station (11.22)**

- That the Council equalises charges for the car park at Winnersh Triangle for both bus and train users.

- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Triangle Station.

**Recommendations at Earley Station (11.27)**

- That the Council works with Earley and Woodley town councils to identify options to increase the availability of car parking near Earley Station including some form of metered parking on selected roads.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Earley Station.

**Recommendation at Wargrave Station (11.32)**

- That the Council, with Wargrave Parish Council, examines the option of removing the double yellow lines on Station Road between the station parking area and the public parking.

**Recommendations at Twyford Station (11.41)**

- That all parties including the Council, GWR and Twyford Parish Council work together to ensure that residents of the Borough are able to access rail services at Twyford.
- That the Council seeks professional consultancy advice on the practicality of Park & Ride services and connecting buses to serve Twyford.
- That Bracknell Forest Council is asked what plans, if any, they have for connecting buses from their new housing in the Binfield area.

## **Introduction.**

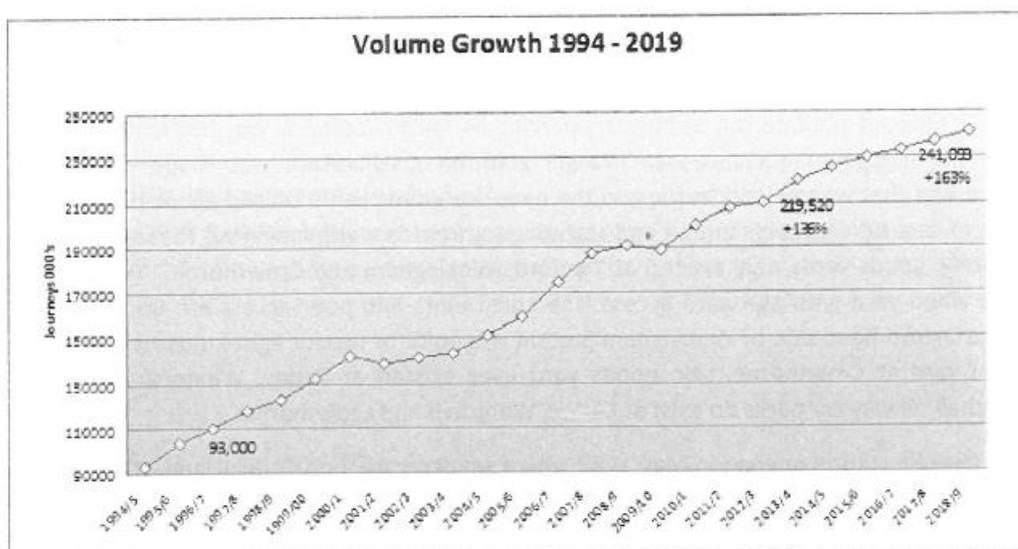
1.0 The suggestion for a scrutiny review was submitted by Cllr Lindsay Ferris primarily to consider the problems near Twyford Station where commuter parking has been an issue for a number of years. It was agreed that the scope of the review would be widened to consider commuter parking issues at all six railway stations within the Borough as well as Crowthorne Station which lies just outside the Borough boundary in Bracknell Forest but where the parking issues are in Wokingham Borough.

## Background.

2.1 **Demand for Rail Travel.** Demand for rail travel has roughly doubled since privatisation in 1995 with the growth in demand showing no signs of abating, growing at about 3% to 4% per year. The growth in the demand for rail travel is illustrated by the graph below which shows Wessex Volume Growth, the Wessex Route being basically the lines into Waterloo Station.



### Wessex Volume Growth



Volume growth expressed as number of journeys.

2.2 **Planned Enhancements of Train Services.** As a result of the burgeoning demand for rail travel, plans exist for the enhancement of services. Better quality trains, journey time reductions, extra seating in trains, frequency enhancements and additional journey opportunities are all expected to further drive demand for rail travel and for access to railway stations. These enhancements are described in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 **Services through Twyford to Reading and Paddington.** Services through Twyford will see significant change over the next 6 years. Twyford already enjoys a very popular peak service with fast services to Paddington that will remain in the timetable. There is also a 4 trains per hour (tph) off peak service between Reading and Paddington. Electric services should begin in May 2017 with a revised timetable, followed by the full Crossrail service through Twyford to Reading in December 2019 with another timetable recast. Although Crossrail will offer through services under London, as it is expected to be an all stations service the principal effect, as far as Twyford is concerned, will be to transform the eastern connections from Paddington. GWR expects to operate a 2 tph semi-fast residual service (to complement 2 tph Crossrail services) from December 2019.

**2.2.2 The Western Rail Link to Heathrow.** The Western Rail Link is expected to open in December 2021 to include 2 tph calling at Twyford. There is to be a further consultation on the Western Rail Link in February 2016.

**2.2.3 The Henley-on-Thames Branch.** GWR has announced that the branch will operate as a self-contained electrified shuttle service from December 2017 with the withdrawal of the through services from Henley to Paddington (2 up in the morning, 3 down in the evening). It is planned to increase the branch frequency to 2 tph (so allowing connections into the GWR semi-fast residual service) and retain stops on all trains at Wargrave and Shiplake if the timetable allows.

**2.2.4 Reading to Gatwick Airport.** GWR plans to double the frequency of the Reading to Gatwick Airport service to 2 tph from May 2017, to complement the current hourly stopping service from Reading to Redhill.

### **2.2.5 Reading to Waterloo.**

2.2.5.1 Following work to upgrade the traction power and extend the London bound platform at Wokingham Station, 10 car trains are to be introduced on these services during 2017. Platforms will not be extended at Earley, Winnersh Triangle and Winnersh Stations with Selective Door Opening applying. These 10 car trains will have, in total, 18 more seats than the current 8 car trains as they have 2+2 seating rather than the current 2+3 seating. Consequently these trains will offer significantly more capacity, with train capacity defined as the number of standard class seats plus the room for standing where the allowance is 4 standing passengers per square metre.

2.2.5.2 The recently published (August 2015) Wessex Route Study which has now been 'adopted', meaning confirmed by the rail regulator - the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), states that the franchise specification process will determine the services providing best value in 2019 but suggests that Wokingham, during the off peak, will be served by 2 'fast' trains per hour via Richmond that "will be approximately 4 minutes faster than now" plus 2 'semi-fast' service per hour running via the Hounslow Loop which will form the services calling at Earley, Winnersh Triangle and Winnersh.

2.2.5.3 As currently planned, journey times will remain uncompetitive and slow compared with those from Twyford. This will be represented in Wokingham Borough Council's response to the Department of Transport's consultation, issued in November 2015, on the replacement South Western Franchise which is due to commence in mid-2017.

## **2.3 Housing Numbers.**

2.3.1 The Council's current Local Plan concentrates new housing in 4 Strategic Development Locations, 2 of which are around Wokingham town adding some 4,000 homes or about 12,000 to its population. Although the rate of completion has been fairly slow so far, this rate will pick up significantly over the next few years with well over 1,000 completions expected annually. The SHMA allocation for the Borough for the period

beyond 2026 is 856 per year. Some of these new residents will wish to travel by train adding to the demand for rail travel and for parking at or near railway stations.

2.3.2 Our neighbouring authority, Bracknell Forest, will build about 1,200 homes in Crowthorne with the remaining 6,000 or so in an arc round the north of Bracknell adding some 18,000 residents. Again, this is expected to add demand at adjacent stations for travel and for parking. This new housing in the Binfield area is likely to add to the pressures on Twyford Station as services from that station will offer shorter journey times, better frequencies and greater connectivity compared with services from Bracknell.

## **2.4 Responsibility for Stations.**

2.4.1 Ownership of railway land is vested in Network Rail as the infrastructure company. However, Network Rail only manages some of the largest stations such as Reading, Waterloo and Paddington. For other stations, the Train Operating Company (TOC) that runs most services at a station is normally appointed the Station Facilities Operator (SFO). For stations in Wokingham Borough, GWR is the SFO for Twyford, Wargarve and Crowthorne (in Bracknell Forest.) SWT is the SFO for Wokingham, Winnersh, Winnersh Triangle and Earley. The SFO is granted a station operating lease by Network Rail which includes station buildings, platforms, car parks and non-operational railway land.

2.4.2 The SFO has the responsibility for operating any station car parks and for developing the railway business. Significant changes have to be agreed with Network Rail. Where a SFO wishes to improve a station forecourt by, for example, pedestrianisation, any parking places lost have to be added back or permission sought from the ORR to allow a reduction in parking places.

2.4.3 Station car park income forms part of the financial projections when franchises are awarded by the Department for Transport (DfT).

2.4.4 The 'station' car parks at Winnersh Triangle and Earley are not on railway land and are therefore not operated by SWT but are Wokingham Borough Council run car parks.

**2.5 Car Parking Capacity and Charges.** A table showing the current capacities at station car parks, including those at Winnersh Triangle and Earley, across the Borough is as follows:

### Stations in Wokingham Borough and Crowthorne

Station	TOC	Usage	Interchange	Car Parking	Peak Cost	Cycle Storage
Crowthorne	GWR	303,816	Nil	42	£2.70	29
Earley	SWT	639,888	Nil	46	£4.00	67
Twyford	GWR	1,369,126	638,123	324	£6.10	c100
Wargrave	GWR	95,910	Nil	30	Free	2
Winnersh	SWT	520,922	Nil	0	n/a	0
Winnersh Triangle	SWT	490,878	Nil	390	£4.00	5
Wokingham	SWT	2,344,598	164,264	414	£7.50	80

**Notes:**

1. Figures are entries and exits combined for 2014/15, the most recent data available from the ORR.
2. No station is gated so there may be an element of ticketless travel.
3. Station car parks at Earley and Winnersh Triangle are operated by Wokingham Borough Council.

## **Terms of Reference.**

3.0 The Terms of Reference for the Review are at Annex A. In summary they are as follows:

- To consider the desirability of car parking keeping pace with the demand for rail travel and how that might be provided.
- To consider the balance of parking restrictions and their enforcement when weighed against encouraging modal shift from cars.
- To consider feeder buses to railways stations and, in particular, orbital bus services as suggested in Wokingham Borough Council's adopted Park & Ride Strategy.
- To enquire on progress towards the targets for active transport in LTP3.
- To consider and understand the effect of commuter parking on residents near railway stations.

## **Meetings.**

4.0 The Task & Finish Group met 8 times to consider our work. One of these meetings comprised a tour of the 7 stations and their surrounding roads to be able to see and assess the problems of commuter parking for ourselves. This tour was on a Wednesday not at half term (as demand for parking is greatest from Mondays through to Thursdays) and, fortuitously, on a wet morning which minimises cycling and increases the demand for car parking.

4.1 The Group took evidence from relevant Council Officers and the Executive Member for Highways and Transport. The Group also met with Tom Pierpoint, the Regional Development Manager of GWR and Richard Tyndall, transport consultant to the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP. Evidence was also taken from a number of residents and the Henley Branch User Group and the Wargrave User Group. We are grateful to all who gave their time to discuss this issue with us.

4.3 Letters were also written to the MPs for Bracknell, Maidenhead and Wokingham advising them of the review, outlining changes affecting stations within their constituencies, acknowledging that the task of addressing the problems lay primarily with the local authority but, nevertheless, invited input and views. John Redwood MP responded with a considered and thought provoking reply and that is reproduced at Annex B. Theresa May MP also replied stating, inter alia, that "Improving car parking facilities at Twyford is vital.." A copy of this letter is at Annex C.

## Policies.

5.0 We explored what Government, Department for Transport, Network Rail, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Wokingham Borough Council policies were in place to give guidance on the provision of commuter parking.

5.1 **John Redwood MP** informed us that the Government had amended parking policy and had abandoned the idea to restrict parking provision as a way of reducing car usage. The Government recognised that cars are generally not in use and when not in use, these cars should not be on the highway as road capacity is generally restricted and highway space should not be used for parking. The Government is also committed to encouraging modal shift to rail but parking at or near railway stations needs to be provided to help encourage this.

5.2 **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** states that *“plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people.”* and *“The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice of how they travel.”*

5.3 **Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan** states that *“the transport and communications infrastructure...is therefore essential (and it is necessary) to invest in it and also to encourage local sustainable transport networks that promote active travel on foot, on bicycle and on public transport.”*

5.4 **Network Rail** in its work on the Western Route Study with the final report published in August 2015 specifically excluded car parking provision from that study (with much protest from local authority representatives attending Stakeholder briefings) merely giving the view that *“car parking provision at or close to stations will need to keep pace with growing rail demand, as will highway access to stations. Good integration and co-ordination with local transport such as...bus...services and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are equally important if rail travel is to achieve its maximum potential.”*

5.5 **Wokingham Borough Council’s** policies are contained in our adopted Local Transport Plan 3 which covers the period to 2026 and states that *“We will encourage alternative modes of travel to the use of private vehicles....and reduce the quantities of CO2 produced”, “We will increase opportunities to walk or cycle to work”, “To work with bus and rail operators to improve public transport services to increase their overall use”* and quite simply *“Encouraging modal shift.”*

### **Addressing the Terms of Reference.**

6.0 In addressing the terms of reference, we decided to address them in a slightly different order as follows:

- To consider and understand the effects of commuter parking on residents near railway stations.
- To consider the balance of parking restrictions and their enforcement when weighed against encouraging modal shift from cars.
- To enquire on progress towards the targets for active transport in LTP 3.
- To consider feeder buses to railway stations and, in particular, orbital bus services as suggested in Wokingham Borough's Park & Ride Strategy.
- To consider the desirability of the provision of car parking keeping pace with the demand for rail travel and how that might be provided.

6.1 Where we refer to specific stations these comments are, for the most part, concentrated under the last heading.

## **To consider and understand the effects of commuter parking on residents near railway stations.**

7.0 We met with various residents on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November who described the problems resulting from cars parked in residential roads that were not designed to have lines of cars along them. This appeared to be all day commuter parking, shopper parking, cars waiting to meet people from trains and, in the case of Crowthorne, it is suspected that roads are being used for some long term car parking for people using Gatwick Airport. Some cars obstruct pavements (which is addressed by our Parking on Verges and Pavements Policy). The problem is perhaps more apparent with open plan estates where parking in full view of residents' houses is considered a particular nuisance. But it is the road safety aspects that cause most concern and we realise that this perception of risk is subjective but, nevertheless, we accept that unconstrained parking adds to the risk in residential roads.

7.1 We also recognise that there is a temptation on behalf of motorists to opt for on-street parking to avoid parking charges but this is not universal, we have seen motorists touring the station car park in Twyford vainly seeking a spare parking place and many other car parks at stations are effectively full. In such circumstances, potential rail users have little choice other than to find on-street parking if they are using cars to reach railway stations and wish to continue their journeys by rail.

7.2 We were also advised of the situation in Wargrave, but this may apply elsewhere, where Station Road is used for commuter parking but is also the only road in lower Wargrave where all day parking is possible without paying parking charges. The parish church in Wargrave Church is also on Station Road and weekday weddings or funerals result in parking chaos.

7.3 We heard of the situation in Twyford, which may also apply elsewhere, where commuters are using car parks such as the Polehampton car park for all day parking because of the availability of spaces and it being cheaper than the station car park, to the detriment of other users. We recommend that Council car parks specifically designed to service local needs such as shopping should either have time restriction or a pricing mechanism to discourage their use by commuters.

7.4 The membership of this Task & Finish Group was drawn from members from across the Borough who brought their own knowledge and experiences of the issues.

7.5 **Recommendation on pricing of Council operated car parks.** Council run car parks near railway stations primarily required to service local needs should have a time restriction or a pricing mechanism to discourage their use by commuters.

## **To consider the balance of parking restrictions and their enforcement when weighed against encouraging modal shift.**

8.0 The relevant policies quoted above all suggest that modal shift from car to more sustainable transport is to be encouraged. In this case, we are considering transfer to rail and we note that plans exist to have electric passenger services operating on all our rail routes with electric trains being pollution free at the point of use.

8.1 We do not interpret this wish to encourage modal shift as meaning a free for all when it comes to parking on residential roads. Instead we consider that there needs to be a 3 pronged approach: alternative provision of access to stations, a means of effective enforcement of parking and, finally, consistent application of parking restrictions where it is deemed necessary to impose them. These will be considered in more detail in general terms and, later, how these might be applied at individual stations.

8.2 **Alternative provision of access to stations.** The provision of access to stations covers all modes of travel including improved walking routes with enhanced lighting, improved and new cycle routes to station with secure storage facilities of cycles, feeder or connecting bus services and the provision of more car parking space where it is practical and cost effective to do so. All the railway stations, with the exception of Winnersh Triangle which opened in 1987, were constructed in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently they pre-date motor cars by some distance and urban development makes parking provision challenging. This is most acute at Winnersh Station which has no dedicated station parking. A Park & Ride facility remote from a station may have its place, particularly if providing additional parking at the station is difficult to achieve. However, we are unaware of any operational “Park & Ride & Ride” elsewhere in the UK but this concept is explored in greater detail later in this report. We also explored with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP possible funding of parking schemes to be told that the essential question to be addressed is “how does it encourage economic growth?” For any proposal to be considered for funding by the LEP, this needs to be answered positively.

8.3 **Effective Enforcement of Parking.** The enforcement of parking in Wokingham Borough is currently the responsibility of Thames Valley Police who do not prioritise this task. We consider that a more effective means of parking enforcement is necessary and that the decision to apply for the authority to implement Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) is both correct and inevitable. We understand that CPE will take at least 18 months to implement.

8.4 **Consistent application of Parking Restrictions.** Commuter parking on residential roads almost inevitably brings calls for parking restrictions to prevent or curtail that parking. As parking restrictions have an implementation cost, have to be enforced to be effective, urbanise the street scene and may penalise residents in their own roads we consider that any further parking restrictions need to continue to be implemented on a formal objective basis Borough-wide to ensure consistency of application. This objective basis should take account of all the factors including road width, traffic, demand for parking, the off road parking available to residents and the general street scene and be made against a

presumption that parking restriction should not be applied except where considered necessary.

**8.5 Metered Parking near Railway Stations.** We consider that it is inevitable that rail commuters using cars to access railway stations will seek to use free on road parking if that is available and convenient rather than pay sums ranging from £7.50 at Wokingham to £2.70 per day (peak charges) at Crowthorne to use station car parks. Any shortfall in parking capacity in station car parks will also drive motorists to then seek on road parking. We consider that it would not be unreasonable to introduce metered parking on certain roads where parking is prevalent and where road safety issues permit its continuance. Charges could reflect the distance from the station and the charges in the appropriate station car parks. Following the introduction of CPE, regular enforcement of parking restrictions will be introduced; complementary to that could be regulation of metered parking in certain roads. We consider that this would give added legitimacy to this parking provision as well as a funding stream for enhancing parking provision.

**8.6 Recommendations on Parking Provision.**

- We support the decision to seek to implement CPE.
- That the Council considers some form of metered parking in selected roads near railway stations which are used for commuter parking where road safety issues allow.

### **To enquire on progress towards the targets for active transport in LTP 3.**

9.0 The Local Transport Plan is a statutory requirement and is the third such plan produced, hence LTP 3. This covers the same time period as the Borough's Local Plan that is 2011 – 2026 and include an active travel goal as follows: *"To work with partners to promote walking and cycling as a health-enhancing physical activity for all our residents through providing:*

- *Connected, convenient, safe and signed pedestrian networks across the Borough to enhance existing networks.*
- *New cycleways integrated with the existing cycle network.*
- *Improved cycle parking at stations, businesses and schools."*

9.1 We heard how Wokingham Borough had been successful with bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund which had helped fund the provision of cycle lanes on the A329 Reading – Bracknell corridor complementing other significant cycle lanes such as that along Lower Earley Way.

9.2 Provision of additional cycle storage, using double stack racks, has been achieved in conjunction with GWR and SWT at Twyford and at Wokingham Stations with match funding achieving early installation.

9.3 The Borough Council prepares Travel Plans for new homes in the SDLs to inform new residents of the availability of public transport as well as walking and cycling opportunities. Measuring cycle usage objectively is difficult but our modal share for cycle use, in a Borough with one of the highest ratios of car ownership, is about 7% compared to a 2% national average.

9.4 We accept that success in encouraging active transport is difficult to measure but note that the layout of the SDLs is designed to encourage this. We consider that the aim should be to further improve secure cycle storage facilities at railway stations and improve, where practical, the access routes to them. Twyford Village Partnership has suggested that the Borough's aspiration to have a cycle route from Woodley to Twyford Station should be progressed together with another route from Charvil to Twyford Station. We would, in principle, support these suggestions.

#### **9.5 Recommendations on Active Transport.**

- That the Council should continue to work with the TOCs to increase and improve cycle storage at all stations.
- That the suggested cycle routes from Woodley and Charvil to Twyford Station should be progressed.

**To consider feeder buses to railway stations and, in particular, the orbital bus services suggested in Wokingham Borough's Park & Ride Strategy.**

10.0 We note that events have moved on somewhat since the Terms of Reference were drafted and various strands of work are in progress seeking to introduce and improve bus services to stations, particularly Twyford. For example, a meeting took place with bus companies at Shute End towards the end of November to brief them on developments within the Borough and specifically on future train services from Twyford and to invite proposals for services.

10.1 The Borough's Park & Ride Strategy adopted in June 2013 stated that: "*Orbital bus services should be considered in the longer term, in order to connect destinations and interchange locations not linked by the main corridors. These services would provide better connections to interchange locations such as Twyford Station.*" Two corridors were proposed for consideration:

- Reading Green Park Station (to open in 2018) through the south of the M4 SDL to Winnersh Triangle then to Twyford Station.
- Arborfield Garrison SDL through Wokingham to Twyford Station.

10.2 We consider that these were 'concept suggestions' with no details provided of routes, frequencies, hours of operation, stopping patterns, journey times or fares. That Park & Ride paper, we suggest, understated the problems of car parking at Twyford when it said "*The station already suffers from some car parking related problems*" suggesting "*a more immediate solution would be to increase the size of the existing car park.*" As the challenge of significantly enhancing the capacity of the station car park seems to be intractable, the provision of some feeder bus service that could also serve as a Park & Ride service must be an urgent requirement to be addressed. We deal with possible services to stations in detail individually in the section following.

10.3 We were informed that the procedure to be followed by a private operator was that an application had to be made to operate a service to the Traffic Commissioners and, when approved, the operator had a legal requirement to provide that service with any variation needing approval by the Traffic Commissioners.

10.4 The Council can commission services and a tender process is used. Services can be part commercial, part supported with the Council 'buying' additional services, for example off peak services or to extend operating hours. Services can also be supported by developers' contribution (either S106 or CIL) and this may be used to introduce services to the SDLs.

10.5 We note that services have been introduced to the bus stops at Wokingham Station with the 121, 122, 128 and 145 calling (although the 145 has one return journey on Tuesdays only). We also note that the 126, 128 and 129 call at Winnersh and Twyford Stations but none of these services are specifically designed to meet trains and there is no element of through or smart ticketing. Were specific feeder buses to run to Twyford, GWR has indicated that some form of through ticketing should be possible.

10.6 **Smart Ticketing.** We consider that there should be no question of Wokingham Borough Council attempting to introduce its own smart ticketing system. We are aware of the significant expenditure by ITSO Ltd (and other organisations) with little tangible result. But the Council should keep abreast of developments in this field and seek to join a tried and tested system.

10.7 **Recommendation.** The Council should maintain a watching brief on Smart Card development.

**To consider the desirability of car parking provision keeping pace with the demand for rail travel and how that might be provided.**

11.0 We now turn to the fundamental question of car parking provision at or near railway stations and do not, for a moment, consider that this can be easily resolved. There are a host of factors making this difficult including the short term nature of TOC franchises, the availability of spare land in an urban environment, making a business case for any expansion of car parking and then finding the funding for it. Nevertheless solutions do need to be found, with Twyford Station being clearly the prime example of a station possibly failing “*to achieve its maximum potential*” – which is a mini-quotation from Network Rail’s Western Route Study.

11.1 We also note that parking provision is insufficient at all our railway stations now, with the possible exception of Winnersh Triangle, and that demand shortfall needs to be addressed first and only then should the further requirement for car parking keeping pace with the roughly 4% annual compound growth for rail travel apply. This really is a classic case of “predict and supply”, only here there is a reluctance to predict and an inability (in most cases) to supply.

11.2 We will now deal in turn with our railway stations in the following order – Crowthorne, Wokingham, Winnersh, Winnersh Triangle, Earley, Wargrave and last (but certainly not least) Twyford. We do not attempt to put forward exact solutions but merely indicate how we consider the problems at each station might be approached.

**Crowthorne Station.**

11.3 Crowthorne is a GWR operated station with an estimated usage figure for 2014/15 (the latest data available) of 303,816 Entries & Exits as published by the ORR. There is a small station car park on the west side of the station operated by GWR with 42 spaces with a peak charge of £2.70 with off peak charges from 11am. The train service is basically 1 tph provided by the Reading – Redhill stopping service with augmentation during the peak hours. Departures are about xx43 for Reading and xx19 for Guildford and Redhill.

11.4 The former station building with forecourt is on the east or Guildford side of the station but is leased by Network Rail to a beauty salon who have parking rights on the forecourt although they have to provide access to a car repair business which is also on leased Network Rail land. The beauty salon seems to have a relaxed attitude to ‘meeters and greeters’ using their car park to meet passengers from the Reading direction. We suggest that a watching brief is maintained on the future use of that land and the possibility, at some stage, that it could become available for station parking.

11.5 Bracknell Forest plans to add about 1,250 homes to Crowthorne all over a mile distant from the station. Wokingham Borough has approved a planning application for about 110 homes about the same distance from the station. As this is not within reasonable walking distance, this will add to the pressures on parking at Crowthorne Station. Surrey County Council commissioned Arup Ltd to carry out a North Downs Line Rail Study that identified that parking provision at Crowthorne needed to be enhanced and also

recommended that the stopping service from Guildford to Reading (including a Crowthorne stop) be increased to 2 tph. This remains an aspiration but may be delivered in future timetables.

11.6 The travel plan for the development of the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) site (with 1,000 homes) proposed increasing the frequency of the 122 bus service, that currently runs at irregular intervals between Wokingham via Finchampstead to Crowthorne, to an hourly service and extending it along Dukes Ride to Crowthorne Station although without any detail of where the bus might turn, sit and what trains it was meant to connect with. Therefore more work is required on this proposal by Bracknell Forest Council to make it a practical and useful connection.

11.7 One immediate relief lies in the hands of Bracknell Forest Council as there is currently a free to use car park with 27 spaces on Dukes Ride at the entrance to Wellington Business Park about 200m from the station which is primarily there to serve the Station Parade shops but has a 2 hour waiting limit (enforced by Bracknell Forest's CPE). There are rarely more than about 3 cars in that car park which suggests that it is underutilised. We suggest that the 'short side' with about 9 spaces plus 2 disabled bays could be maintained at the current 2 hour limit with the time restriction removed on the remaining 16 spaces. We recommend a formal request to Bracknell Forest Council for this change to be implemented.

11.8 Crowthorne Parish Council informed us that they understood that Wellington College may be minded to consider the transfer of part of what is known as Derby Field, adjacent to the existing station car park, to allow the possible expansion of capacity in the station car park. This could allow the access, currently close to the overbridge approach and at an awkward angle, could be resited but that is within Bracknell Forest. GWR indicated that they would be interested in negotiating directly with Wellington College on this and a contact has been forwarded to allow this to take place.

#### 11.9 **Recommendations at Crowthorne Station.**

- That the Council requests that Bracknell Forest Council considers removing the 2 hour time limit on 16 spaces in the car park on Dukes Ride at the entrance to Wellington Business Park.
- That GWR explores with Wellington College the possible availability of a small part of Derby Field to expand the station car park at Crowthorne.
- That Bracknell Forest Council is asked to work with GWR to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Crowthorne Station.

#### **Wokingham Station.**

11.10 Wokingham is a SWT operated station with usage figures of 2,344,598 plus 164,264 interchangers and is thus the Borough's busiest station. Following the construction of the Station Link Road, the SWT run car park has a total capacity of 414 spaces with a £7.50 peak charge with off peak rates applying after 4pm. The train service is currently 2 tph to Waterloo, 1 tph to Gatwick Airport and 1 tph to Redhill combining to give a 4 tph service to and from Reading. There are additional services run during peak hours and GWR has

announced plans to run an extra service to Gatwick Airport per hour from May 2017 so raising the total to and from Reading to 5 tph. The car park at Wokingham is deemed to be at about capacity and SWT has announced that the car park will be decked in the latter half of 2016 to increase the capacity by about 100 spaces with the work being carried out under Permitted Development.

11.11 In his submission to us, John Redwood MP made some excellent points that parking at the station needs to keep pace with housing development around the town and, ideally, with the enhancement of the service to Gatwick Airport, secure long term parking should be available. We will make the point to SWT when we meet with their Stakeholder Manager that the planned decking should allow further expansion to be readily added on so allowing the capacity of the car park to be increased beyond the additional 100 places.

11.12 The possible 'orbital bus service' from the Arborfield SDL to Twyford Station could also serve Wokingham Station but this will need very careful scheduling to ensure reliability and reasonable connections at both Wokingham and Twyford Stations. Routing of buses over the Barkham Road level crossing is likely to become more difficult with any frequency enhancement of the train service. Because of this we recommend consideration as to whether a through service is possible compared with decoupling the services to, say, an Arborfield to Wokingham service and a separate Wokingham – Twyford Station service.

#### 11.13 **Recommendations at Wokingham Station.**

- That SWT is asked to ensure that the design for partial decking in the Wokingham station car park allows further expansion.
- That the Council considers, in conjunction with the bus operators, the viability and reliability of through bus services from Arborfield to Twyford Station via Wokingham.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Wokingham Station.

#### **Winnersh Station.**

11.14 Winnersh is a SWT operated station, usage figures of 520,922, no station parking and a basic service of 2 tph provided by Waterloo – Reading trains.

11.15 Commuter parking on residential roads is prevalent around Winnersh Station, for example in Danywern and Bathurst Roads. Arguably alternative provision for parking has now been provided at Winnersh Triangle Station but we endorse John Redwood's proposal that the Council should explore a joint use car park for Forest School and the station. This could also incorporate secure cycle storage as cycle storage provision is poor at Winnersh when it should form a much higher proportion of travel to that station. As the greater use of cycling to Winnersh Station is likely to be the most practical solution of enhancing access, the provision of better quality and expanded cycle storage should be explored jointly with SWT.

#### **11.16 Recommendations at Winnersh Station.**

- That the Council explores the possibility of a joint use car park for Forest School and the station and, were that possible, how parking would be managed.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Station.

#### **Winnersh Triangle Station.**

11.17 Winnersh Triangle is a SWT operated station, usage figures are 490,878, there is a car park owned and operated by the Council and the basic service is 2 tph provided by Waterloo – Reading trains. The station was opened in 1987 by the then Network SouthEast and was built fairly cheaply with no disabled access. The station has seen remarkable growth in usage over the last 5 years of over 97% (roughly doubled) and this led to study funded by TVB LEP to identify options for enhancement including disabled access.

11.18 The opening of the enlarged car park at Winnersh Triangle took place on 19<sup>th</sup> October during the work of this Task & Finish Group. This enlarged the car parking provision from 123 spaces to 390 spaces, partly to serve the adjacent railway station but primarily to serve a bus Park & Ride facility, in conjunction with Reading Borough Council, to replace the facility at the Showcase Cinema that was prone to flooding. The bus operation is a commercial service with the operator taking the revenue risk. It is appreciated that the train service is only 2 trains per hour but we question the logic of charging rail passengers £4 per car to park but only charging £1 per car for passengers using the Park & Ride service and we suggest that car parking charges should be indifferent to the chosen mode of travel by users and therefore recommend that this differential be eliminated with charges for all users brought to the same level.

11.19 The Council has an aspiration for greater frequency of trains at Winnersh Triangle and to enhance the range of stations served to help reduce road congestion, increase the pool of potential employees available and to offer Borough residents improved travel opportunities. This will be taken forward in the Council's responses to various consultations on rail franchises and studies.

11.20 We consider that cycle storage facilities require expansion and improvement and that the Council should work with SWT to achieve this to encourage further use of the station.

11.21 We note that the position of the station car park lying as it does to the north side of the railway which runs on an embankment could be fairly unobtrusively decked as a way of further increasing capacity if demand warrants. The Executive Member for Planning and Highways has stated in Council that he would be endorse such a proposal were demand to increase beyond the current capacity.

#### **11.22 Recommendations at Winnersh Triangle Station.**

- That the Council equalises charges for the car park at Winnersh Triangle for both bus and train users.

- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Winnersh Triangle Station.

### **Earley Station.**

11.23 Earley is a SWT operated station, usage figures are 639,888 which makes it our third busiest station, there is a small car park adjacent to the station owned and operated by the Council with 46 spaces with a daily charge of £4, and the basic service is 2 tph provided by Waterloo – Reading trains. As the car park fills to capacity there are significant on road parking issues on both sides of the A329 in the South Lake and the Maiden Erlegh wards.

11.24 Once again we agree with John Redwood when he says there is no easy answer. We note that there is significant commuter parking in Nightingale Road and Hazel Drive in South Lake. It looked to be possible to construct more parking at the east end of Nightingale Road which is a cul-de-sac and this is one area that seemed to us as being suited to metered parking.

11.25 This highlights the need for our Council to work with the town councils of Woodley and Earley to identify options that could be used for additional parking near Earley Station. As ever, funding will not be straightforward and we consider that the ‘user pays’ principle should be followed which, in our opinion, points to parking charges where it is practical and appropriate to apply them.

11.26 We note the well-used and fairly extensive cycle storage facility at Earley Station plus Reading’s cycle hire scheme stand outside the station. The Council should work with the South Western franchisee to expand cycle storage at the station.

### **11.27 Recommendations at Earley Station.**

- That the Council works with Earley and Woodley town councils to identify options to increase the availability of car parking near Earley Station including some form of metered parking on selected roads.
- That the Council works with SWT to enhance the provision of cycle storage at Earley Station.

### **Wargrave Station.**

11.28 Wargrave is a GWR operated station, the usage figure is 95,910 which makes it our least busy station by some margin – the next lowest figure is Crowthorne with 303,816. There is a small station car park with 30 spaces, run by GWR, where no parking charges are applied. The station is served by the branch train to Henley-on-Thames which operates off peak at about 3 trains every 2 hours although there are 2 through trains to Paddington in the morning and 3 through trains from Paddington in the evening.

11.29 GWR has announced that the through trains will cease in 2017 with the branch then operated a self-contained shuttle. The aspirations is to have a 2 tph branch service, the constraint being to get a round trip from Twyford to Henley and back within 30 mins but

there is a suggestion that Wargrave could be served only by alternate trains in order to achieve a robust timetable. Connecting services depend on punctual services on the GWML. The point that we wish to make here is that there will be significant changes to the services over the next 2 years from Wargrave which could conceivably discourage and reduce use of that station.

11.30 It is against that background that we consider parking at Wargrave Station. The Henley Branch User Group suggested that Network Rail land to the south of the station could be used for additional car parking. We understand the Network Rail has suggested using this land for additional parking but making a business case for investment will be difficult as parking at the station is currently free. It is likely that some means of third party funding will be necessary for this to be taken forward.

11.31 It was explained that Station Road serves as overspill parking for the station and provides long term free parking in lower Wargrave but any weekday service in the parish church then results in a significant parking problems. There are double yellow lines between the station parking and the public parking in Station Road. It is not obvious why they were deemed to be necessary and a quick and cheap way to provide additional parking would be to remove them. This, we suggest, may be the least bad of the various options in seeking some quick and practical solution.

#### 11.32 **Recommendation at Wargrave Station.**

- That the Council, with Wargrave Parish Council, examines the option of removing the double yellow lines on Station Road between the station parking area and the public parking.

#### **Twyford Station.**

11.33 Twyford, the junction station for the branch line to Henley-on-Thames, is a GWR operated station (and will remain so post the introduction of Crossrail services in 2019), the usage figures are 1,369,126 plus 638,123 interchanging passengers making it the Borough's second busiest station. Station parking has 324 spaces in two car parks, one for car park season ticket holders off Station Road known as Car Park 1 and the larger car park in the confined space bounded by the main line, the branch line and the River Loddon known as Car Park 2. This is accessed by Gas Lane which joins Station Road and there is a second entrance lane from Hurst Road joining Gas Lane at an awkward junction near the two under-bridges. Parking at Twyford costs £6.10 as a peak charge with off-peak charges starting at 11am – if spaces so allow.

11.34 The basic off peak service is 4 tph on the Relief Lines but there is significant enhancement in the peak hours services with calls on the Main Lines which are extremely popular as they offer some impressive journey times, for example the 6.47pm train from Paddington is an HST service with a first stop in Twyford at 7.10pm, 23 mins for a journey of 30.68 miles. It is therefore obvious why Twyford is a popular railhead and parking at Twyford has been a problem for the last 20 years or so.

11.35 The problems at Twyford are manifold. These include:

- The station forms the hub of the Twyford Station Conservation Area.
- The footbridge is a Public Right of Way (since 1839.)
- Station Road is a narrow road with residents' parking and has awkward junctions at either end onto Waltham Road.
- The station forecourt is an untidy shambles.
- The 'railway land' area on Station Road is not well defined into taxi ranks, waiting areas for those meeting trains, drop off areas, pedestrian flows and motor cycle parking.
- The access to Car Park 2 via Gas Lane and from Hurst road is poor - helped only by the 'tidal flow' nature of their use.
- The car parks are poorly laid out and Car Park 2 is for the most part unsurfaced, puddles, with cramped parking spaces (identified by the consultants Aedas Ltd, commissioned by GWR). The site is constrained by the main line, the branch line, the River Loddon and the access roads via Gas Lane. Car parks are full on Mondays through to Thursdays and fill up early.
- The ORR requirements on TOCs not to reduce station parking without their express permission.
- The station buildings need enhancement, for example there is no heated waiting area on the main departure platform, Platform 4.
- Neither coffee stall offers any seating, both are on Platform 4 (causing some obstruction that could become more critical with a greater number of interchanging passengers from the Henley Branch) and may need removing to de-clutter the platform.
- Platform 4 is short for the trains that will be introduced and cannot be extended, constrained at one end by the Waltham Road Bridge and by the Henley Branch junction at the other end. (Crossrail trains will have Selective Door Opening with the doors on the rear cars not opening as they will not be in the platform on Platform 4.) It is planned to extend Platforms 1, 2 and 3.
- Access from Car Park 2 to the station is via the 'barrow crossing' at the end of Platform 4/5 that will now remain in use.
- Land at the southern entrance is very restricted, is part Council land, part GWR (Network Rail) land through which runs the access road to Car Park 2. (Some motorists use the Council's grassed area for parking.)
- Parking for people meeting trains is limited on the Hurst Road side leading to most waiting to meet trains taking place on Station Road adding to congestion there.
- There is very limited cycle storage on the Hurst Road side of the station.
- GWR is thought unlikely to be successful in its bid for funding for a multi storey car park.
- The short term nature of GW franchises with the current one ending in April 2019.

11.36 All these factors are, to an extent, inter-related and suggests that unless some radical improvement is achieved rail travel from Twyford Station will not *"achieve its*

*maximum potential*". For example, any expansion of the station buildings into the forecourt, or pedestrianisation of the forecourt will remove parking places which then need adding to the existing car parks. These car parks already have sub-standard spacing which if addressed will again remove spaces. But it is essential that the problems and limitations are addressed to maximise rail travel to help address road congestion, reduce car use and to assist the business credentials of Wokingham Borough by helping to ensure the planned inclusion of stops on the Western Rail Link to Heathrow services.

11.37 GWR had convened a 'Twyford Workshop' in conjunction with Wokingham Borough Council to consider the problems and recommend solutions. This will have to be revisited if the multi storey car park bid is not successful and the membership should be widened to encompass all relevant parties including Twyford Parish Council.

11.38 It appears inevitable that some Park & Ride solution will have to be urgently considered, even in the short term, but this would appear to still require more land near the southern entrance. Feeder/connecting buses could also run and these could, potentially, serve various purposes, for example connect a Park & Ride site as well as feeding the railway station. However, we consider that regular commuters' primary requirements are overall journey times and reliability of their journey. Secondary considerations are cost, frequency, operating hours, comfort including the probability of a seat, wi-fi availability and connectional policy in the event of late running trains. In our opinion, the Park element should be as near to the station as possible to minimise the duration of the bus Ride element and allow a higher frequency of operation. Consequently we consider that the more remote the Park element, the greater the difficulty in offering an attractive package. We are unaware of any comparable 'Park & Ride & Ride' operating in the UK and consider the Achilles heel is likely to be the overall journey time. However, we do not feel qualified to comment on the viability of these potential services but recommend that formal professional consultancy advice is necessary and should be obtained.

11.39 We realise that we have listed many problems but few solutions on Twyford Station. It is a cliché to suggest that doing nothing is not an option. In the case of Twyford, this is basically what has occurred over the last 20 years – with the exception of a new 'Access for All' footbridge, some expansion of Car Park 2 some 15 years ago and, more recently, an extra exit gate added to Platform 1. We fully agree with the Home Secretary when she wrote *"Improving car parking facilities at Twyford is vital..."* a view incidentally fully supported by the Managing Director of GWR, Mark Hopwood. We consider that the onus for devising a solution on the Station Road side must lie with GWR with assistance as appropriate from the Council. However, on the Hurst Road side, we consider that the reverse should apply, the Council should lead with assistance as appropriate from GWR.

11.40 We are aware that Bracknell Forest Council will build the majority of its new housing on the north side of Bracknell. Compared with the extended journey times currently in place to Waterloo (about 60 minutes for 32 miles) a portion of these residents is likely to choose, access permitting, to travel from Twyford Station, particularly after eastern connections from Paddington have been transformed by Crossrail in 2018. This suggests 2 actions, one is to press yet again for journey time reductions on services on services to

Waterloo in the Council's response to DfT's current consultation on the South Western franchise (and to invite Bracknell Forest Council to make a complementary response) in order that the Wokingham- Waterloo services take a greater share of the demand. The second is to ask Bracknell Forest Council what plans, if any, they have for connecting bus services from the new developments in Binfield to Twyford.

#### **11.41 Recommendations at Twyford Station.**

- That all parties including the Council, GWR and Twyford Parish Council work together to ensure that residents of the Borough are able to access rail services at Twyford.
- That the Council seeks professional consultancy advice on the practicality of Park & Ride services and connecting buses to serve Twyford.
- That Bracknell Forest Council is asked what plans, if any, they have for connecting buses from their new housing in the Binfield area.

## **Recommendations.**

12.0 In making our recommendations, we do not propose to reiterate the suggested actions on individual railway stations and on other sections of this report. We consider that we have offered an outline strategy to follow to enhance access to stations within the Borough plus Crowthorne with the notable exception of Twyford. The numerous problems at Twyford make it challenging in extreme yet the potential rewards to the Borough from maximising its potential mean that satisfactory solutions must be found.

12.1 However, we realise that certain of our recommendations made for individual stations have a wider application and highlight these here:

- There should be a three pronged approach to applying parking restrictions on residential roads: alternative provision of access to stations, an effective means of enforcement, and to continue with the consistent application of parking restrictions. (Paragraphs 8.1 to 8.4)
- There appears to be a case for some metered parking on public roads near railway stations. (Paragraph 8.5)
- Professional consultancy advice should be obtained on Park & Ride schemes where the Park element is remote from the station as the overall journey time and journey reliability will be key to their success or, indeed, failure. (Paragraph 11.39)

## **Conclusions.**

13.0 While demand for rail travel has doubled in the last 20 years, the provision for parking at stations, with the exception of Winnersh Triangle, has basically remained unchanged, far less than 'keeping pace with demand'. The result is the increased prevalence of on street parking that has given rise to complaints from householders leading to this review.

13.1 All policy direction, including that in our Local Transport Plan, encourages modal shift from cars to more sustainable transport. To help to fulfil these policies, access to railways stations, including the provision of additional car parking, requires enhancement where possible.

13.2 The Borough's efforts to establish Park and Ride services are commendable but largely ignore the fact that provision of parking for rail services takes cars off roads, is greener and serves an established demand for customers who have a track record of being prepared to pay tidy sums to park. We consider that commuters' primary requirements are overall journey time and reliability of service and that this may not be provided by a remote Park and Ride facility.

13.3 Twyford will be the Borough's gateway station to London, Crossrail and the planned development and interchange at Old Oak Common, to Heathrow via the Western Rail Link and to the west. Access, and particularly car parking, needs significant enhancement, although this is a challenge. We are aware that efforts are ongoing to achieve this but co-operation from all will be necessary to be successful. But they are essential for the generation of economic growth.

13.4 As the increased demand for rail travel will, in future, be at least partly proportional to our increasing housing numbers and population, the various infrastructure funds, such as CIL, should help fund improvements in access to railway stations and the provision of parking. This also applies at Crowthorne where it is likely that the majority of the increased demand will come from housing in Bracknell Forest.

## **Acknowledgements.**

14.0 The Task & Finish Group are grateful to all those who contributed to the study and to Colm Ó Caomhánaigh of Democratic Services who served as our secretariat.

## Appendix A: Terms of Reference

**Purpose of Review: To consider the problems of commuter and other parking at, or near, railway stations.**

1. To consider the desirability of car parking near railway stations keeping pace with the rising demand for rail travel and if such additional car parking is deemed to be necessary, where and how it could that be provided.
2. To consider whether feeder bus services to stations are desirable and, if so, to recommend what services should be considered and when planning for these services should commence.
3. To consider in the longer term orbital bus services running to Twyford Station serving the SDLs, as suggested in the Borough's adopted Park & Ride Strategy given that house building is under way in all the SDLs except Arborfield Garrison where outline approvals have been given. The potential for smart or through ticketing might also be examined.
4. To enquire what improvements, if any, have been achieved since the adoption of LTP3 and what further improvements are planned.
5. To consider the balance of parking restrictions and enforcement as to whether motorists are being discouraged rather than being encouraged to change their mode of travel.
6. To consider and understand the effect on residents living in the area.

### Key Objectives:

1. To determine what progress has been made towards the goals in LTP3
2. Is further car parking near railway stations desirable and practical and, if so, where and how should that be provided?
3. What planning should be initiated for the orbital and for other bus feeder services suggested in the adopted Park & Ride Strategy? What through ticketing might be possible?
4. What improvements in active transport have been achieved since the adoption of LTP3 and what further improvements are planned and what further improvements are needed?
5. Is the current balance between having parking restrictions and encouraging modal shift correct and how should it be changed?

### **Scope of the work:**

1. To gain an understanding of the current commuter parking situation in the Borough and immediately adjoining areas.
2. To gain an understanding of the impact of alternative modes of travel as possible solutions.
3. To gain an understanding of how the Vision priority to tackle congestion and improve journeys across the Borough is being impacted by the problems of commuter parking.
4. To gain an understanding of how Commuter parking impacts on economic growth and business and links to ensuring strong sustainable communities both of which form part of the Vision.
5. To gain an understanding of appropriate local and national policies relating to commuter parking.
6. To consider what constraints exist whether legal, physical or resource-related.
7. To consider the impact of service changes to trains or buses.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting held on 23 June 2014, considered a number of suggestions from Members for possible Scrutiny reviews.

Councillor Lindsay Ferris had put forward a suggestion relating to the impact of commuter parking on Wokingham Borough Council residents across the Borough.

Commuter parking in residential roads can be seen across the Borough and this has a negative impact on residents for example, in Winnersh, Twyford and Wokingham. This links to the Vision priority to tackle congestion and improve journeys across the Borough. Commuter parking is also linked to economic growth and business and links to ensuring strong sustainable communities both of which form part of the Vision. Tackling this issue and improving the situation would have a direct benefit to residents. Planned development in the Borough will increase the number of residents and will exacerbate this issue.

Commuter parking has caused particular concerns with access to residential roads e.g. waste collection and emergency vehicles. For example, in Cavendish Gardens, Winnersh a petition for double yellow lines. In Wessex Gardens, Twyford a petition in 2010 and further request in 2012. In Jan 2014 waste collection could not be made due to parking blocking the road.

## SPECIFIC AREAS FOR THE PANEL TO ADDRESS:

1)	Consultation with residents in all areas surrounding railway stations in the Borough.
2)	A report assessing exactly when and where commuter parking creates problems and establishing the full extent of the problem.
3)	The Committee to look at and make recommendations on a Commuter Parking Policy.
4)	Development of a fair, even handed and consistent policy that can be applied across the Borough.

## INFORMATION GATHERING:

### Witnesses to be invited

Name	Organisation/Position	Reason for Inviting
Rail companies;	First Great Western South West Trains	To obtain their views
Various Groups/Officers/MP/ Councillors	Matt Davey, Head of Transport and Planning Matt Gould, Service Manager Transport and Road Safety Rail user groups; Executive Members for Planning and Highways; Other Councillors; Local MPs; South West Trains LSTP Officers; Representative from the LEP.	To find out what they have done to tackle the problem of commuter parking.
Residents who commute		To obtain their views

### Information to be obtained from

Organisation	Information to be Requested
Various Local Authorities	Benchmarking exercise.

## Key Documents / Background Data / Research:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | A benchmarking exercise be carried out with other local authorities to see if (and if they have, how) they have reviewed the problems of commuter parking at or near railway stations. |
|----|--|

### TIMESCALE:

**Starting:** June 2015

**Ending:** January 2016

### REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS:

Body	Date
Executive	18 February 2016

**Referred by the Management Committee to:** Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Terms of Reference agreed by:** Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Committee Members involved in the review:** To be confirmed but to include Councillors Lindsay Ferris and David Sleight

**Committee Lead Member:** Councillor Norman Jorgensen  
**Executive Member:** Councillor John Kaiser

## Appendix B: Letter from the Rt Hon John Redwood MP

THE RT HON JOHN REDWOOD MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Councillor David Sleight  
114 Ellis Road  
Crowthorne  
Berkshire RG45 6PH

27 October 2015

Dear David

Thank you for your letter consulting on the provision of parking at stations. This issue is part of a wider question of making sufficient parking provision generally.

The new Conservative government has altered parking policy. It has altered the idea that parking provision has to be restricted to try to reduce car use. The government recognises that cars are usually not in use. When not in use they need to be off the highway, as we are short of road capacity generally and cannot spare much limited highway space for parking.

The government remains happy to encourage more use of trains as a substitute for cars. To do so my constituents need to be able to drive to a station and park easily. If it takes too long or is too expensive people will complete their total journey by car and not change to a train. Many of my constituents live too far from a station to be able to walk there.

I support the actions the Council are taking to expand parking facilities at Winnersh Triangle and Wokingham stations. In view of the growth of housing in the area and the wish to develop Wokingham town centre to the south, I would urge a large enough expansion at Wokingham station to allow for growth. It is also important to provide some longer term parking at stations, allowing people to be away for more than a day when using trains. There needs to be sufficient drop off and pick up spaces close to a station. This is currently cramped at Wokingham.

Earley and Winnersh are more problematic, as both are on constrained sites in built up areas. At Winnersh the Council should explore a joint use car park for the school and station, offering more spaces for both users. Residents in Earley and Winnersh rightly object to people parking all day outside their homes in narrow residential roads, sometimes blocking their drives. There is no easy answer on parking for Earley, where a study of options should be made. There is land on the other side of the railway track to Station Road adjacent to the A329M which could be considered.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Redwood'.

Email: [john.redwood.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:john.redwood.mp@parliament.uk) Tel: 020 7219 4205

## Appendix C: Letter from the Rt Hon Theresa May MP



THE RT HON THERESA MAY MP  
Member of Parliament for Maidenhead

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr David Sleight  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Shute End  
Wokingham  
RG40 1BN

28 October 2015

Thank you for your letter regarding commuter parking at or near railways stations.

I am pleased to read about your Working Group, which is addressing an extremely important issue. As you mentioned, this is of relevance to Wargrave in my constituency, and particularly to Twyford where there is a clear need for increased capacity – and this is only likely to be exacerbated once Crossrail comes into operation.

I am supportive of GWR's efforts to find a solution to this problem. Indeed, I wrote a letter of support for the funding bid and discussed the plans with their Managing Director, Mark Hopwood. I have also discussed this matter with Cllr John Halsall.

Improving car parking facilities at Twyford is vital and I am pleased to support your efforts to make progress. Please do let me know what conclusions your Working Group reaches.

Many thanks again for writing.

Yours sincerely,

**The Rt Hon Theresa May MP**

Tel: 020 7219 5206

[www.tmay.co.uk](http://www.tmay.co.uk)

Email: [mavt@parliament.uk](mailto:mavt@parliament.uk)

## **Appendix D: Glossary of Abbreviations.**

AfA	Access for All – step free access either through ramps or lifts
CPE	Civil Parking Enforcement
DfT	Department for Transport
GW	Great Western – not specific to the current GWR
GWML	Great Western Main Line – the route from Paddington to the west.
GWR	Great Western Railway – formerly First Great Western
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ORR	The Office of Rail and Road – the railway (and Highways England) regulator
P & R	Park & Ride
SDL	Strategic Development Location
SDO	Selective Door Opening – where carriage doors do not open when not in a short platform.
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SFO	Station Facilities Operator (The train operating company managing a station)
SWT	South West Trains
TOC	Train operating company
Tph	Trains per hour
TRL	Transport Research Laboratory in Crowthorne
TVB LEP	Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Evening, Sunday and Shute End Charges</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Highways and Planning

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

These proposed charges will ensure that the council's off street car parks provide a best value return on the asset.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Executive:

- 1) approve the permanent making of The Wokingham Borough Council (Various off-street Borough Car Parks) (Variation (2)) Order 2016);
- 2) Instruct officers to amend signage and equipment in the car parks;
- 3) inform those who have responded to the consultation accordingly.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report summarises the Sunday and evening car parking charges proposed, responds to the objections from the consultation on these proposals, and recommends a decision to the Executive.

## **Background**

The principle of charging for car park use is well established. The Council currently charges users in most of the car parks it operates with those charges applying between the hours of 8am and 6pm, Monday to Saturday. The Council is increasingly under pressure to generate new streams of income in order to support services. The proposals for evening and weekend charging will generate additional income and brings Wokingham car park charging regime in to line with many other authorities locally.

For the car parks listed below, a £1.00 charge for parking Sunday and bank holidays all day (8am-6pm) and Monday to Sunday, nightly (6pm-8am). All car parks below have a Nightly Season Tickets (6pm-8am) for 12 months of £292, apart from School Lane, Wargrave, which has a residents parking scheme in place.

- Cockpit Path
- Easthampstead Road East
- Easthampstead Road West
- Crockhamwell Road
- Headley Road
- Denmark Street
- School Lane, Wargrave
- Station Road, Earley
- Lytham Road East
- Lytham Road West
- Polehampton Close East, Twyford
- Polehampton Close East, West
- Shute End Council Offices
- The Paddocks
- Carnival Pool
- Rose Street
- Winnersh Triangle.

In addition, the following charges shall apply to The Shute End Council offices car park on Saturdays between 8:00am and 6:00pm (excluding bank holidays):

- 70p up to 1 hour;
- £1.20 up to 2 hours;
- £2.00 up to 4 hours;
- £3.00 up to 6 hours;
- £4.00 up to 10 hours.

For all car parks, the unladen weight limit has increased from 30 cwt to 3000kg. In all other respects, the charges listed in the car parks shall continue to apply in addition to those that appear above.

## **Analysis of Issues**

A public consultation on the above proposal was held from 13 January 2016 until 5 February 2016. Notices were placed in each car park and advertisements appeared in both local papers. In addition, letters were sent to each town and parish council as well as the Wokingham and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiatives. All ward members were also informed of the proposals and consultation. Consultation responses were made on the council's website. Responses which came in writing were also added to the consultation. The responses to the consultation can be seen in

Appendix A. *[Due to the size of this Appendix it is not included in the agenda but can be found on the Council's website or is available on request from Democratic Services.]*

Most responses to the consultation were against the proposals. The objections and responses are summarised in this section. Appendix A, which shows the objections, refers to the numbered responses below.

### 1 – Safety impact

Safety concerns were raised regarding women using the car parks to pay at night. Although the fear of crime is understandable, the council's crime figure analysis, in conjunction with Thames Valley Police shows that crime, even in the council car parks, is very low. With the introduction of these charges, trained enforcement officers will now patrol the car parks during the evening, ensuring that an even higher level of safety is maintained.

### 2 - On street parking impact

Car users who wish to avoid the charges in the council car parks may choose to park on street. Whilst this parking is an acceptable alternative if done so legally, illegal parking may inconvenience residents. The council has been given approval by the Executive to apply to parliament for the powers to undertake on-street parking enforcement. Until these powers are granted, the council will continue to work with the police to ensure illegal parking is addressed.

### 3 – Resident impact

The evening charges will have an impact on residents who do not have private parking availability at their residence and choose to use council car parks. Parking is not a right that the council provides for each residence and the provision of where to park a vehicle must be a factor when choosing a place to live. Through planning work, the council aims to provide different types of accommodation to the population to account for different needs. The proximity to amenities and public transport is part of the attraction in leaving near a town centre, even at the detriment of private car owner's ability to have reserved parking for their vehicle. The council has offered an overnight season ticket as part of these proposals to address this concern.

For some residents, the cost of parking may be prohibitive. Adult and children's services run by the council can give advice as to individual circumstances.

### 4 – Social impact

Various community groups concerned by the impact on their organisations were mentioned in the responses to the consultation. These include theatre groups, community centres, car-boots/markets, sporting activities in local parks, libraries, after school clubs, major events, and centres of religious worship. Although the circumstances of each organisation varies, all bring a sense of purpose to their constituents and to the wider community. Whilst the council recognises this contribution, the car parking asset must generate value for money to the council in order to support the transport goals of the council as well as other valuable services that the council provides to the community. The land value of the car parks must also be considered when operating a parking service. In order to provide off-street parking that balances the needs of the multiple users of the council's services, charges must be established in order to provide value for money.

### 5 – Business impact

Among the businesses that residents felt may be negatively impacted by the proposals were take-aways, restaurants, bars, retailers, traders, banks/cash points, fitness/health classes, doctor surgeries, and pharmacies. The charges are proposed so that the provision for off-street parking can remain and be sustainable to support the customers of these businesses in the future. Benchmarking with neighbouring borough councils show that similar charges are in place in other districts, often at higher values than those set out in this proposal.

### 6 – Community impact

Concerns on the impact of the proposals on the vibrancy of the borough's town centres were raised in the consultation. Whilst some individuals may choose not to use the town centre car parks during the hours of the new proposals, the risk of impact on parking is minimal compared to other factors, many of which are addressed through the works of town centre regeneration and other similar projects. Parking studies have shown a steady year-on-year increase in the use of all of the borough's car parks. With many new residents moving to the borough, this trend is expected to continue and the council is preparing projects to address the future parking needs of the area.

### 7 – Financial viability

Concerns were raised within the consultation as to the financial viability of this scheme. In generating these proposals, the cost of enforcement was considered. If the proposals gain approval, the implementation of the proposals will be carefully monitored in order to ensure value for money is achieved. The proposed revenue savings will ensure that the transport aims of the council can be achieved. The off-street parking service is a non-statutory service that provides a valuable asset to the community and is part of the council's transport asset.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue

### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

None

### **Cross-Council Implications**

None

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
See Appendix A

<b>Contact</b> Alison Dray	<b>Service</b> Environment
<b>Telephone No</b> 0118 974 3727	<b>Email</b> alison.dray@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Date</b> 18 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 2

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	Shinfield South and Shinfield North
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Councillor John Kaiser, Executive Member Planning and Highways

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To continue to support Shinfield Parish Council in their neighbourhood planning efforts.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive;

- 1) approve a 6 week consultation for the draft Neighbourhood Plan; and
- 2) approve that the Council can begin to appoint an examiner to examine to Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan once adopted will be part of the Development Plan and therefore carry significant weight in the determination of planning applications in or affecting Shinfield Parish. The plan contains policies on housing, transport and access, the natural environment, community and recreation, and business and commercial development. Most of the policies are in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in Wokingham Borough's Development Plan and have had regard to national policies.

The Council considers that the Submission document accords with the neighbourhood planning regulations which require general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan ([Paragraph 8 \(1\) \(a\) \(2\) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(inserted by the Localism Act 2011\)](#)).

## Background

### Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act 2011 and associated regulations introduced neighbourhood planning, which gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans. The key stages in producing a neighbourhood plan are:

- 1) Designating a neighbourhood area
- 2) Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan
- 3) Pre-submission publicity & consultation
- 4) Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the local planning authority
- 5) Independent examination
- 6) Referendum
- 7) Bringing the neighbourhood plan into force

### Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Shinfield Parish began work on producing a neighbourhood plan shortly after being designated a neighbourhood area by the Council in October 2012. The parish council undertook a six week consultation on their pre-submission draft plan in July 2015. The consultation was extended to 30 September 2015. The parish Council have considered the consultation responses, and working with the Borough Council, amended the plan. The Plan has now been submitted to the Council for Executive approval to publicise the draft plan for a minimum regulatory six week.

### Next Steps

If approved by the Executive, the Council will then publicise the draft plan and invite representations for a minimum regulatory six weeks and appoint an independent examiner. The Council will send the draft plan and all representations to the examiner who will issue a report to WBC and Shinfield Parish Council. At this point, the Council will consider the recommendations in the report and decide what actions to take in response to each. The Council must also come to a formal view about whether the draft plan meets the basic conditions set out in [paragraph 8\(2\) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#).

The basic conditions are:

- a. That it has regard to national policies and advice;
- b. That it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- c. That it is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the local Development Plan;
- d. That it is compatible with EU obligations; and
- e. That it is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site.

If the Council is satisfied that the draft plan satisfies the criteria below, a referendum on the plan must be held where this reflects the advice of the Examiner.

- That it meets the basic conditions;
- That it is compatible with EU obligations; and

- That it complies with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan and the provisions that can be made by a neighbourhood development plan.

### **Council Review of Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan**

The Council's officers have provided support to the neighbourhood plan steering committee throughout this process. The Council arranged and paid for (with Department for Communities and Local Government neighbourhood planning grant funds) the plan to undergo a 'healthcheck' in April 2015, which is essentially a light touch review to determine whether the draft plan would pass examination. The [healthcheck report](#) contained a number of relatively minor recommendations, which are now reflected in the plan. The report included one major recommendation which was to "*delete the new parking policy in preference for a statement that the Neighbourhood Plan complies with the development plan in this respect*". The steering committee decided not to remove the parking policy but agreed to amend it in a way to be consistent with the existing development plan.

The steering committee submitted the draft plan to the Council in December 2015. The plan was reviewed by the Council. Council officers met with the Parish on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to provide feedback and work together on policies that would be suitable for both the Parish and the Council. A further meeting was held with the Parish and Ward Councillors on the 11 February to agree changes to the plan.

### **Analysis of Issues**

The Shinfield Parish Draft Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of policies designed to address issues within Shinfield Parish. The plan contains background information and policies on housing, transport and access, the natural environment, community and recreation, and business and commercial development. The policies should be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Wokingham Borough Development Plan but may add more locally specific detail.

Wokingham Borough Council has worked proactively and positively with the Parish to get to this point. It is considered that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in Wokingham Borough's Development Plan and that it has regard to national policies.

### **Conclusion**

The Council considers that the Submission document accords with the neighbourhood planning regulations which require general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan ([Paragraph 8 \(1\) \(a\) \(2\) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(inserted by the Localism Act 2011\)](#)).

It is recommended that a 6 week consultation for the draft Neighbourhood Plan is approved and an examiner be appointed to examine to Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	nil	nil	nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£400 (consultation) £5,000 (Examination) £12,400 (Referendum)	Yes. Once the Draft Plan is published, the Council would receive grant funding of £5,000 After successful Examination the Council would receive grant funding of £20,000 to offset costs incurred.	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	nil	nil	nil

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None anticipated.

### Cross-Council Implications

The Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan, if adopted, will be used to determine planning applications within Shinfield Parish.

### List of Background Papers

[Shinfield Parish Draft Neighbourhood Plan](#)  
[Final Determination Statement that Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan does not need a Strategic Environment Assessment](#)  
[Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan Health check Report](#)

<b>Contact</b> Manpreet Kanda	<b>Service</b> Land Use and Transport
<b>Telephone No</b> 0118 908 8363	<b>Email</b> Manpreet.kanda@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Date</b> 18 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 1



Shinfield Parish Council  
Draft Neighbourhood  
Development Plan

Examination version  
28 January 2016

## A note about this document

The Localism Act 2011 requires a Neighbourhood Development Plan document to include a number of statutory appendices. This document covers the policies and evidence.

This document has been revised following public consultation, carried out between June and September 2015.

- 1) View or download at [www.shinfieldplan.org](http://www.shinfieldplan.org)
- 2) Access a printed copy of the additional documents for viewing at:
  - a. Shinfield Parish Council office, School Green, Shinfield;
  - b. Wokingham Borough Council Planning Department, Shute End, Wokingham;

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The coalition government, under the Localism Act 2011, introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Development Planning to allow local communities to have greater involvement in planning decisions and land use within their individual areas.
- 1.2 Shinfield Parish Council believes that, by developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, it can play a much bigger role going forward in helping to shape new development. The parish council can have greater influence in obtaining the additional infrastructure improvements that we consider are needed to allow the parish to accommodate additional homes and continue to make this a desirable place to live.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Development Plan covers the period from 2016 through to 2026, which is the period of growth outlined in the South of M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL) Supplementary Planning Document (May 2011) produced by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).
- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is specifically about use of land, and therefore, our policies must take this into account. The plan must take account of both strategic national and local planning policies and will allow us to strengthen local policies where we feel they are not sufficiently tailored, or robust enough, for our locality.
- 1.5 The process of developing this plan has allowed us to build stronger ties with both WBC and local housing developers, helping to ensure that local residents' voices are heard.

## 2 How can you find out more?

- 2.1 Drop into the parish council office at School Green to find out more about progress with the Neighbourhood Development Plan, or speak to your local parish councillor for an update.

## 3 Creating the plan

- 3.1 Shinfield Parish Council first considered developing a plan in the early part of 2012. A working group of parish councillors was set up in February 2012 to investigate matters and report back to the parish council. A proposal to develop the plan was approved by Shinfield Parish Council in May 2012 and a steering group of parish councillors was formed under the chairmanship of Parish Councillor, Peter Hughes.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan will build on the excellent work of the Shinfield Parish Community Plan (*see appendix W*), adopted by the parish council in 2011, following the publication of the Village Character and Design Statements for Shinfield School Green, Ryeish Green, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. These can be found on the [Shinfieldplan.org](http://Shinfieldplan.org) website or viewed at the parish office.

## 4. What happens next?

- 4.1 This draft Neighbourhood Development Plan was consulted throughout the local community within Shinfield Parish between Mid-June and September 2015.
- 4.2 Minor alterations were made to the plan, taking account of the comments received from this consultation. The plan will be formally issued to WBC in January 2016, to begin the process of formal examination by an independent examiner, appointed jointly by WBC and the parish council.
- 4.3 Providing the plan passes these stages, it goes to referendum for consideration by all eligible voters in the parish. A majority voting in favour of the plan would then make it a legal part of planning considerations for all development within the parish.

## 5. Visions and objectives for the plan

### 5.1 Our Vision:

***'People working together, respecting our local history, building a vibrant community now and for the future'***

### 5.2 Our Objectives:

***'To ensure the new developments enhance the character of existing settlements'***

***'To develop a vibrant and prosperous neighbourhood by encouraging development that supports a good range of housing, schools, shops and services that meets the needs of local people and protects the quality of the local environment'***

***'To provide new and diverse leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy and crime free lifestyles for everyone'***

5.3 The first public meeting was held on 5 July 2012. Six focus groups were initially established to look at particular aspects of the plan that the steering committee felt it necessary to address. An open invitation to join these focus groups was sent to all residents via the parish council's summer newsletter, delivered to all households in the parish.

5.4 To date, there have been more than sixty meetings held to collect issues, review, analyse and agree the content for the plan.

5.5 The focus groups worked initially to list the issues that were raised at both public events and through focus group discussions. This ultimately led to the creation of a '19 Questions Survey', produced in the summer of 2013. The survey asked residents for their views on the key issues from each focus group. More than 700 responses were received, highlighting the strength of community concern over these issues. An analysis of the responses was published on [www.shinfieldplan.org](http://www.shinfieldplan.org) and this plan aims to tackle these issues.

5.6 Full details of the community involvement can be found in the Consultation Statement.

## 6. Planning Policy

6.1 In creating policies for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, it is necessary to take account of existing national and local policies (those adopted by WBC). A full list of the documents reviewed can be found in appendix X. Our plan will add to these national and local policies to make them more robust or to deal with specific local issues.

## 7. Our Plan

7.1 The following twelve policies form the main body of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. In addition to the policies, there are many appendices documents which include:

- Additional background information about the parish;
- Supporting material and evidence relating to the policies;
- Survey data carried out for the plan;
- Aspirations for the future of the parish, not directly covered by the plan policies.

## 8. Background information and data

- 8.1 Shinfield Parish, covering an area of 1,813 hectares, is made up of many villages and settlements, each with its own identity and local community. It extends from the urban community north of the M4 motorway, through Shinfield village south of the M4, to Spencers Wood in the south west and from the banks of the River Loddon in the east, through Ryeish Green and Three Mile Cross to the rural communities of Grazeley, Mere oak, Great Lea, Hartley Court and Pound Green in the west. The parish has a long history stretching back to the Domesday Book of 1078, and has a wealth of historical features, including areas of ancient woodland, more than thirty listed buildings and a designated Area of Special Character. (See *appendix B for maps of the parish*)
- 8.2 The parish is dissected by the M4 motorway, offering access to the UK trunk road network, fast train services into Central London and access to Heathrow airport. Coupled with its proximity to high quality employment within the many national and international companies that have settled in the Thames Valley, excellent shopping, leisure facilities and a good choice of schools, there can be few places in the UK so appealing.

### Shinfield Parish Population

- 8.3 In the past fifteen years or so, there has been extensive development within the parish, both north and south of the M4 and east of the A33. In 2001, the population was 8,136 living in 3,200 households. By 2011, some 11,198 people (an increase of 37%), were living in Shinfield Parish, in 4,403 households. This represents 76% of the overall rise in new residents across the whole of Wokingham Borough in the same period. Of these homes, 66% (2,949) were privately owned and the remainder rented and in shared ownership. Shinfield Parish has some 12.3% of Wokingham Borough's social housing stock and a greater proportion of rented housing than any other part of Wokingham Borough.
- 8.4 The area of Shinfield Parish south of the M4 motorway is one of WBC's four strategic development locations (SDL) and to date, over 3,000 new homes now have planning permission to be built in the parish by 2026 (*see appendix N*).
- 8.5 Projecting over the period of the plan to 2026, it is expected that the population will rise to within the region of 19,000 residents. This is based on average occupations for the approved and received planning applications for developments of five or more dwellings as at December 2015 (*see appendix N*).
- 8.6 No account has been made in the figures for dwellings converted to Homes in Multiple Occupation since the 2011 Census, nor for small developments of less than five dwellings built, or approved, since 2011.
- 8.7 Given the location of the parish relative to transport links and employment opportunities, including the proposed University of Reading Thames Valley Science Park, it is expected that

further development of residential dwellings, in significant numbers, will come forward before the end of the plan period.

## 9. What infrastructure will be delivered?

- 9.1 Along with the housing, there is a planning requirement for the Development Consortium (the University of Reading, Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes and other developers) to deliver amenities for the new community. Naturally, some of these infrastructure improvements will serve the existing community as well. Additional projects, developed by the parish council and WBC, will enhance the facilities available to everyone.

### Shinfield Eastern Relief Road

- 9.2 This will run from Arborfield Road, skirting round the eastern side of Shinfield, crossing the M4 over a new motorway bridge and will join the Black Boy roundabout on a newly built spur. This new road should take traffic travelling to, and from, Arborfield and beyond, around Shinfield Village.

### Other highways changes

- 9.3 Modifications are currently planned for key junctions within the parish, including the junctions of Hyde End Road and Basingstoke Road and Church Lane and Basingstoke Road.

### Alternative travel

- 9.4 Development proposals also include the provision of new pathways for use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, which will enhance the existing network, and provide an alternative to car use.

### New bus service

- 9.5 Additional bus services will be running at an early stage of the Shinfield and Spencers Wood developments. These will connect the three key points of Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood and Shinfield, and run a frequent service into central Reading.

### Park and Ride

- 9.6 A new Park and Ride facility has been constructed at Mere oak, adjacent to the A33, providing spaces for over 500 cars, with a bus service to Reading.

### New schools

- 9.7 Two new primary schools are planned to meet the needs of families expected to move into the new housing. These new schools are proposed for sites in Shinfield and Spencers Wood.
- 9.8 Wokingham Borough Council has recently approved plans to meet the need for additional secondary school places, with a new school at Arborfield, scheduled to open in September

2016. This will provide more secondary school places for the parish in addition to Oakbank Free School. There is currently no provision of post-16 education within the parish.

### Community centre

- 9.9 A new community centre will be built in Shinfield, on the site of the now closed Royal British Legion building. It is intended to create a focal point and provide a broad base of facilities to serve the enlarged population.

### A new village centre

- 9.10 A new village centre is planned for Shinfield, alongside the existing health centre at School Green. The plans include a medium-sized supermarket, smaller stores and parking. It will be accessed from a new road off the School Green roundabout. The parish council is working in partnership with WBC and developers to integrate the parish hall, the British Legion site and School Green, in to this new village centre, to create an open, car-free area, allowing safer access to Shinfield Infant and Nursery School.

### Sports and recreation

- 9.11 The sports proposals grew from research conducted for the parish and borough council by Ploszajski Lynch Consulting. A sports hub, offering facilities for both the general community and existing organised sports clubs, is proposed for the playing fields at Ryeish Green.
- 9.12 The parish council is working with existing sports clubs in order to provide the best facilities possible. In the longer term, the parish council aims to provide a wide range of sports and recreation facilities to cater for all age groups and abilities.

### Green spaces

- 9.13 Under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010, suitable alternative natural green spaces (SANGs) must be provided close to new developments. These SANGs are intended to provide green spaces for people to use for general recreation, such as dog walking.
- 9.14 Each area will be grassland, edged with, and crossed by, hedgerows, trees and footpaths. Other wildlife friendly features such as ponds, scrub and log piles will be included.

### The four newly created green spaces will be:

**Langley Mead SANG (opened May 2015):** Fields and watercourses on the south side of Hyde End Road with raised pathways.

**Ridge SANG:** A green area separating the Shinfield West development from Ryeish Green and new housing north and south of Church Lane in Three Mile Cross.

**Five Acre SANG:** This area extends from Ryeish Lane to the top of the hill at the back of the playing fields in Ryeish Green.

**Mays Farm SANG:** This area extends between Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green, south of Church Lane.

## 10. Housing

- 10.1 Shinfield Parish Council wants to ensure that the needs of residents and the community are aligned with housing design, to maintain community cohesion, and ensure the development of desirable communities. The parish council will work with developers to build homes that are in keeping with their surroundings, homes that are visually interesting, that provide sufficient attractive green areas and that do not have a negative impact on neighbours.
- 10.2 The parish council will support the early development of formal residents' associations in new developments, to ensure integration within individual developments and with the wider community.

### Retention of the individual identities of the settlements within the parish

- 10.3 Wokingham Borough Council adopted its Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plan in February 2014, following examination by a government planning inspector. The MDD allocated sites for residential development in the borough. It used figures from the Core Strategy document, adopted by WBC in 2010, as the basis for its identified housing need of 13,230 homes. The document identified an allocation for the South of M4 SDL of 2,500 homes.
- 10.4 Wokingham's Core Strategy recognises the importance of the separate identity of the various settlements that form Shinfield Parish. Section A7.17 states: "The area to the south of the M4 is characterised by existing small settlements set within a rural context, which has thus far been retained through the formal allocation of green gaps. This sets it apart from the area to the north of the M4, which is perceived as being more closely aligned to Greater Reading. The character of the area is considered worthy of retention as it forms part of the identity of the Borough. **New development must therefore seek to balance the demand for new housing with the prevailing settlement configuration and setting**".
- 10.5 During the government planning inspector's review of the Core Strategy (Adopted in 2010), the housing allocation for the South of M4 SDL was reviewed, and the following wording is taken directly from the inspector's report:

*The number of dwellings proposed for the South of M4 SDL accords fully with the confirmed projected target in Policy WCBV3 of the South East Plan (SEP), footnote 4, which refers to 2,500 dwellings that will contribute to the delivery of housing to serve the needs of Greater Reading. In essence the SDL would involve urban extensions of three villages. The consortium of developers involved in this proposal argue that the area has capacity for 3,000 dwellings in addition to the 700 already committed, suggesting an appropriate Core Strategy (CS) target of 3,500. However, to achieve this number would rely on a higher density than the Council's proposed 30-35 dph and/or a narrowing of the gap between Shinfield and Spencers Wood.*

*Development over a wider area than shown on the Concept Diagram in Appendix 7 is likely to prejudice the key objective for this Strategic Development Location (SDL) of maintaining the separate identities of the three villages concerned. I consider it would also be inappropriate to plan for densities at a significantly higher level than the housing areas of the villages.*

*While the provision of more dwellings near to Reading and transport links has benefits, these have to be balanced against the need to protect the local environment and the aspirations of the existing communities. The overall density of the SEP of 40 dwellings per hectare (dph) applies to the whole region, including much denser urban areas, unlike the SDL environs.*

*The exact locations of new parcels of development will be finalised at the detailed master planning stage. The eastern part of the SDL area is within the floodplain of the River Loddon. Taking into account this constraint, the illustrative plan for development of 3,500 dwellings indicates that the width of the SANG and playing fields separating the new development at Shinfield and Spencers Wood would be just 300m, with some parts of the gap between new and existing development at Ryeish Green much narrower. Although I recommend the deletion of Gaps Policy CP13 below, I endorse the commitment to maintaining the separate identities of the three settlements, which received strong support in principle from virtually all those who commented on the CS at all stages in its evolution. I am therefore not convinced that the capacity of the SDL could be increased without undermining this important objective [D61].*

- 10.6 Throughout the consultation on development within the parish, there has always been a strong support amongst residents to retain the boundaries between, and the identities of, the separate villages. Responses from the '19 Questions Survey' showed that over 89% of respondents supported this (see appendix A). The parish council strongly supports the aspiration to maintain the separate identities of the three villages as an aspect of the historic environment that contributes to the relationship between people and place and the need to integrate new development with the natural, built and historic environment.
- 10.7 It is important that new development respects the local landscape quality, ensuring that natural and historic views and vistas are maintained wherever possible. Whilst the landscape represents the interplay of human influence and the natural world we recognise that the characteristic, and often attractive, features are the result of thousands of years of human intervention and management. As such, many views take in positive features that are historic as well as, or rather than natural. Historic views, such as the view of a church steeple across open farmland or the characteristic arrangement of historic buildings on a village street or seen across a village green, are a distinctive feature of many villages and their landscapes (see appendix E).

### **Policy 1: Location of Development**

In Shinfield Parish, development within Development limits (as defined by Policy CC02 of Wokingham's MDD Local Plan (February 2014) or a future adopted Development Plan), will be acceptable in the context of Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy policies, Managing Development Delivery policies (*or those set by a future adopted development plan*) and the adopted village character statements for the area (*see appendices R, S and T*).

*Small scale<sup>1</sup> development, that is not considered to be cumulative, adjoining development limits will be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts. These developments are:*

- 1) 100% Affordable housing in perpetuity<sup>2</sup> for rental or shared ownership (including for Key Workers) by those with a strong local connection<sup>3</sup> which are sustainable and of a design suitable to the local character; and
- 2) Properties of an exceptional quality, highly sustainable and innovative nature of design, as defined in paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Such design must:
  - a) Be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
  - b) Reflect the highest standards in architecture;
  - c) Significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
  - d) Be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

#### Footnotes

1 – Small scale proposals are defined as 5 dwellings or less.

2 – See designated protected areas covered by Statutory Instrument: The Housing (Right to Enfranchise)(Designated Protected Areas)(England) Order 2009

3 – A strong local connection is defined as those who are ordinarily resident in the parish for at least 10 years, or have previously lived in the parish for 10 years and have existing family (parents, children and siblings) who have lived there for 10 years, or have been working within the parish for 10 years or has a demonstrable need to live in the parish to support a family member who has lived within the parish for 10 years

## **11. General Design Principles**

11.1 Housing is the major building type within the parish. There is no single housing design or feature that dominates. It is a mixture of ages and styles and this mix should be maintained. Further details on the styles of housing located within the villages can be found in the Village Character Statements, which form part of the appendices to this plan.

11.2 The wide variety of property styles within the parish include:

- Detached and semi-detached houses from Victorian times, with tile or slate roofs, gabled and hipped - sloping to each elevation of the building. Development from the last century includes detached and semi-detached houses together with terraced properties, bungalows and chalet style houses;
- Typically houses are two storey;
- Feature brickwork is a sign of Victoriana and can also add interest to a modern building;
- A mix of architectural features including dormer windows, deep rounded bay windows, splayed and square bays all appear in village properties;
- Original porches and later additions may be gabled or lean-to;
- Whilst many houses in this area are constructed in red faced bricks, Shinfield has its fair share of smooth rendered houses, while some are pebble-dashed and others roughcast usually to the upper elevations;
- The centres of Spencers Wood and Ryeish Green are characterised by late Victorian and early Edwardian red brick buildings, some patterned with silver and cream bricks, typically with sash windows, tiled roofs and decorative eaves boards. In these areas the buildings provide a unique character to the locality; and
- In Three Mile Cross, the oldest part of our villages, stone buildings are typical, some colour washed. Other individual properties with these characteristics are present throughout the parish.

11.3 The '19 Questions Survey' found that 78% of respondents felt it was important to have a diversity of housing styles in the new developments (*See appendix A*). Respondents also raised concern around young people economically being unable to remain in the area and older residents being unable to downsize.

11.4 Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy recognises the anticipated growth in numbers of older residents, and the need to find effective ways of caring for these members of the community, in their own homes, with the necessary accessible care and support.

## Policy 2: General Design Principles

All new developments within Shinfield Parish, including conversions of existing office or retail premises to domestic dwellings, and extensions to existing individual properties, will be expected to demonstrate good use of space, good quality design and appropriately detailed specification. This should respond to, and integrate with, the character of the local area and be compatible with any relevant adopted Village Character or Design Statement. Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- 1) Use of quality materials that complement the established built environment around the development site;
- 2) Compatibility with the scale and features of existing buildings in the locality;
- 3) Creation of suitable site layout that provides sufficient spacing between buildings to maintain privacy and amenity for any new and existing residential properties;
- 4) Allowance of appropriate space for hard and soft landscape works, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas;
- 5) Provision of appropriately high quality and high specification sustainable landscape works and tree planting, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed);
- 6) Where appropriate, provision of suitable and unobtrusive storage facilities for refuse and recycling; and
- 7) Design of road and service layouts to ensure the sustainable retention, where appropriate, of existing landscape features, including trees and historic landscape features, and to allow space for new sustainable landscape works without the need for maintenance and upgrades to services damaging landscape works, as they mature.

In new residential developments, provision of an appropriate mix of size, built form and garden size, including style, design and character, will be supported in order to provide variation within a scheme, as long as this respects local distinctiveness. This can be achieved through the use of distinctive materials, differing layouts and positioning of dwellings, and the retention of existing trees, and provision of new trees, within new gardens and in the public realm.

Developments designed to aid independent living for older residents, such as homes that are easier to adapt over the lifetime of the resident, or extra care housing, will generally be supported.

## 12. Sustainable Development

- 12.1 Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures, published in March 2014, found that annual household spending on energy had increased by 55% above inflation, from an average annual figure of £828 per household in 2002 (a figure adjusted to 2012 prices) to £1,272 per household in 2012. Additionally, the level of household disposable income spent on energy rose from 3% in 2002 to 5% in 2012 (*see appendix AB*).
- 12.2 In November 2013, The Guardian Newspaper reported projections from the Citizens Advice Bureau, that the big six energy suppliers had increased energy prices by 37% between October 2010 and December 2013 (*see appendix AC*).

### Policy 3: Sustainable Development

All development within the parish should seek to achieve the highest standards of sustainability. Development must meet the strategic sustainability priorities set out by Wokingham Borough Council.

Shinfield Parish Council positively encourages the use of:

- 1) Renewable and low-carbon or zero carbon technologies;
- 2) Techniques such as passive solar design, choice of construction materials and standard of construction, as well as aspect and orientation of layout, such as south-facing roof slopes to maximise the use of solar photovoltaic panels, to encourage energy efficiency.
- 3) Steps to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport – including walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4) Demonstrate how the development will facilitate the use of, and recycling of, all resources including water.

Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate network capacity for all utility provision, for the site, to serve the development and that it would not lead to amenity impacts for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing network infrastructure. Necessary infrastructure improvements will need to be provided ahead of occupation of the developments

## 13. Transport and access

- 13.1 With the M4 motorway running through the northern portion of the parish, the A33 running along the western fringe and the A327 running through Shinfield, the parish is well connected and well served by major routes. This makes it an ideal residential location, with access to a varied range of employers across a wide geographic area. Construction of the Eastern Relief Road and a new park and ride at Mere oak, alongside the A33, are part of a number of improvements designed to improve traffic flows across the Borough and within Shinfield.
- 13.2 Both the Reading Borough and Wokingham Borough Local Transport Plans (LTP's) show a dominance of car travel in south 'Greater Reading' – an area which, by public perception, incorporates the parish of Shinfield.
- 13.3 Throughout the development of this Neighbourhood Development Plan, residents have continually raised concerns about the levels of traffic congestion, both current and anticipated. Whilst the A33 relief road is dual carriageway, many of the local roads crossing the parish are narrow country or residential roads, and main junctions regularly see congestion at peak times. The parish council anticipates that this congestion will further increase.
- 13.4 There are concerns that the proposed development of a further 3,500 new homes at Arborfield will detrimentally impact our parish, as many of these new residents will travel through the parish to destinations such as Reading, the M4 motorway and beyond. There is good evidence within Shinfield that there are increased resident numbers using the recently improved public transport facilities. Development proposals within Shinfield and Arborfield include a number of additional measures to encourage use of alternative travel methods, which the parish council positively encourages, to help relieve traffic congestion.
- 13.5 Many of our local primary routes were constructed many years ago when the parish was a more rural collection of villages. They were not built to a size fit to cope with the volumes or size of modern vehicles. For example, Hyde End Road, a key access road connecting Shinfield village to Spencers Wood, has barely sufficient width for two commercial vehicles to pass at key bends. Many key roads lack the infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling; stretches of Church Lane, Hyde End Road and Arborfield Road, all of which form walking routes to local schools, lack suitable pedestrian footpaths.
- 13.6 Local residents have, for some time, been campaigning for lower and more consistent speed limits throughout the parish, where many of the roads currently have 40 MPH limits. Plans to reduce speed limits on certain routes are currently being considered, along with junction improvements.

### Vehicle ownership and travel habits

- 13.7 Vehicle ownership within Wokingham Borough is one of the highest in the UK. The 2011 Census indicated that the 4,403 dwellings in Shinfield used 7,211 vehicles (1.637 per

household, on average), compared to an average of 1.1 per household across England (*see appendix AD*).

13.8 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Road Transport Forecasts published in 2013 reviewed the growth in car ownership and usage. The report shows that with rising economic growth and rapid fuel efficiency improvements significantly decreasing the fuel cost of driving, traffic is expected to rise by 19% from 2015 to 2025 (*see appendix O*).

13.9 Planners of the major developments have envisaged a shift away from private car use to alternative methods of transport. Shinfield Parish Council will work with Wokingham Borough Council to achieve the key aims of Wokingham's Local Transport Plan 3, which include:

- Policy AT1: 'Actively encourage integrating walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations'
- Policy AT2 – 'Improving access to public open space and country parks will help to encourage walking and cycling as a leisure activity'
- Policy AT3 – 'Provide walking and cycling opportunities that are inclusive of residents with mobility, visual and hearing impairments and other disabilities'

*See Appendix F: Local Transport Plan 3*

#### **Policy 4: Accessibility and Highways Safety**

It is recommended that all developers engage with the parish council to identify specific local issues affecting the parish prior to submitting planning applications.

All development proposals should demonstrate appropriate levels of accessibility and highway safety. The following issues should be considered:

- 1) Restricting traffic speed through traffic calming measures such as the use of chicanes within residential streets, restricted speed limits within development roads and pedestrian priority zones.
- 2) Make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling to schools, work places and local amenities, through measures such as (but not limited to):
  - The provision of additional pedestrian footpaths and cycle routes
  - Accessibility improvements to bus stops from existing developments,
  - Real time travel information at bus stops
  - Bus fares that match those provided by Reading Buses in the wider Reading area (Revision of the Reading Buses fare zones to incorporate the parish into the inner Reading zone area – *see appendix Q*).
  - Practical walking routes from developments to public transport, schools, work places and local amenities with proper footpaths, street lighting and safe crossing points.

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 3) | Steps to actively encourage the integration of walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations within the parish |
| 4) | Provision of safe routes for equestrians   |

## 14. Parking

- 14.1 Wokingham Borough Council introduced revised parking standards for new developments in 2012 and these new standards have been incorporated into Wokingham's MDD Local Plan (February 2014). The parish council recognises that recent housing developments within Shinfield Parish have been built under the previous parking standards, resulting in a reduced level of off-street parking provision and the many problems associated with this. Shinfield Parish Council endorses the parking standards required within the MDD Local Plan.
- 14.2 In 2014, Shinfield Parish Council carried out a survey of some 1,500 homes which were constructed over the previous 15 years or so (*see appendix G*). All of the homes surveyed were built using the older parking standards. The 387 responses received indicated that 761 vehicles were owned or used from properties which had a total of 631 off-road parking spaces (including garages and car ports). This shows that at least 130 vehicles are regularly parked on the street, assuming that all off-street spaces are used. In reality, further vehicles are parked on the street, even where off-road parking does exist, because it is either in the wrong location, or it is deemed inconvenient. Parking provision on the Gloucester Avenue development of 74 dwellings of mixed sizes was used, as an example. This demonstrated the current parking requirements would have added, an additional 42 parking spaces over those provided when this development was constructed (*See appendix AA*).
- 14.3 Other evidence collected from the parking survey suggests the following:
- The vast majority of residents with garages do not regularly use them for parking a vehicle, due to the space either being used for storage or being too small to accommodate their vehicle;
  - Parking laid out in tandem is often not always fully utilised;
  - As there are so few car free households, there should be a minimum requirement for at least one designated off-street space for every single dwelling; and
  - On-street parking can cause access issues for buses and service vehicles.
- 14.4 Roads intended for bus routes through residential and commercial developments should look to maintain a clear minimum running width of 6.1 metres. Parking Management Strategies to provide this should be required as a condition of any new development identified as incorporating, or potentially incorporating a bus route.
- 14.5 The parish council will continue to monitor levels of on-street parking, as occupation of the new developments commence.

## Policy 5: Parking

- 1) Garages should meet the minimum internal dimensions of 7 metres long x 3 metres wide, to allow sufficient space for a modern vehicle and provide some storage and to also be considered as cycle storage. However, for garages built at a minimum size of 6 metres long x 3 metres wide, additional storage facilities such as a secure garden shed must be provided, for bicycles and other items. Where garages are not provided, then suitable secure accommodation and access must be provided for the storage of bicycles and motor cycles. The distance to the highway boundary from the face of the garage or car port should meet current WBC standards set out in the borough Design Guide, Parking Standards Study and Core Strategy.
- 2) Garage door dimensions must, at minimum, be 2.4m wide by 2.1m high, for a single or tandem garage, as set out with Wokingham Borough Council's MDD parking standards, Borough Design Guide and Parking Standards Study.
- 3) Communal car parking areas in residential schemes should be close to buildings where there is appropriate natural surveillance.
- 4) Developers should indicate measures that they will introduce to stop parking on pavements or grass verges. The use of square edged Conservation kerbs and strategic shrub planting on grass areas has proved to be of assistance to discourage parking on pavements and verges.
- 5) Developers will be required to introduce and enforce management of on-street parking from first occupation of developments, to discourage irresponsible parking from the outset.
- 6) Proposals for conversions and extensions that require planning permission must not reduce the overall level of off-street parking available on site at the time of development.
- 7) Development proposals that add additional habitable rooms to a dwelling, must be able to meet the additional parking requirements (as determined by Wokingham Borough Council's MDD parking standards) on site, unless sufficient on-street parking is readily available.

## Policy 5 continued:

### Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and Sub-Divisions

- 8) Conversions of dwellings to multiple occupation and sub-divisions generally intensify the use of the property and can increase demand for parking because of the greater number of adult occupants living in the property. There may also be a greater demand for visitor parking than if it were in single family occupation.
- 9) The required level of parking provision may vary depending on the location and the specifics of the proposal. However, the minimum should be for the provision of one parking space per bedroom either on-site or on-street depending on the parking capacity available in the area, unless otherwise justified by providing details, for example, as to what measures will be taken to deal with anticipated traffic impacts of the scheme. Applications will normally be expected to include a parking survey.
- 10) For sub-divisions of houses or conversions of office or other non-residential accommodation into apartments that require planning permission, the standards will be as per the Residential Parking Standards set out above. Planning applications will normally be expected to include a parking survey.

### Parking Surveys

- 11) Parking surveys are required for all new HMO development and Unit conversions where on-site parking cannot be fully accommodated.
- 12) The Parking Survey shall be accompanied by a scaled plan (in the form of a dimensioned sketch) annotated to indicate private accesses, on-street parking bays, unmarked roadside parking, waiting restrictions (single yellow lines), provision of suitable barriers to prevent parking on pavements or green verges and public car parks up to 100 metres distance from the development. The plan should also indicate areas unsuitable for parking within this distance.
- 13) The information submitted with the parking survey will also need to include:
  - A) The likely levels of car ownership amongst occupants;
  - B) An assessment of parking activity in an identified vicinity of the application site. The Parking activity would need to be recorded at an agreed frequency between the hours of 6am and 11pm, covering week days (including a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and a weekend day for up to one week . The survey is to be undertaken by an independent assessor;
  - C) The results of the survey would be required to provide mapped records of the parked vehicle locations at each regular count interval and vehicle identities and would need to be at a time unaffected by seasonal variation (not in school holidays, or leading up to Christmas, for example); and
  - D) Proximity and access to public transport.

## 15. Natural and Historic Environment

- 15.1 The environmental and long-established cultural heritage of the parish is based within individual village settlements that are currently separated by open countryside. The Village Character Statements give description and some design guidelines for the natural and built environment. Historic buildings form the basis of the character of the parish, amply demonstrated by the 15 listed buildings in Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, 11 across Shinfield village and Shinfield North and 8 in the Grazeley area (*see appendix Y*). These buildings and their surroundings are significant in the history of the Parish, and any nearby development should be of appropriate scale and style and not obscure or affect the settings of these buildings. Parts of Three Mile Cross, predominantly consisting of the residential housing and buildings along the east side of Basingstoke Road, make up one of five areas across the borough designated by Wokingham Borough Council as an Area of Special Character, which affords it a greater degree of planning protection. Similarly, the character of the Parish is largely determined by the valleys of the River Loddon on the south-east and Foudry Brook in the west. A ridge of high land separates these valleys running south through Shinfield North (marked out by part of the A327), turning west from School Green to Ryeish Green and south again between Spencers Wood and Grazeley. The ancient churches of St Mary and St Michael are on this ridge which otherwise is mostly clear of development. *Appendix D* gives detailed examples of the significant natural environmental features, which are usually small arable fields with wide hedgerows and belts of trees or woodland. The extensive network of lanes and roads are bordered by grass verges, some with ditches. Old hedgerows contain a wide range of native species of shrubs and trees. There are many by-ways such as Woodcock Lane, as well as footpaths and bridleways that are also bordered by old hedgerows, veteran trees and drainage ditches criss-crossing open countryside and linking the settlements.
- 15.2 The wildlife dependent on this range of habitat includes many diverse animal types including deer and small mammals such as bats, as well as bird life such as owls, cuckoos, woodpeckers, nuthatches and sparrow-hawks. The majority of the parish lies within the 5 – 7 km avoidance and mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This seeks to protect ground nesting birds in the Bramshill area.
- 15.3 Small woods and copses occur where agriculture has been difficult, such as on the steep hill slope down towards Grazeley from Spencers Wood. There are many mature trees, which have been surveyed as part of the Wokingham Borough Veteran Tree Project and are listed by Wokingham and District Veteran Tree Association and Thames Valley Environment Records Centre (TVERC).
- 15.4 The semi-natural grasslands include a meadow on Clares Green Road, a field in Spencers Wood known as “The Common”, the field north of the avenue of Wellingtonia trees leading to Wellington Court, the small field at the end of Yew Tree Lane, and the separated cemetery off St Mary’s Church, Shinfield. Although detailed surveys have yet to be completed on some of these fields they are known to be rich in native flora and have not been ploughed in recent memory.

- 15.5 There are several ponds that are also rich in wildlife, including the largest one at “The Common”, and a series of ponds in Grazeley and where ditches widen out beside the single track lanes of Hyde End Lane, Croft Road and Ryeish Lane, particularly in the wetter months. Ponds on the heavy clay soils around Ryeish Green may dry up in summer droughts. These habitats add to biodiversity in the parish.
- 15.6 Corridors of natural features are vital for the survival of the flora and fauna of the native environment. They link separate patches of, for example, meadow and hedgerow or water so that plants and wildlife have essential variety of opportunities for feeding, shelter and breeding. Without these corridors there can be little biodiversity and the range and number of wildlife species decreases sharply. The corridors enable species to move across open green spaces and playing fields. Grass verges in housing developments can provide links within a corridor.
- 15.7 The topography and geology of the Parish is such that drainage and flooding from surface water is a serious issue and has been fully recorded. Existing open water courses such as field and roadside ditches form an extensive network for essential water drainage. A report by a hydrologist (*see Appendix H*) examines and highlights this issue.
- 15.8 Over the last few years small infill developments have begun to erode the open space countryside and the new large scale developments threaten to merge the three main villages of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross into a single town. The concerns voiced by residents about non-land-use Planning Issues are set out in *Appendix J*.
- 15.9 The following information (*see appendix P*) was received from the Countryside Officer (Biodiversity) of WBC:
- Hedgerows** – Best practice (as established elsewhere in Wokingham) in planning terms suggests ordinarily that hedgerow buffer zones are 15 metres from the centre line of the hedge on each side, in order to allow for minimum 2-4 metre wide hedgerow plus 5 metre wide rough grassland habitat strip and 5 metre strip suitable to allow vehicular access for maintenance;
- Veteran/near veteran trees** – 15 times the stem diameter is the buffer zone/root protection zone recommended by the Ancient tree Forum in their Ancient Tree Guides No.3: ‘Trees and development’.
- Ancient Woodland** – Natural England and the Woodland Trust both recommend that ancient woodland have a minimum buffer zone of 15 metres and policy 6 is aimed at securing a buffer zone that is in excess of the absolute minimum.
- The management of residential gardens cannot be controlled in the future so they are not suitable for inclusion in these buffer zones.
- 15.10 Gathering of the issues that people considered important (*see appendix Z*) and public consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed key concerns in relation to the natural environment:

- More than 87% of the '19 Questions Survey' (see *appendix A*) respondents felt that retaining the individual character and clear boundaries of the villages and settlements within the parish was important;
- Over 93% believed that walking distance access to open countryside is important;
- 98% felt that open countryside, trees and hedgerows form significant and valued characteristics of the parish;
- 99% believed in the importance of providing adequate space in new developments for trees and hedgerows to grow and mature;
- 97% believed in the need to have appropriate, secure spaces for birds and animals to move, feed and breed within the parish;
- 99% felt it important that local ditches, ponds and streams are kept in a good condition.

### **Policy 6: Trees, hedgerows and Woodland**

New build development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- 1) Hedgerows which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected hedgerows to be carried out by the developer, due to their age or ecological value or in order to screen other development or land use, will have at least a 15 metre wide buffer zone, measured from the central stem of the hedge, from the centre line of the hedge on both sides of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage;
- 2) Veteran trees which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected trees to be carried out by the developer, will have a buffer zone equivalent to at least 15 times the diameter at breast height (DBH);
- 3) Habitats of Principal Importance in England (Section 41 Habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)), as defined by the act, which are appropriate for retention as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected habitats to be carried out by the developer, will have a minimum 15 metre wide buffer zone of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage;
- 4) Ancient Woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and ponds which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected woodlands, wildlife sites or ponds to be carried out by the developer, will have a 15 - 30 metre wide buffer zone of native woodland planting that excludes any residential curtilage;
- 5) All buffer zones should consist of appropriate native species and where appropriate should be designed in such a way as to encourage public access and enjoyment of the zone and with appropriate provision for its maintenance.

### **Policy 7: Biodiversity**

New build development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- 1) The scheme, where practical, provides biodiversity enhancement through the creation of new areas of Habitats of Principal Importance in England (Section 41 Habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)) such as woodlands, ponds, hedgerows and wildflower grasslands.
- 2) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement through the provision of additional bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities.
- 3) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement through the provision of suitable wildlife corridors to ensure that the development site retains or enhances its ecological permeability.
- 4) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement for garden dwelling species such as hedgehogs through the provision of suitable residential boundary treatments.

### Policy 8: Flooding

- 1) Where appropriate, new developments must incorporate the existing open watercourses, points and ditches within the development site, to lessen the risk of flooding to property, fields and roads.
- 2) Existing open watercourses, ponds and ditches shall be preserved in new developments and substituted only where absolutely necessary.
- 3) The creation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments is essential and must be incorporated into the site layout and landscape design, matching with the requirements of existing adjacent land and with regard to provision for fauna, flora and habitats. Provisions for the maintenance and management of the features must be made by the developer.
- 4) No development will be permitted which reduces the ability of the flood attenuation areas to alleviate flooding, or which increases surface water run-off, unless suitable mitigation is put in place.

## 16. Community and Recreation

- 16.1 For many years there has been a strong sense of community in each of the areas that form Shinfield Parish and residents identify themselves as part of these individual areas.
- 16.2 This has come about as a result of the rural feel of the whole parish, fostered through local nurseries and schools, strong congregations in local churches, local shops and medical facilities and wide ranging clubs and societies that offer activities to all age groups.
- 16.3 The parish council recognises that the existing sports, leisure and social facilities are of great value to the community and are generally well utilised. We have five community halls, but they lack space and modern equipment to cater for all needs and the halls are mostly fully occupied, especially in the evenings. The parish council will work to protect and enhance these existing facilities (*see appendix K and appendix L*), and will seek to identify other assets of community value (defined as buildings and pieces of land that are essential to the social foundation of the area) and will seek, where appropriate, to register identified assets with Wokingham Borough Council and retain a working list of sites identified as valuable to the community (*see appendix M*).
- 16.4 The parish has many outstanding sports clubs but a lack of capacity holds back further development. A sports survey (*see appendix C*) was commissioned by the parish in conjunction with WBC in the spring of 2013 to establish both the current and future requirements based on benchmark data for communities of a similar demographic profile to Shinfield. The main proposals of this survey have been adopted by WBC
- 16.5 There are five religious organisations serving the community, with four churches and a Friends Meeting place. These groups form a substantial part of the local community.
- 16.6 The community cafe in St Michael's Church in Spencers Wood has provided a welcome meeting point for many people and shows that further developments of this kind would enhance the parish.
- 16.7 We have recreation and green areas around the parish, some controlled by the parish council, others by the borough council, and some which are privately owned. The development of new homes within the parish will also provide a number of additional green areas that will be available to everyone. These need to be carefully planned, managed and deliver the right sort of facilities that are demanded by the current population today and the large number of extra residents that will come into the parish with the new dwellings (*see appendix K*).
- 16.8 The comprehensive sports audit summary (*see appendix C*) details the basis for current and future open space, recreation and sports needs for the parish, across an array of sports and facilities, and this forms much of the evidence base for the policies below.
- 16.9 In addition, the following views of residents were taken from the '19 Questions Survey' (*See appendix A*):
- 62% of respondents wanted more indoor sport and recreation facilities;
  - 72% of respondents wanted more space for outdoor leisure activities;

- 69% of respondents wanted more recreation and social facilities for teenagers;
- 86% of respondents wanted a flexible community centre which could meet the needs of the local community.

### **Policy 9: Community Assets**

- 1) Development which results in the loss of any current community sports, social or leisure assets, through redevelopment will only be supported if it provides an alternative equivalent asset or an appropriate contribution towards the improvement of an existing asset.

### **Policy 10: Community and Sports Facilities**

- 1) All qualifying developments shall contribute, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or negotiated Section 106 agreements, towards formal and informal sport and leisure activities and recreation and social facilities within the parish, either through the provision of facilities or through financial contributions towards sports, leisure and recreation projects, where they are required to mitigate the impact of the development.
- 2) We encourage developers to engage with the parish council at an early stage of development planning to identify suitable sport, leisure and recreation projects.
- 3) Where appropriate, housing developments should also seek to provide community facilities such as allotments and communal gardens.

## 17. Business and Commercial Development.

17.1 Shinfield Parish has a mixture of mainly small business and commercial organisations, based across a number of local retail sites and small industrial estates.

17.2 As at May 2015, many businesses exist to supply the local market, including:

- Four hairdressing salons
- Four convenience stores – three with Post Offices attached
- Three petrol stations
- Five public houses serving food and two restaurants
- Two pharmacies
- Two doctors' surgeries and two dental practices
- Two veterinary surgeries
- Two florists
- Two estate agents
- One bakery
- One dry cleaner and laundry
- A number of independent suppliers such as a cycle shop, printers and a carpet cleaning company.

17.3 Shinfield Parish has some large employers such as Amec Foster Wheeler and The European Weather Centre, who draw on staff from a wide area due to their specialist nature. There are also a number smaller of office based employers in the area, but a recent trend has been for these type of premises to fall vacant and for them in time to be converted to apartments under current planning laws.

17.4 Whilst the proposed University of Reading Thames Valley Science Park will naturally provide some employment to the existing local population, it is expected that many of the people who will eventually work there may well be amongst the new residents of the parish living in one of the 3,000+ new homes to be built. There is however a growing number of self-employed people who operate a variety of businesses from their own homes, many of whom are dependent upon the internet. Whilst the Thames Valley generally has high levels of employment it is important to retain local employment where it currently exists.

17.5 Data from the 2011 census shows that 7.3% of residents in employment work mainly from home (*see appendix AD*). It is essential that super-fast broadband be available across the parish as soon as possible.

17.6 Improvements have been made and this is to be welcomed. However, it would be important to ensure that the network is continuously upgraded and all dwellings on new developments should be connected by fibre-optic cables.

### **Policy 11: Commercial Development**

- 1) Proposals for (or that incorporate) commercial uses may be supported where they do not conflict with other policies and it can be demonstrated that:
  - A) The scheme will not result in any net loss of dwellings
  - B) The scale of the development would complement the local area
  - C) The proposals will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring land uses
  - D) The proposal will not cause an adverse impact on highway safety
  - E) The scheme will contribute to the development of local employment and innovation (e.g. through the creation of live-work units)
  - F) The scheme will retain and enhance green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed) where relevant
- 2) In cases where new development would result in the loss of commercial premises that fall under Classes A and B of the Use Classes Order (2005), and where planning permission is required for the change of use, proposals may be supported where they demonstrate that the commercial use of the premises is no longer viable (e.g. through continued vacancy and evidence of competitive marketing for an appropriate time period, at an appropriate price, and in an appropriate location).

### **Policy 12: Broadband provision**

- 1) The continuous improvement of broadband and internet connections to all premises in Shinfield Parish will be encouraged.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>SDL Community Facility, Shinfield</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	Shinfield North and Shinfield South
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning and Highways

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Increased community facilities within Shinfield.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) agree to the utilisation of the following S106 contributions from developers on the community facility jointly delivered by Wokingham Borough Council and Shinfield Parish Council on the former Royal British Legion site in Shinfield:
  - (a) £1,136,000 from the S106 funds for community facilities in the SM4 development area; and
  - (b) up to £1,000,000 from the S106 fund for leisure and community facilities in the SM4 development area.
- 2) authorise the Director of Finance and Resources to forward fund the scheme through borrowing.

(To note: the interest costs will be funded by the reserve for infrastructure 'bridging loans' if it cannot be accommodated within existing Treasury Management budgets. The borrowing costs are estimated to be £75K if the scheme is commenced in 2016/17 or £23K if the scheme is commenced in 2017/18.)

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report provides the Executive with the appropriate assurances for the ongoing development of the community facility within Shinfield that is being jointly delivered by Wokingham Borough Council and Shinfield Parish Council. These assurances centre on the outline business case and feasibility study produced by Shinfield Parish Council on behalf of the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee.

## **Background**

In July 2015, the Council agreed a preference for working jointly with Shinfield Parish Council to develop a new community facility on the former Royal British Legion site in Shinfield utilising S106 contributions from developers to support the SM4 Strategic Development Location. At this time the Council identified specific progress and assurances it would require in the development of the community facility before committing resources to it. These were:

1. Agree in principle to develop the new community facilities to serve the South of the M4 SDL on the Royal British Legion site in Shinfield Village Centre subject to, the Director of the Environment and Executive Member for Planning and Highways receiving from Shinfield Parish Council (SPC) before the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 a satisfactory form of:
  - a. business case for erection of a community facility and its ongoing operation;
  - b. agreement to contribute funds towards project;
  - c. agreement to suitable governance arrangements with WBC to enable provision of services which are consistent with 'Shaping Our New Communities' principles
  - d. evidence of wider community support for the community facility
2. Agree that subject to above being satisfactorily concluded, initial feasibility, costings and other details to be worked up and reported back to the Executive to enable a planning application to be progressed

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015 Wokingham Borough Council and Shinfield Parish Council formalised the joint working arrangements for delivering the new community facility, including the establishment of the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, the Council received a correspondence from Shinfield Parish Council detailing their progress on the development of the new community facility against the requirements specified in point 1 above. This information provided the Council with satisfactory assurance in terms of the progress being made and this was confirmed to Shinfield Parish Council in January 2016.

Shinfield Parish Council has secured the use of the Royal British Legion site through a 125 year lease from the University Of Reading which was completed on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015. This lease is subject to the payment of an annual peppercorn rent and is not subject to any rent reviews during the period of the lease. Shinfield Parish Council is also in the process of agreeing a longer lease of at least 60 years for the existing Shinfield Parish Hall which is located next to the Royal British Legion site.

## **Analysis of Issues**

Since the completion of the lease transaction the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee (SCCMC) has engaged Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt Architects and BDS Surveyors to develop designs for the new centre and up to date construction costs. Details of the Business Case including a Marketing Strategy and Revenue and Expenditure Assessment are included in Appendix 1 and summarised below. The

SCCMC has decided to omit the additional background information from the Business Case, but will make these available upon request.

The architects have developed five design options for the SCCMC to consider for a 560 m2 centre. The options explored include use of both pieces of land leased by Shinfield Parish Council and are intended to support the development of a coherent public centre at School Green for the community in Shinfield. The options are shown in the table below:

Option	Description	Key issues	Shortlist
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	RBL building does not have a viable 125 year life. Internal RBL design not suitable for proposed uses. Foundations not sufficient for best design options	No
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Does not fully utilise building height opportunity	No
3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	Separates the buildings and doesn't make route to the health centre as inclusive as options 2 and 4.	No
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites incorporating the existing SPC premises with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Fully utilises building height opportunity	Yes – Maximum build option
4a	New build on RBL site SPH with maximum 2 storeys build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking.	Assumes the health centre access road is relocated north and further land rented from the Consortium at peppercorn rent. Separates the buildings and route to health centre.	Yes -maximum build option on RBL site

The options have been evaluated at high level by SCCMC based on whether the proposal would provide long term viability. The option of retaining the Royal British Legion building has been rejected as it is both physically restrictive and would increase building costs.

Options 2 and 3 did not provide the maximum development opportunity for the site either in the short or long term. Options 4 and 4a provide a means to maximise development opportunity by considering future expansion issues.

## Development Costs

Based on the design options, survey reports and cost plans the estimated building costs of the options are shown below:

Option	Description – See appendix	Estimated Capital cost	VAT	Estimated Total
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,136,238	£227,247	£1,363,486
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,566,893	£313,378	£1,880,272

3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	£1,550,980	£310,196	£1,861,176
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	£2,014,436	£402,887	£2,417,324
4a	New build on RBL site SPH with maximum 2 storey build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking	£2,094,791	£418,958	£2,513,750

These costs include construction costs with 10% construction contingency, 12% professional fees and 12% Optimism Bias to manage client scope development.

The SCCMC has been advised that VAT will be recoverable on the new build schemes (options 2 to 4a).

The equipping of the facilities will amount to an additional sum of approximately £185,000 +VAT i.e. £225,000, applicable to all options above. VAT will not be recoverable on fittings and equipment.

Total budget for option 4a (including fittings and equipment) = £2,320,000 including non-recoverable VAT.

### **Timescale and Funding Options**

There is a desire by the local community in Shinfield to complete the development of the new community facility as early as possible. An indicative timescale for developing the community facility shows that the formal design phase and planning application could be completed during 2016/17 with the build taking place in 2017/18.

In order to deliver the community facility within this timeframe the Council will need to forward fund the development ahead of receiving the expected S106 for the SM4 SDL. It is expected that the S106 detailed within the recommendation for the new community facility will be received by the Council in during 2018/19 and 2019/20.

If the project is delivered within this timeframe, the interest cost to the Council will be £75,000. This cost would need to be covered by the Council through a Supplementary Estimate. However, if the timeframe from the project is delayed for a year, the interest cost to the Council for forward funding the development is reduced to £25,000, and it is envisaged that this cost could be consumed within the Council's overall Treasury Management processes.

### **Operating Costs**

Since providing the Council with the required assurances by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and identifying a high level design preference for the new community facility, the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee have been developing the required initial feasibility, costings and other details to enable a planning application to be progressed.

The projected cost and revenue figures for the new extended community site are based upon the known costs and revenue figures for the existing facilities (including Shinfield Parish Hall and Spencers Wood Pavilion). Based on the cost and revenue figures from these two sites, the new School Green facility totalling 850m<sup>2</sup> including the current Shinfield Parish hall would be in surplus by 2020/2021

	Pre-opening	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Revenue	17,700	101,620	108,620	115,620	122,620
Costs	-46,000*	-115,000	-117,000	-119,000	-121,000
Surplus	-28,300	-13,380	-8,380	-3,380	1,620

The pre-opening of new community centre includes an assumption of some staffing costs to market the centre to attract new business and no additional revenue.

SCCMC will develop a charging policy that recovers the running costs of the building and it is anticipated by Shinfield Parish Council that an initial deficit will be financed through Shinfield Parish Council precept.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	NA	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£200K	Yes £200K Shinfield PC contribution	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£2,120K	No £85K Shinfield PC contribution	Capital
	Up to £75K	£2035K (S106) Capital Programme Forward Borrowing	Revenue

#### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

#### Cross-Council Implications

None

#### List of Background Papers

None

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<b>Date</b> 18 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 1



## Business Case to Build a new Community Centre at School Green, Shinfield

For approval by Shinfield Parish Council  
For approval by Wokingham Borough Council

Version	Date	Author	Status	Approved by	Date
V0		Andrew Grimes	1 <sup>st</sup> Draft		
V1		Peter Hughes	Revised draft		
V2		Peter Hughes	Revised draft		
V3		Peter Hughes	Final draft		26.02.2016
				SPC	
				WBC	

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<b>10</b>	<b>Project Risk Register</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Project Initiation Document (PID)</b>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Land Registry record of SPC lease</b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Minute of SCCMC approval of business case – Feb 2016 Minute of SPC approval of business case – March 2016</b>	<b>To Follow</b>

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

This business case covers the construction and operation of a new Community Centre at School Green in Shinfield. This case demonstrates that the new community centre has affordable capital and revenue costs and, therefore, approval is sought of the business case to build the new centre with Section 106 contribution funds held by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and financial reserves of Shinfield Parish Council.

WBC Executive agreed in principle to support the new community centre by approving the recommendations of item 42 of the Executive meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015 (Appendix 7).

Condition 2 of the Executive recommendation required the delivery of the following from SPC:

- A) Business case for erection of a community facility and its ongoing operation;
- B) Agreement to contribute funds towards project (to be determined);
- C) Agreement of suitable governance arrangements with WBC to enable provision of services which are consistent with “Shaping our New Communities” principles;
- D) Evidence of wider community support for the community facility.

Condition 4 required condition 2 to be satisfied by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

The business case demonstrates that SPC have satisfied Condition 2 and Condition 4 as amended by a subsequent exchange of letters between SPC and WBC (Appendix 8).

### **1.1 Strategic Case**

#### **Housing Development**

Shinfield Parish will receive some 3,000 new homes by 2026.

The parish council has, through the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, given much consideration to the ways in which the new and existing communities can be integrated, and this new community centre forms a central part of our vision for the future.

As part of the planning consents for the west of Shinfield and North of Hyde End Road/Three Mile Cross developments the land owners/developers have signed planning (Section 106) agreements which legally commit them to fund and /or deliver certain community benefits should they implement these consents.

The west of Shinfield consent includes a Section 106 Agreement, as amended by Deed of Variation in 2015, to fund a new 560m<sup>2</sup> Community Centre on the Royal British Legion site at School Green.

The north of Hyde End Road/Three Mile Cross developments includes a Section 106 Agreement to provide a range of community benefits.

The west of Shinfield development includes the creation of a Local Centre at School Green (Appendix 2). SPC considers the new Local Village Centre, community centre and existing health centre should be arranged to provide a coherent public centre to School Green.

#### **Public engagement**

SPC has engaged with the public on several occasions to establish support for the project:

1. Village centre workshops held at Oakbank School in March 2014, arranged by the Development Consortium (University of Reading, Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes; developers of west of Shinfield , north of Hyde End Road and Three Mile Cross developments)
2. Neighbourhood Forum in early 2014 and which supported the location of the Community centre on the RBL site.
3. Public meeting with Allies Morrison – 14 May 2014
4. Neighbourhood Forum in October 2015.
5. Consultation sessions at SPH on 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016 which supported the scheme (Appendix 9).

## 1.2 Economic Case

SPC appointed a Project Board in 2013 (now known as the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee per Appendix 1) to develop a case for a new Community Centre funded through Section 106 agreements.

The West of Shinfield consent specifies the provision of 560m<sup>2</sup> of a community hub at the new School Green Local Centre. WBC amended this requirement at its Executive meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015, item 42, to enable the developer to discharge this condition by payment of £960,000 to the borough for an off-site provision (Appendix 8) to be developed.

Condition 4 of the Executive recommendation required Condition 2 to be satisfied by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. The exchange of letters between SPC and WBC (Appendix 8) extends Condition 4 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

The Chair of the Council, Clerk and Project Director met with the WBC's Executive Member for Planning and Highways, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance and senior officers on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015. WBC confirmed that it had a requirement to provide 560m<sup>2</sup> of new community facilities at School Green.

The University of Reading, SPC and WBC completed contracts on 29th September 2015 to facilitate the delivery of the community facilities obligation on the Royal British Legion site at School Green.

The purchase of the RBL site by SPC, onward sale to the UoR, and leaseback for 125 years was completed on 29th September 2015. This lease is subject to the payment of an annual rent of one peppercorn and is not subject to any rent reviews during the period of the lease.

Shinfield Parish Hall (SPH) stands on land adjoining the RBL. SPC leases the site from Shinfield United Charities (SUC) and the lease expires in 2031. Negotiations are in progress to extend the lease to a minimum of sixty years and SUC have confirmed in writing their agreement, in principle, to this extension, subject to final negotiation on rent payable. This will be resolved prior to any further decisions being taken on this land. Additionally SPC have a lease from UoR for a strip of land at the rear of the parish hall. SPC is aiming to deal with the ransom strip either by adding this to the lease on the Legion site on the same terms or purchasing the land from UoR.

Since the completion of the lease transaction the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee (SCCMC), chaired by Wokingham Borough Councillor Anthony Pollock, has engaged Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt Architects and BDS Surveyors to develop designs for the new centre and up to date construction costs.

The architects have developed a total of 5 design options (Appendix 5) for the SCCMC to consider for a 560 sq m centre. Structural, asbestos (invasive) and ground contamination surveys have been carried out (Appendix 6). The options explored include use of both pieces of land leased by SPC and are intended to support the development of a coherent public centre at School Green. The options are shown in the table below:

The options have been evaluated at high level and the short list of options below is to be taken forward. The criteria for short listing was based on whether the proposal would provide long term viability. The option of retaining the RBL building would only postpone the inevitable date of demolition and increase costs and reduce funding options.

Options 2 and 3 did not provide the maximum development opportunity for the site either in the short or long term. Options 4 and 4a provide a means to maximise development opportunity by considering future expansion issues.

Option	Description	Key issues	Shortlist *
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	RBL building does not have a 125 year life. Internal RBL design not suitable for proposed uses. Foundations not sufficient for best design options	No
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Does not fully utilise building height opportunity	No
3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	Separates the buildings and doesn't make route to the health centre as inclusive as options 2 and 4.	No
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites incorporating the existing SPC premises with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Fully utilises building height opportunity	Yes – Maximum build option
4a	New build on RBL site SPH with maximum 2 storey build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking.	Assumes the health centre access road is relocated north and further land rented from UoR at peppercorn rent. Separates the buildings and route to health centre.	Yes -maximum build option on RBL site

\*The options have been evaluated at high level by the SCCMC and by WBC property services officers, architects ACG and chartered surveyors BDS. The short list of options above is to be taken forward.

### 1.3 Financial Case

Based on the design options, survey reports and cost plans the estimated building costs of the options are shown below

#### 1.3.1:

Option	Description – See appendix	Estimated Capital cost	VAT	Estimated Total
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,136,238	£227,247	£1,363,486
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,566,893	£313,378	£1,880,272
3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	£1,550,980	£310,196	£1,861,176
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	£2,014,436	£402,887	£2,417,324
4a	New build on RBL site SPH with	£2,094,791	£418,958	£2,513,750

	maximum 2 storey build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking			
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These costs include construction costs with 10% construction contingency, 12% professional fees and 12% Optimism Bias to manage client scope development.

Please note the figures shown in the ACG feasibility study (appendix 5) are base cost plus 5% contingency, plus 12% professional fees, but EXCLUDE 12% optimism bias, and so are understated.

1.3.2 BDS advise that VAT will be recoverable on the new build schemes (options 2 to 4a).

1.3.3 The equipping of the facilities will amount to an additional sum of approximately £185,000 +VAT i.e. £225,000, applicable to all options above. VAT will not be recoverable on fittings and equipment.

Total budget for option 4a (including fittings and equipment) = £2,320,000 including non-recoverable VAT

### Capital Funding

Sources of capital funding:

- 1) Developer Contribution (Section 106 funding): £2,035,000
- 2) Shinfield Parish council approved use of reserves: £285,000

**Total: £2,320,000**

**Funding for costs to date have been secured from the SPC contribution as detailed in appendix 13**

### Revenue implications

SPC has experience in managing multiple community facilities. The projected cost and revenue figures for the new extended community site are based upon the known costs and revenue figures for the existing facilities (including Shinfield Parish Hall and Spencers Wood Pavilion). Based on the cost and revenue figures from these two sites, the new School Green facility totalling 850m<sup>2</sup> including the current SPH would be in surplus by 2020/2021

	Pre-opening	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Revenue</b>	17,700	101,620	108,620	115,620	122,620
<b>Costs</b>	-46,000*	-115,000	-117,000	-119,000	-121,000
<b>Surplus</b>	-28,300	-13,380	-8,380	-3,380	1,620

**\*pre-opening of new community centre includes an assumption of 50% staffing costs and no additional revenue**

As the scheme delivers more capacity, the Managing and Developing the New Community Centre Plan (Appendix 3) would be taken forward as a marketing strategy at an early stage, prior to opening, to increase activity levels.

Shinfield Parish Council will develop a charging policy that seeks to recover the running costs of the building.

### 1.4 Commercial Case

The project risks (Appendix 10) relate to developing a facility that would be too large. The risk of being too large stems from the fact that housing developments represent an approximate doubling of the population south of the M4 whilst the new facility would be 3 times greater than the existing Parish Hall.

Other sources of revenue are to be explored, including offering anchor tenancies/licences to commercial users and offices/facilities for local public services.

The second major area of risk for the scheme relates to handling a project of up to £2.3m through SPC accounts. Shinfield Parish Council manages revenue of approximately £250,000 per annum and currently has reserves. As construction projects can have cost overruns of up to 10% it would not be prudent for the parish to manage the construction procurement, hence it is considered this should be commissioned externally.

### **1.5 Management Case**

The management of both the construction phase of the project and the longer term management of the community centre will be considered in detail at the next stage of the process. It is intended that the SCCMC will continue after completion of construction, to manage the ongoing running of the centre, though its makeup will be revised, as appropriate, over time.

### **1.6 Preferred option and recommendations**

The business case demonstrates that an affordable and sustainable community centre can be created which is adjacent to the Parish Hall and consists of a new building of at least 560m<sup>2</sup> and up to approximately 750m<sup>2</sup> depending on estimated costs and finance. SPC has acquired the RBL site on a 125-year lease at a peppercorn rent.

It is recommended that:

- 1) SPC explore with WBC how the procurement of works will proceed;
- 2) SPC continue negotiations with SUC to extend the current lease to a minimum sixty year period at a rental to be agreed, to provide the best design solution for the new and old facilities;
- 3) SPC will provide £285,000 of funds from reserves to contribute to the purchase, demolition, design and construction of the new facility, on part or all of the joint Parish Hall /RBL site;
- 4) WBC allocates sufficient S106 funds to support the delivery of the project, as agreed between SPC and WBC.
- 5) The SCCMS approves the business case and commends it to SPC and WBC for approval.

## **2.0 Strategic Case**

### **New Community Centre for Shinfield**

#### **Introduction**

This business case covers the construction and operation of a new Community Centre at School Green in Shinfield. This case demonstrates that the new community centre has affordable capital and revenue costs and, therefore, approval is sought of the business case to build the new centre with Section 106 contribution funds held by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and financial reserves of Shinfield Parish Council.

WBC Executive agreed in principle to support the new community centre by approving the recommendations of item 42 of the Executive meeting of 30th July 2015 (Appendix 7).

Condition 2 of the Executive recommendation required the delivery of:

- A) Business case for erection of a community facility and its ongoing operation;
- B) Agreement to contribute funds towards project (to be determined);
- C) Agreement of suitable governance arrangements with WBC to enable provision of services which are consistent with "Shaping our New Communities" principles;
- D) Evidence of wider community support for the community facility.

Condition 4 required condition 2 to be satisfied by 31st December 2015.

The business case demonstrates that SPC has satisfied Condition 2 and Condition 4 as amended by a subsequent exchange of letters between SPC and WBC (Appendix 8).

## **Strategic Case**

Shinfield Parish contains the South of M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL) which is one of four development areas which provide in excess of 80% of Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) housing supply until 2026. The South of M4 SDL and other local developments within the parish will supply some 3,000 new dwellings, bringing 8,000 new residents (Based on average occupancy rates) to the current parish population of 11,000.

As part of the overall Core Strategy, Wokingham has developed community infrastructure plans for the SDLs with its "Shaping our new communities" (SONC) strategy.

The new dwellings are being developed by a range of land owners and developers including the West of Shinfield scheme promoted by the University of Reading (UoR) who own the land and the North of Hyde End Road / Three Mile Cross Consortium consisting of Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes

As part of the planning consents for the west of Shinfield and North of Hyde End Road/Three Mile Cross developments, the land owners/developers have signed planning (Section 106) agreements which legally commit them to fund and /or deliver certain community benefits should they implement these consents.

The Chair of the Council, Clerk and Project Director met with the WBC's Executive Member for Planning and Highways, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance and senior officers on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015. WBC confirmed that it had a requirement to provide 560m<sup>2</sup> of new community facilities at School Green.

The West of Shinfield consent specifies the provision of 560m<sup>2</sup> of a community hub at the new School Green Local Centre. WBC amended this requirement on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015 to enable the developer to discharge this condition by payment of £960,000 to the borough for an off-site provision (Appendix 8).

The north of Hyde End Road developers and other developments within the South of M4 SDL are committed to providing S106 funds for community and sports provision of which approximately £2m will be spent at the Ryeish Green Sports Hub (RGSB). Other parts of this funding supports the Shinfield Community Centre project.

The west of Shinfield development includes the creation of a Local Centre at School Green (Appendix 2). SPC considers the new Local Centre, community centre and existing health centre should be arranged to provide a coherent public centre to School Green.

The west of Shinfield consent has also resulted in the transfer of a piece of land, at the rear of Shinfield Infants and Nursery School (SINS) and adjoining the Health Centre, to the school, for the provision of additional capacity, including a new hall. The position of the new hall enables future changes to the access routes to enable the creation of a pedestrian friendly area outside the Parish Hall.

### **School Green Local Centre**

The West of Shinfield consent requires the developer to create a new local centre to the north of the British Legion and Health Centre sites at School Green. The local centre is specified to include a 25,000 sq ft. supermarket and ancillary retail units. The community centre originally specified in the scheme is to be developed on the RBL site by SPC using Section 106 and SPC funding.

### **Adjoining land owners**

Since the consent, the two neighbouring buildings to the local centre have come onto the market. Shinfield House has been purchased and has been converted into a 66-bed care home with a dedicated dementia unit. The planning consent obliges the owners to discuss variations to access routes to support the development of a pedestrian friendly School Green.

Shinfield Infants and Nursery School has been granted planning consent for its new hall. A condition offering alternative access avoiding School green should be investigated.

The purchase of the RBL site by SPC, onward sale to the UoR and leaseback for 125 years was completed on 29th September 2015.

The Shinfield Parish Hall (SPH) stands on land adjoining the RBL. SPC leases the site from Shinfield United Charities (SUC) and the lease expires in 2031. Negotiations are in progress to extend the lease to a minimum 60 year term.

### **Public engagement**

SPC has engaged with the public on several occasions to establish support for the project:

- 1) Village centre workshops arranged by the Development Consortium (University of Reading, Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes; developers of west of Shinfield , north of Hyde End Road and Three Mile Cross developments) and Neighbourhood Forum in early 2014 which supported the location of the Community centre on the RBL site.
- 2) Public meeting with Allies Morrison - 14 May 2014
- 3) Neighbourhood Forum in October 2015.
- 4) Consultation sessions at SPH on 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016 which supported the scheme (Appendix 9).

### **3.0 Economic Case (Initial marketing strategy –see appendix 3)**

The concept of the community hub has been considered across the parish over the last 3 years.

Shinfield Parish Council will seek to establish the community centre as a destination place for local residents. The council will seek to achieve a balance between commercial activity to make the centre financially viable, and the provision of inclusive community facilities at an affordable price for residents and local groups and organisations.

SPC has drafted an initial marketing plan, with a number of objectives (see appendix 3). Objectives include:

- The recruitment of a community centre manager, prior to the completion of the building, to promote the centre through means such as establishing new activities, classes and groups and develop interest and activities to drive revenue from the outset.
- Open days for local companies and organisations to view what is on offer. This building, close to Junction 11 of the M4 and south Reading's industrial areas, is in an excellent location for a wide range of meetings for businesses and other organisations. SPC aims to make the centre's accessibility and facilities rival those of similar professional operations, and at competitive rates.
- The main halls and meeting rooms would be available to clubs, societies and commercial organisations throughout the day, evening and weekends.
- A range of different booking facilities will be made available, to include online reservations and payment as well as personal contact.
- Rooms would be equipped with Audio Visual (AV) equipment to allow for the widest possible use. Halls and rooms would have Wi-Fi.
- Refreshments and catering will be available from a cafe during opening hours and vending machines when the cafe is closed.
- The community centre could operate social events open to all, where entry covers the cost of provision and provides an incremental income for use of the facility. For example concerts, shows, educational events (such as lectures and U3A activities) and talks.
- There is no general youth provision in Shinfield Village currently and we will be considering what can be done to provide an appropriate weekly meeting place for teenagers. The AV system could include installation of a large screen system with a mini cinema or theatre, for educational or entertainment/leisure use.

## **The Community Centre Building design**

SPC aspires to design a community centre that integrates the whole site to ensure it becomes an attractive and desirable place to visit that encourages both local people and visitors and attracts footfall to the centre.

- The building is envisaged to be a two storey building, which could be linked physically, or by courtyards or covered walkways to the existing parish hall, allowing the existing parish hall to integrate with the new, and continue to provide additional space over that proposed in the new building.
- The design and specification of the building is currently being scoped, with the aim of providing a flexible, usable space, accessible for all (see development options on page 13).
- The design will provide the opportunity for extending the building, for example, extending the second floor of the new building, if demand warranted the need for further space.
- The internal finish of the building will be modern, high quality both in image and materials used. We envisage use of as environmentally friendly methods as can be justified by cost/benefit to reduce energy and maintenance costs. SPC aspires to achieve high environmental standards in the building and will investigate how we may design an iconic building showcasing modern technology.
- We would seek to use an interior designer during the final stages of construction and fitting out to ensure an integrated design concept with complementary colours, flooring and lighting.
- The overall design of the building will incorporate multipurpose, flexible spaces and storage, including an area for use as a Children's Centre. This space would be available for other uses, such as for children's parties, which is a fast growing market and provides a substantial part of our income stream for ad hoc hire.
- A suitable self-catering facility linked to the halls and separate from the cafe kitchen will also be considered so the building can be used for receptions, parties and other events.
- We will investigate how the building will incorporate a library facility of some kind, perhaps as part of the cafe.
- The upper floor could include enlarged parish council offices with a reception area with separate offices for the staff and dedicated meeting space. Within this area it is envisaged that a number of small meeting rooms will be available for hire.
- A small kitchen and additional toilets would be provided on this floor both for use by the public when hiring facilities, and by council staff.
- We aim to offer hot desks to local people for business use or study with Wi-Fi and accessible computer stations.
- Provision of children's play facilities on-site may enhance the accessibility of these services at the centre

## **Linking with the Parish Hall**

The development of the new community hub is complementary to the operation of the existing parish hall and it is the use of the existing facility that has provided guidance to the operational requirements in the future.

To link the two buildings will require agreement with the landlords of the Parish Hall, Shinfield United Charities (SUC). SPC has entered into discussions with SUC and has established that the charity is able and willing to provide a minimum 60 year lease on the land. We are now entering into further negotiations in order to agree the terms of the lease. The outcome of the negotiations will define the final design solution but will not impact on the viability of the new community facilities.

Additionally there is a lease with UoR over a small ransom strip at the back of the parish hall adjoining the Health Centre. We are currently negotiating with UoR to resolve this issue in order to clarify ownership of each site.

The two sites could be linked physically, or by courtyards or covered walkways, allowing the existing parish hall to integrate with the new centre.

### Development options

Since the completion of the lease transaction the Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee (SCCMC), chaired by Wokingham Borough Councillor Anthony Pollock, has engaged Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt Architects and BDS Surveyors to develop designs for the new centre and up to date construction costs.

The architects have developed a total of 5 design options (Appendix 5) for the SCCMC to consider for a 560 sq m centre. Structural, asbestos (invasive) and ground contamination surveys have been carried out (Appendix 6). The options explored include use of both pieces of land leased by SPC and are intended to support the development of a coherent public centre at School Green. The options are shown in the table below:

The options have been evaluated at high level and the short list of options below is to be taken forward. The criteria for short listing was based on whether the proposal would provide long term viability. The option of retaining the RBL building would only postpone the inevitable date of demolition and increase costs and reduce funding options.

Options 2 and 3 did not provide the maximum development opportunity for the site either in the short or long term. Options 4 and 4a provide a means to maximise development opportunity by considering future expansion issues.

Option	Description	Key issues	Shortlist *
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	RBL building does not have a 125 year life. Internal RBL design not suitable for proposed uses. Foundations not sufficient for best design options	No
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Does not fully utilise building height opportunity	No
3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	Separates the buildings and doesn't make route to the health centre as inclusive as options 2 and 4.	No
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites incorporating the existing SPC premises with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	Provides a coherent frontage to School Green Provides a secure rear area for children's activities Fully utilises building height opportunity	Yes – Maximum build option

4a	New build on RBL site SPH with maximum 2 storeys build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking.	Assumes the health centre access road is relocated north and further land rented from the Consortium at peppercorn rent. Separates the buildings and route to health centre.	Yes -maximum build option on RBL site
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#### 4.0 Financial case

The project has two areas of finance to be considered: Revenue and capital implications.

An analysis of risk indicates that the size of the build will determine the:

- Revenue impact
- Capital impact

The aim for the centre would be to arrive at breakeven point or deliver a small surplus after the initial period whilst the new homes are built and occupied.

Shinfield Parish Council will develop a charging policy that seeks to recover the running costs of the building.

Appendix 4 includes analysis of the revenue and capital costs.

The financial analysis of capital cost reviewed 5 options. 3 of the derivatives expand option3 adding various amounts of floor area

Based on the design options, survey reports and cost plans the building costs of the options are shown below:

Option	Description – See appendix	Estimated Capital cost	VAT	Estimated Total
1	Refurbish and extend existing RBL building with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,136,238	£227,247	£1,363,486
2	New single storey build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH	£1,566,893	£313,378	£1,880,272
3	New two storey build on RBL site with open courtyard to SPH	£1,550,980	£310,196	£1,861,176
4	New build on RBL and SPC sites with enclosed courtyard to SPH with maximum 2 storey build	£2,014,436	£402,887	£2,417,324
4a	New build on RBL site SPH with maximum 2 storey build, enclosed courtyard to SPH and additional car parking	£2,094,791	£418,958	£2,513,750

These costs include construction costs with 10% construction contingency, 12% professional fees and 12% Optimism Bias to manage client scope development. Quantity surveyors BDS, appointed by SPC to provide outline costings, has advised that VAT will be recoverable on the new build schemes.

Please note the figures shown in the ACG feasibility study (appendix 5) are base cost plus 5% contingency, plus 12% professional fees, but EXCLUDE 12% optimism bias, and so are understated.

The equipping of the facilities will amount to approximately £185,000 +VAT i.e. £225,000. VAT will not be recoverable on fittings and equipment.

Indicative budget for option 4a = £2,320,000 including non-recoverable VAT

**Capital Funding**

Sources of capital funding:

- 1) Developer contribution (Section 106 funding): £2,035,000
  - 2) Shinfield Parish council approved use of reserves: £285,000
- Total £2,320,000**

**Funding for costs to date has been secured from the SPC contribution as detailed in appendix 13**

**Revenue implications**

SPC currently operates Shinfield Parish Hall and Spencer’s Wood Pavilion, which break even when taken together. Based on their figures the new School Green facility totalling 850 sq m including the current SPH would be in surplus by 2022:

	Pre-opening	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Revenue</b>	17,700	101,620	108,620	115,620	122,620
<b>Costs</b>	-46,000*	-115,000	-117,000	-119,000	-121,000
<b>Surplus</b>	-28,300	-13,380	-8,380	-3,380	1,620

**\*pre-opening of new community centre includes an assumption of 50% staffing costs and no additional revenue**

As the scheme delivers more capacity, the Managing and Developing the New Community Centre Plan (Appendix 3) would be taken forward as a marketing strategy at an early stage, prior to opening, to increase activity levels.

Shinfield Parish Council will develop a charging policy that recovers the running costs of the building.

It is anticipated that an initial deficit will be financed through Shinfield Parish Council precept.

The revenue calculations in appendix 4 include assumptions relating to anchor tenants/users

**5.0 Commercial case**

The PID identified a number of high level risks for the project. The key risks to the project were:

Risk ID	Risk Type	Description
CC01	Management	Lack of leadership fails to drive project
CC02	Finance	Failure to agree scope makes project unaffordable
CC03	Viability	Long term operating cost unaffordable
CC04	Finance	SPC may have to commit funds which are then lost due to project not proceeding
CC05	Finance	SPC may have to commit funds which are then lost to ongoing operating losses

CC06	Finance	SPC may have to commit funds which are then lost due lack of external grants
CC07	Resources	SPC has to develop 2 schemes at same time

Of these risks, the key elements related to developing a facility that would be too large.

- The risk of being too large stems from the fact that housing developments represent an approximate doubling of the population south of the M4 whilst the new facility would be 3 times greater than the existing Parish Hall.
- As the developments are spread between Shinfield, Spencer's Wood and Grazeley it is possible that a new 1000m<sup>2</sup> facility in School Green would be significantly over sized. This oversizing would create on-going revenue losses.
- Furthermore, discussions with WBC and its report (Appendix 8) indicate that there is insufficient capital available.
- Borrowing against a weak revenue stream would not be prudent. External funding will be sought where possible but cannot assumed at this stage.
- Other sources of revenue are to be explored including offering anchor tenancies/licences. s.
- The general marketing of the centre is described in Appendix 3. It is assumed that charges to other public sector bodies would be at break even on running costs, administration costs, maintenance and depreciation costs and would not subsidise unused space in the building.

The second major area of risk for the scheme relates to handling a project of up to £2.3m through SPC accounts which manages revenue of approximately £250,000 per annum and currently has reserves.

- As construction projects can have cost overruns of up to 10% it would not be prudent for the parish to manage the construction procurement, hence it is considered this should be handled directly by WBC's property/procurement services team.

### **Other factors for consideration**

Issues have been raised as potential risks with regard to the new Community Centre, which include:

- Future parking requirements for the users of the centre
- Unavoidable delays in delivering the new Community Centre (planning permission, appointment of a suitable contractor etc.)
- Impact on other projects whilst elements of the new community centre are still to be determined
- A lack of approved design for the overall village centre

### **6.0 Project and Operational Management case**

The PID has identified robust Project Management arrangements for the construction procurement. It is intended that the SCCMC will continue after completion of construction, to manage the ongoing running of the centre, though its makeup will be revised, as appropriate, over time.

#### **Public Support**

A series of meetings, workshops and presentations has demonstrated that WBC, the local borough councillors, the parish councillors and the majority of local residents consulted, all agree that demolition of the existing RBL building and construction of the new community centre linked to the existing parish hall, together with a pedestrian space outside, is the best solution (Appendix 9). The SPC outline design

presentation documents demonstrate that the community centre can and should be the focal point of the new village centre. A key feature of this new development is its ability to link the commercial, residential, community, health facilities and Village Green together to protect and enhance the appearance, safety and sustainability of the new centre of the parish.

### **Operating the new Community Centre**

It has been assumed that the new Community centre would be owned and managed by either SPC or a community trust. Early indications highlight that SPC may be best placed to manage the new centre cost effectively; but further work is needed to explore other management options.

SPC already funds the Parish Hall and supports local organisations who provide recreational and social activities to the community. The overall level of precept settlement is expected to grow with the increase in households, hence the rise in available funding for the centre will be reflected in SPC's future budgets, emphasising the parish council's ability to manage the community facility longer term.

SPC recognises that the centre is likely to require financial support in the early years whilst the local population grows. The parish council has the experience, financial and management skills to run and operate public properties and already owns and manages a range of land and property. SPC will develop its financial planning strategy as part of a medium and long-term business plan.

Management of a facility of this size will need additional staffing in addition to the natural expansion of our workforce to cater for the new residents. SPC will be looking to employ staff dedicated to running and managing the centre as it develops

### **7.0 Preferred option and next steps**

The business case demonstrates that an affordable and sustainable community centre can be created which is adjacent to the Parish Hall and consists of a new building of between 560m<sup>2</sup> and up to 760m<sup>2</sup> is recommended that:

- SPC has acquired the RBL site on a 125 year lease on a fixed rental of one peppercorn for the entire period;
- SPC explore with WBC how the procurement of works will proceed;
- Undertake negotiations with SUC to extend the current lease for a minimum period of 60 years at terms to be agreed to provide the best design solution for the new and old facilities;
- SPC will provide £285,000 of funds from reserves to contribute to the purchase, demolition, design and construction of the new facility on part or all of the joint Parish Hall /RBL site;
- WBC provides funds of £2,035,250 to support the construction of the project.
- The SCCMS approves the business case and commends it to SPC and WBC for approval.

Approval of the business case will permit the full appointment of a design team and commencement of the construction procurement and planning processes.

Appendix	
1	Shinfield Community Centre Management Committee Terms of Reference
2	Shinfield Village Centre Proposals
3	Initial Marketing Strategy Managing and Developing the new Shinfield Community Centre
4	Projected revenue and expenditure
5	Architects and Surveyors Feasibility Report
6	Survey Reports
7	Wokingham Borough Council Executive 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2015 Item 42 Report and Decision. Contract between WBC and SPC
8	Exchange of letters between SPC and WBC to update Executive Item 42 recommendation 4.
9	Public Engagement
10	Project Risk Register
11	Project Initiation Document (PID)
12	Land Registry record of SPC lease
	Minute of SCCMC approval of business case – Feb 2016 Minute of SPC approval of business case – March 2016

## MARKETING STRATEGY

### Managing and Developing the new Shinfield Community Centre

The project's objective for the new community centre is to provide multi-purpose, affordable, flexible facilities for the local community. This will be consistent with 'Shaping Our New Communities' principles.

Our current aims include the following:

1. The centre will break even within four years. We have an established group of users for the existing parish hall and more enquiries from hirers during peak times than we are able to facilitate. With the addition of the new building and possibly some reconfiguration of the existing building, we will have flexible spaces of varying sizes, thus allowing more than one group to use the building at the same time. It is anticipated that the halls will be adaptable, to provide more appropriate spaces for smaller groups, whilst at the same time retaining the larger spaces for social events.
2. It is anticipated that some fixed space will exist as part of the agreed planning considerations, including for use as a children's centre, a police contact point and possibly a library facility. The detail of these specialist facilities remains subject to negotiation, as we have yet to get clarification on local needs, but the objective will be to attract further footfall to the centre.
3. Long term core tenants will be sought.
4. Shinfield Parish Council will develop a charging policy that seeks to recover the running costs of the building.

### Ideas for use of the building and generation of income include:

- **Meeting space for Shinfield Parish Council**
  - Additional space is anticipated as being needed for the parish offices to allow for the growth of the parish. A charge for provision of this office space will be made to the parish council. Charges will also be made to the parish for use of hall and meeting rooms for council, committee and ad-hoc meetings which take place outside the designated parish office area.
- **A meeting place for residents, local groups, clubs and societies**
  - There will be meeting rooms and halls available for hire by the session, for commercial daytime use and for use by small local groups and committees during the evenings and at weekends. Charges will be by the morning, afternoon, evening periods with optional catering packages available.
- **Facilities to provide services for all, from children to older residents. A local venue for social events**
  - The centre will provide a meeting space for a range of clubs and activities to encourage local residents to visit and use the facility. A lunch club for those elderly people who live alone, classes and courses in a wide range leisure activities for young people to meet, are just a few of things we will look at.
- **External hires**
  - The possibility of becoming licensed for weddings, with the facility for providing a venue wedding receptions
  - A package of facility hire with optional inclusive catering supplied via the cafe could be available.

- **Business users**

- We will consider the possibility of 'hot desks' available by the hour, with Wi-Fi facilities and other services such as copying, hire of meeting rooms and catering from the centre cafe.
- The whole building will have Wi-Fi availability and hopefully be wired throughout for audio visual and sound in meeting areas so providing an up to date facility appealing to a wide range of users.

### **Catering**

A cafe will be incorporated into the building, potentially leased to an outside operator. The cafes kitchen could be separate from any other kitchen facility in the centre. It was always considered that a cafe would be an important element of the new centre, potentially driving some revenue but as importantly acting as focal point for residents to meet and discover the activities that will be available in the centre.

In addition, we would envisage a vending machine operation to cater for visitors outside the cafe operating hours.

### **Management of the community centre**

We consider the appointment of a community centre manager and a robust marketing strategy, as an essential part of delivering a break-even financial situation, to ensure the viability of the centre. The prime responsibility of this position will be to introduce the facilities of the new centre to local residents, groups meeting throughout the parish, potential commercial users and at the same time work to maximise usage of all parts of the facility throughout opening hours.

Shinfield Parish Council will need to give consideration to future management and administration for the centre, including:

- Bookings and invoicing
- Cleaning and caretaking

Further consideration needs to be given to additional staffing requirements and the potential operation of a dual use facility. This will have budget implications and require a further risk analysis.

### **Working with other local hall facilities**

The parish council has taken initial steps to build relationships with the management committees of other halls across the parish and other groups such as local churches. The parish council will be exploring opportunities to collaborate and share information and facilities with these organisations, to benefit the wider community.

APPENDIX 4 - ESTIMATED REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Income:				
<u>Existing parish hall</u>				
Regular Hirer income	12700	12700	12700	12700
Ad hoc hirer income	5000	5000	5000	5000
<u>New community centre</u>				
Café	12000	12000	12000	12000
Office facilities SPC	40000	42000	44000	46000
Meeting room space SPC (based on 72 meetings a year of 3 hrs duration at £7 p/h)	1500	1500	1500	1500
hall hire SPC (based on 10 meeting a year of 3 hrs duration at £14 p/h)	420	420	420	420
New space hire	30000	35000	40000	45000
<b>Total INCOME</b>	<b>101,620</b>	<b>108,620</b>	<b>115,620</b>	<b>122,620</b>

Budget for the new community centre

Running cost for the new build (Estimated by BDS surveyors)	-28,000	-28,000	-28,000	-28,000
Anticipated maintenance cost per annum	-6,000	-8,000	-10,000	-12,000
Building renewals fund	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000
Running cost of Shinfield Parish Hall	-16,000	-16,000	-16,000	-16,000
Anticipated maintenance cost per annum	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
Salaries and staff costs for new centre	-50,000	-50,000	-50,000	-50,000
	<b>-115,000</b>	<b>-117,000</b>	<b>-119,000</b>	<b>-121,000</b>
<b>Total shortfall / surplus</b>	<b>-13,380</b>	<b>-8,380</b>	<b>-3,380</b>	<b>1,620</b>

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Council Owned Companies Business</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Graham Ebers, Director of Finance and Resources
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Keith Baker, Leader of The Council

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Transparency in respect of Council Owned Companies

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) note the budget monitoring position for the month ending 31 January 2016;
- 2) note the operational update for the period to 29 February 2016.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

### **Strategy and Objectives of the Council's Subsidiary Companies**

There has been no change to the Strategy and Objectives of the Council's Subsidiary Companies since the last report to Executive in February 2016.

### **Operational Update**

An operational update is provided from each of the companies as at 29 February 2016 in paragraph 2 below.

### **Financial Report**

A budget monitoring report is provided for each of the companies for January 2016, which confirms that overall the group has incurred a deficit as forecast. This again reflects the high level of WHL capital works being undertaken which has previously been reported, and which will be followed in later years by income flows from the investments. This together with the management costs of WBC (Holdings) Ltd offset the profit earned by Optalis Ltd. The position for each of the companies is explained in paragraph 3 below.

## **REPORT**

### **1. Directorship Report**

- There have been no changes to the directorships of the group companies since the last report to Executive.

## **2. Operational Update to 29 February 2016**

### **2.1 WBC (Holdings) Ltd**

WBC (Holdings) Ltd does not undertake any operations as it is a holding company.

### **2.2 Optalis Ltd**

- CQC compliance:
  - Outstanding registered manager applications have been submitted and interviews have taken place for Cockayne Court manager and the START manager respectively. Formal confirmation of registration is awaited.
  - The proposed restructure of Optalis' Extra Care services (Alexandra Place, Beeches Manor and Cockayne Court) has been agreed by the commissioner and the Optalis senior team. An internal recruitment process is being prepared and it is anticipated that an appointment will be made in early March.
  - To complete the restructure Optalis will remove registrations for the three individual services, and apply for one single 'Extra Care Services' registration; this will be progressed once the single manager is in place.
- No Care Governance Ratings are currently in place.
- Sickness absence overall for January was an average rate of 13.1 days per year and an underlying short term rate of 9.5. This represents a spike in absence, with the main pressure being in older people's services, whereas other service areas are below or only slightly above the target of 5 days. There were six people experiencing long term sickness (over 30 days continuous absence), evenly spread across services; each employee in this situation is carefully monitored and supported back to work wherever possible.
- Recruitment to the Head of Service in Brokerage & Professional Support has not been successful to date. A candidate was interviewed and accepted the offer of the role on 29 January, but subsequently withdrew. The executive search continues and positive CVs are still being pursued.
- A programme of recruitment for the Director of Quality & Delivery (formerly Commercial Director) role is currently underway. In the meantime the contract of the current interim has been extended to the end of June.
- Following the successful TUPE consultation Nicholson House Extra Care service in Abingdon transferred to Optalis' portfolio on 15 February 2016. An introduction and welcome event was held on 24 February.
- A tender for Extra Care Services in Harrow led to an interview on 17 February. The outcome is awaited.

The first Optalis Care Governance Committee met during February. The Committee will oversee all of Optalis' operational quality and compliance activities to ensure the organisation is able to support continuous improvement and learning. The Committee is attended by SMT and all service managers, chaired by the managing director.

### **Business Development:**

#### **Oxfordshire County Council**

- As per above, the contract to run Nicholson House in Abingdon commenced on 15 February 2016.

### Wokingham

- Optalis has now been engaged by WBC commissioners as the provider of choice for a new extra care scheme in Woodley (Bulmershe) set to open in October 2016. Early indications are that the scheme may be delayed until February 2017, which will affect Optalis projected budget for 2016-17 adversely.

### West Berkshire

- The tender for the home care framework was suspended by the authority; we await news.

### Harrow

- We are pursuing an extra care opportunity being tendered by Harrow local authority. The scheme is a new build with 47 flats with care currently being provided by another provider. An interview took place on 17 February and the outcome is awaited shortly.

### Bury

- The LATC consultancy work with Bury MBC has now concluded following successful delivery. The intention is to write up a case study jointly with Stepping Out for promotional purposes.

### Nottinghamshire

- A LATC consultancy contract has been delivered by the managing director in partnership with Stepping Out consultants. The work focused on support to develop and Outline Business Case and an Options Appraisal for presentation to the Council's decision making bodies. The next step, if the Council decides to proceed, would be the development of a Full Business Case.

### Supported Employment

- The SES team have been approached by a local college and a college in Oxfordshire with a view to possibly delivering further projects like 'Ace@Optalis', focused on work preparation for young people with disabilities. Negotiations continue.

## **2.3 Wokingham Housing Ltd (WHL)**

### **2.3.1 WHL Completed schemes:**

There are no landlord operational matters to report on the management of Hillside. At Vauxhall Drive a meeting with residents' parents and the care provider LinkNursing has taken place to clarify responsibilities between Loddon Homes Ltd (LHL) and WBC and improve communication between all parties around the on-going issues from the original works and associated defects/specification errors.

### **2.3.2 WHL Schemes in Progress and/or Development:**

#### Phoenix Avenue:

The development continues to progress well and there have been no issues identified of concern in meeting the current programme.

### Fosters Extra Care Home:

Tender returns were received and Leighfields – a Swindon based contractor – has been appointed following approval from the LHL, WHL and the WBC (Holdings) Boards. Leighfields bid is under the £6.035m estimated contract sum at £5.942m. Our Employers Agent is confident they are well placed to do the development, having worked with them previously. We hope to start on site in late March or early April, which fits in with the estimated HCA grant claim for April 2016 of just over £700k.

### Pipe-line sites:

Planning permission for development of two affordable homes in Elizabeth Road on HRA land is due to be heard in March. Various other small sites are at pre-application stage and we are working closely with WBC planners to ensure applications will provide good quality developments where appropriate.

The Small Contractor Framework returns have been received and now assessed by our Employers Agent. Four returns were received. The Framework was tendered on the basis of actual sites being included based on a package of sites upon which WHL has already achieved planning for – Barrett, Anson and Grovelands – and we hope to be able to appoint the successful contractor following final discussions with WBC on the best way of progressing the sites.

### Loddon Homes:

Following the initial advice, and subsequent meeting, with Trowers over the advantages and disadvantages of registering Loddon Homes in the current uncertain policy climate; it was agreed to continue to try and register Loddon as a For Profit Register Provider to give the Council maximum future flexibility in its delivery of housing in Wokingham Borough.

To that end work has continued with Campbell Tickell and Devonshires to agree a final submission to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which balances addressing their concerns with pointing out where we believe their concerns are unfounded. It is hoped to have this considered at an April HCA meeting, possibly the early May meeting at the latest.

## **3. Financial Report**

### **Budget Monitoring for 2015-16 financial year (To 31 January 2016)**

**3.1 WBC Group Consolidated, (i.e. comprising WBC (Holdings) Ltd, Wokingham Housing Group, and Optalis Group).**

The figures shown below represent the overall expenditure and income of the Council's subsidiary companies. Budget figures for WHL are now available and so an overall comparison of spend against budget is included below:

At the operational level, the net deficit was £58k, compared to a budget of 69k; this is largely due to savings on interest charges as anticipated works on Phoenix Avenue

(formerly Eustace Crescent) were rephased.

### **3.2 WBC (Holdings) Ltd**

A loss of £171k is reported compared to a budgeted loss of £275k. As for the consolidated results this is largely due to a saving on interest as anticipated works on Phoenix Avenue (formerly Eustace Crescent) were rephased.

### **3.3 Optalis**

- The post-tax result for January is a profit of £4.5k which is in line with budgeted profit for the month.
- The forecast for February is profit of £4.5k and March is a profit of £4.5k. The full year pre-tax result is forecast at £60k (which is after a return of £250k to the Commissioner as budgeted).
- No corporation tax provision is provided as the profit for the year will be offset by losses in other group companies.
- Revenue in the month was £5k higher than last month as we had £2.5k of consultancy for Bury and Nottinghamshire. There was £2.5k of revenue related to refund of money spent relating to deregistration of LD homes.
- The YTD pre-tax result is a profit of £51k - favourable to budget by £11k (budget £40.3k).
- Overall YTD Revenue has exceeded Budget by c£600k due to a combination of higher revenues from WBC commission; (Suffolk Lodge dementia unit, SUSD, new business from Independent Living Services - Orchard and Shipman) and Private Income (Reading College, Clement House, NRS, OT, Out and About, Private dom care, Consultancy from Bury and Nottinghamshire).
- Overall YTD Costs have exceeded budget by c£600k. This is mainly due to staffing costs including agency spend to meet the requirements of new revenue.
- The balance sheet includes a provision of c£100k relating to outstanding debtors that are over 90 days overdue. Some of the debts are over a year old. Overall it appears that 60% of the debt will need to be written off.
- Outstanding costs that have not been provided for in the balance sheet include; £20k relating to Termination costs of Commercial Director and c£20k Accrued Leave costs for additional hours worked.
- Net assets at 31 January are £237k (budget £185k).
- Cash at 31 January was £283k (budget £689k).

### **Risk/Mitigation**

- Agency spend remains unacceptably high, however weekly management reviews chaired by the managing director have been successful in turning the trend, with agency use during November/December/January consistently reducing. Recruitment remains the greatest underlying pressures on agency spend, with sickness absence an issue in some older people's services.
- Recruitment continues to be challenging. A pilot with a recruitment agency has been launched during February, recruiting to a number of care worker roles and a social work service manager role. If the pilot is successful, Optalis will consider further engagement with the agency.
- Legal: Negotiations via the WBC legal team with Expense Reduction Analysts (ERA)

are continuing. Optalis' offer has been rejected and it is therefore now likely that the matter may be referred to the courts by ERA.

- Costs relating to termination of commercial director will be offset by release of bad debt provision for amounts recovered.

### Overview of Results – Year to Date

Total Company Jan YTD	Actual	Budget	Budget Variance
	(£000)	(£000)	(£000)
Turnover	9,810	9,223	587
Costs	(9,686)	(9,108)	(578)
Operating Profit	124	115	9
Depreciation	(73)	(75)	2
<b>Profit before tax</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>11</b>
Corporation tax	0	(8)	8
Net profit	51	32	19

### 3.4 Wokingham Housing (Including Wokingham Housing Ltd & Loddon Homes Ltd)

Total Sub Group JANUARY	Jan	Jan	Budget	Prior Mth	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Variance
	(£000)	(£000)	(£000)	(£000)	(£000)
Income	23	7	16	7	(8)
Costs	(59)	(50)	(9)	(32)	30
Operating Loss	(36)	(43)	7	(25)	22
Non Trading costs	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation	(2)	(2)	0	(2)	0
Loss before Tax	(38)	(45)	7	(27)	22
Taxation	-	-	-	-	-
Net Loss	(38)	(45)	7	(27)	22

## Wokingham Housing Limited (Consolidated)

P10: January Year To Date

Profit and Loss Account for  
the period to 31st January  
2016

	Actual	Budget	Variance
	£	£	£
Income	92,068	120,496	(28,428)
Operating Expenditure	(541,196)	(593,773)	52,576
Operating Loss	(449,128)	(473,276)	24,148

Income for January 2016 is £23k (Year to date £92k). Against budget this represents a surplus in month of £16k (but YTD is behind by £28k). The surplus in month is due to consultancy revenue billed in January but budgeted in November, while year to date is due to fewer failed project recharges as per budget. Operating expenditure is overspent in the month by £9k due in part to recognition of cost equivalent to consultancy revenue set against lower costs of repairs. YTD expenditure is also underspent by £53k due to lower direct costs, lower payroll costs, lower repairs costs and lower interest charges but offset by higher professional fees.

The Net Loss position of £38k in the month and Net Loss of £449k YTD are 6k and £24k ahead of budget.

### Balance Sheet

Capital Expenditure of £866k in the year includes the contractor payments for the build of Phoenix Avenue of £606k.

Net assets total £567k at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016. In total there are 1,900,000 issued and fully paid Ordinary £1 shares held by WBC (Holdings) Ltd. The share capital remains at £1.9m.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

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

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
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The Council will benefit from reduced costs in commissioning services, the interest and management charges to WBC (Holdings) Ltd and future profits paid out as dividend. These will be factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan under the appropriate service.
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<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
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No Cross-Council Implications
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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None
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<b>Contact</b> Emma Lyons	<b>Service</b> Resources
<b>Telephone No</b> 07769957900	<b>Email</b> Emma.Lyons@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Date</b> 18 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 2

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Council Policy on Academies</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Judith Ramsden, Director of Children’s Services
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children’s Services

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

- A coherent local education system preserved through a change process
- Schools’ mutual support embedded in new academy system
- Council remains a respected trading and professional partner of schools, enabled to continue its pupil-related functions

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) adopt the provisional policy stance on academies proposed in the report, and particularly the proposal to change any school’s licensed deficit to a loan;
- 2) instruct officers to continue related discussions with the Department for Education;
- 3) maintain associated dialogue with schools and other stakeholders reflecting schools’ autonomous decision-making and current interest.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The report sets out the growing pace at which schools maintained by local authorities have been and will continue to change to academy status. In this context a review of the WBC stance towards academies is due, specifically because:

1. the Education and Adoptions Bill is expected to increase the rate of “Requires Improvement” and “failing” schools becoming sponsored academies when enacted in April;
2. new schools needed have to be academies and their proportion will therefore increase;
3. indications are that government wishes to see all schools as academies in the medium term and a reduction in LAs’ Education Services Grant on the same timescale;
4. schools are aware of these pressures and concerned about how to address them;
5. The council needs to support this change in a measured way, with the LA involved and supporting, so as to develop local academies able to sponsor other local academies, and to preserve WBC’s place as a commercial partner with schools, its

influence in school improvement and its role as the champion of the children in them.

6. Discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) indicate a potential interest in Wokingham moving forward with this in partnership with central government.

The report illustrates those factors, identifying potentially significant financial implications and proposed next steps. Costs of academy conversion are controversial, to some degree unclear and potentially significant, so further exploration of those is needed (to be the subject of a separate report).

## Background

### 1) WHAT ARE ACADEMIES?

Academy schools are state funded schools in England which are not maintained by a local authority and are run by an Academy Trust which is directly funded by central government. An Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is, once its first Academy is open, an exempt charity. In all cases this is the body the Department for Education contracts with, funds, and holds to account. There are two types of academy trust: multi-academy trusts (MATs) and single-academy trusts (SATs). Between 2001 and 2010, there was only one kind of Academy. This was usually a secondary school that had been closed by the Local Authority and re-opened as a new legal entity, often in response to low attainment figures and judgements made by Ofsted.

Academies are favoured by government as a model of schools' governance, and were subject to an aspiration voiced in the prime minister's conference speech in October 2015, that all schools should become academies. In the form of Multi-Academy Trusts or "chains" they also reflect the preferred model of school improvement which is school to school support. Academies under the post 2010 legislation are subject to different conversion processes and requirements:

- i) *Sponsored academies can be obliged* to become academies by the Department for Education (DfE) as a result of low standards of attainment.
- ii) *Converter academies choose* to become an academy themselves but have to be approved for conversion by DfE by satisfying tests regarding standards and sustainability. The decision to apply for conversion rests with the Governors of the school. Converting schools can still seek a sponsor if they feel this will add value to the education of pupils.
- iii) All new schools must be set up as academies.
- iv) *New Academies* can be set up through different routes which involve *bidding processes* and include secondary schools, primary schools, special schools, university technical colleges (UTCs), studio schools and free schools.

### 2) WHAT IS CHANGING?

National Policy has developed in favour of smaller local Multi-Academy Trusts:

- Whilst a few years ago the DfE would have imposed an academy sponsor on a school/local authority they now seem to prefer to work with local stakeholders to find a solution. They prefer councils to be pro-active not reactive.
- The Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) have new powers and resources to facilitate the development of organisational solutions with councils. Some of these resources have been switched from the central DfE Academies Division to the regions in order to strengthen the local knowledge.

- The large national academy chains created under the Labour government have now been curtailed. With a few exceptions their performance has not been significantly greater than the better local authorities. The preference now is for locally 'grown' multi academy trust chains based on 'natural' groupings of schools;
- One of the preferred models is for an existing outstanding school to support struggling schools eg. in the form of a School Improvement Partner. This arrangement can be set up by the governing bodies of two community schools and provides a natural stepping stone for the creation of a MAT.
- In the early years of the development of academies there was a general belief that conversion offered schools financial advantages (eg. that part of the centrally retained DSG used for services to schools was passed onto schools). Whether this was true or not, the current thinking (eg. Oxfordshire CC below) is that the only real benefits arise from groups of schools pooling their resources and supporting each other.

The Education and Adoption Bill is due to be enacted in April 2016: the overall impact will be to increase the rate of academy conversion, through the following mechanisms:

- Increased responsibilities and wider remit for Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs), including the ability to exercise the Secretary of State's powers and intervene *directly* with schools
- RSCs will have the authority to intervene in failing academies including being able to remove sponsors;
- Duty on Secretary of State to convert failing schools to academies replaces current discretionary power, and stakeholders including governors and LAs will have duty to collaborate;
- Introduction of new category of '*coasting schools*' – ie those schools where performance data shows that they are failing to ensure their pupils reach their potential (based on a 3 year period ending Sep'16). Once a school has been notified by the RSC that it is coasting and is therefore eligible for intervention, there is a range of steps the RSC may take:
  - a. No further action – the school has a credible plan which leaders can deliver.
  - b. The school needs some additional support and challenge.
  - c. The school is required to enter into partnership with another school
  - d. Additional governors or an Interim Executive Board (IEB) are put in place
  - e. A sponsored academy solution is deemed necessary.

A new white paper is to be published shortly, to propose and precede further mechanisms to increase the rate of academy conversions for successful schools able to act as sponsors for the coasting or failing schools. This would be likely to see moves to set up local Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to provide sponsors, and also to establish models of collaboration to secure economies of scale. Thus conversion is proposed as a means of improving the organisation and efficiency of schools and ensuring that they remain viable, in a context of financial constraint.

A change in the pace of academy conversions is a likely result, to deliver the government's aspiration voiced in the prime minister's conference speech of October 2015.

### **3) WOKINGHAM SCHOOLS CONTEXT: Experience of academy growth**

- i) There are currently 65 schools (excluding independents) in Wokingham of which 9 are academies or free schools:
  - 5 secondary academy trusts (Piggott, Waingels, Forest, Holt, Maiden Earlegh)
  - 1 secondary free school (Oakbank)
  - 2 primary academy trusts (Wheatfields, Windmill)
  - 1 primary free school (Ewendons)
  - All have converted in the last 3 years with the latest being Waingels College which converted in July 2015
- ii) Over the next 5 years a further 8 academy schools will be created through the Basic Needs/Strategic Development Location programme requiring new schools in the borough:
  - 1 secondary (Arborfield), 2016
  - 7 primary (Montague Park 2016, Shinfield West 2016, Spencers Wood 2019, Matthews Green 2018, Arborfield 2019, Hogwood 2020, South Wokingham 2020)
- iii) Thus within 5 years the number of trust schools will increase from 9 (14%) to 16 (22%) simply resulting from pupil growth.
- iv) Currently 32% of Wokingham pupils are taught in academies or free schools. By 2020 the figure will rise to 40%; for primary schools the percentage will rise from 5% to 19% (excluding impact of new legislation).
- v) Currently all of the secondary academies are of the converter type (ie voluntary conversion), with one, Maiden Erlegh being a multi academy trust (which sponsors a further secondary school in Reading, and The Piggott school which is a through school (4-18yrs)
- vi) Currently the only WBC schools sponsored by external trusts are Windmill and Wheatfield primary schools which are part of the Glyn Foundation GLF
- vii) By September 2016 a further two sponsors will be operating in Wokingham:
  - Floreat Education Trust – sponsoring Montague Park – (currently have 4 other primary schools in West London, 2 opened in 2015 and 2 to open in 2016)
  - Bohunt Education Trust – sponsoring the new secondary school at Arborfield – (Bohunt currently sponsor 3 secondary schools at Liphook, Portsmouth and Worthing)
- viii) There are currently no schools in Wokingham which have become academies owing to being rated as 'Inadequate' i.e. an imposed conversion. Several schools are reflecting on academy conversion as a way forward for them.

#### 4) EXAMPLES OF COUNCIL RESPONSES

Following a request for best practice material, the DfE identified Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as a potential model. Details are provided via references but the key features of this council's approach to academies are:

- i. The council has had an academies policy in place since July 2012<sup>1</sup> (see Annex) which is managed through an Academies Programme Project as part of its overarching Education Strategy. There are three main strands of activity within the project:
  1. Encouraging and supporting groups of schools to convert
  2. Ensuring that underperforming schools become Academies with an appropriate sponsor
  3. Developing new Academies and Free Schools in response to demographic need or parental demand
- ii. In 2014-15, the council allocated £900k to the project.
- iii. The council publishes an annual report<sup>2</sup>
- iv. Key points:
  1. Most schools have converted as part of groups or with the intention of setting up a group in a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).
  2. Models based on local collaborative companies<sup>3</sup> are being used to promote, build on and formalise existing partnership arrangements for shared support and services between schools. They can stand on their own or be used as a stepping stone for schools in considering whether and how an academy partnership may be appropriate to them.
  3. Oxfordshire schools are encouraged to consider how they might work effectively together to find local solutions to raising standards and providing support for under-performing schools. Good/outstanding schools are encouraged to sponsor struggling schools. To this end OCC has co-hosted events with the Department for Education (DfE) to consider how the council and schools can work together more effectively.
  4. Most new MATs are based around local groupings of schools.
  5. In 2014, OCC had its first example of CoE aided school joining a MAT with non-faith schools.
  6. In 2014 4 primary schools with standards issues as judged by Ofsted converted to academy status with a sponsor. Sponsors were identified early in the process and were sourced entirely from the local area.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/academies>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/educationandlearning/schools/ourworkwithschools/academies/2014\\_Annual\\_report\\_of\\_academies\\_activity\\_Oxfordshire.pdf](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/educationandlearning/schools/ourworkwithschools/academies/2014_Annual_report_of_academies_activity_Oxfordshire.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> A term loosely applied to Umbrella Trust and Collaborative trust arrangements which are models which can be used by groups of school irrespective of status eg. faith plus non faith, academies plus LA maintained.

7. Sponsors are identified as soon as possible after a negative school inspection judgement is known.
8. Cost of conversion – at the end of 2014 OCC estimated that the average cost (to the council) per conversion was £12k – this having increased due to the complexity of the conversion i.e. more MAT models than individual conversions.

In contrast, Oldham MBC had no council policy on academies and the council majority was ideologically against academies. Prior to the introduction of a coordinating function for academies some of the problems encountered included the case of one failing school which had a sponsor selected for them by the DfE which was agreed by the governing body. However during due diligence work carried out by the council it became apparent that:

1. The school finances, management and organisation were in no fit state to convert without the council inheriting a considerable financial liability and
2. The selected sponsor did not appreciate the state of the school and in any case did not have the capacity or capability to take on the school.
3. In the end, the council had the DfE and governing body reverse the appointment of the sponsor and a local MAT solution was introduced using a neighbouring outstanding primary school.

Work in Oldham from 2013-14 indicated that the average cost per conversion ranged from £4k to £7k for single school conversions normally dependent on the complexity of the land issues.

## **5) COSTS: addressing schools' deficits**

Cost estimates by two councils have been given above. Recently the LGA has claimed that the average cost of a school conversion to an LA is £7,000. If we were to assume a large scale conversion process and use £7,000 as an estimate there could be a total cost of £392,000 to simply convert the WBC schools.

The timescale given to convert could determine whether or not additional resource would need to be drafted in, as opposed to regarding these as opportunity costs. If WBC schools were given three years to convert this should be manageable with current staff. A timescale under three years would probably require increased staff to meet this deadline.

Further potentially significant cost implications are to be explored in a separate report. However the question of school deficits requires early attention. This is because of the risk of schools' deficits being left with the council at the point of transfer to academy status. This applies currently to sponsored academies but not converter academies. The risk is that the new national policy thrust could mean it applies to all, with resulting negative impact on council resources.

Wokingham schools are generally successful, and overall are in net surplus.

However it is considered appropriately cautious to convert current deficits to loans, and to change existing policy on deficits to ensure new ones take the form of loans. This involves a report to Schools Forum and consultation with chairs of governors; it is considered an appropriate course of action to secure the council's position.

## **Analysis of Issues**

National policy is developing mechanisms to secure a significant increase in the rate of change from maintained schools to academies. The government appears to welcome councils taking a pro-active approach to school organisation and viability as well as academy transitions, and having a strategy for dealing with their operational problems.

In Wokingham as other LAs, there are likely therefore to be more sponsored academies. In parallel schools are starting to take greater interest in academy conversion and the creation of MATs, seeing it as (a) inevitable given national policy and (b) a positive way of addressing austerity, school improvement and sustainability. Thus there will also be more converter academies, which are needed as local sponsors and MATs. It is in the interest of those schools and their pupils that they have access to expertise in the council in order to manage the process as smoothly as possible and without detriment to core business.

Best practice suggests that locally grown solutions for school support via MATs are likely to be effective:

- i. More chance of ownership and buy in from the community
- ii. Sponsors are known
- iii. Using local outstanding schools retains local knowledge and expertise
- iv. Opportunities for staff development and lesson learned.

Wokingham BC has a clear role in promoting coherent solutions to school groupings and MATs so that local partnerships are most effective. School Improvement officers are already engaged in brokering partnerships and supporting schools leaders as they address such issues.

Financial complexities including burdens on councils need to be considered with care and further explored. This will be addressed in a report to follow this one, once there has been further clarification of national drivers. It appears nevertheless the case that legislation will drive these changes, and WBC has to be able to make the best practical approach to schools' academy status. This includes approving loans to schools rather than licensed deficits.

### Current and recent actions are:

- Presentations at headteachers' and chair of governors' briefings on 10 February 2016;
- Technical support for a paired infant and junior school which have expressed interest;
- WBC representation at a meeting of the Earley cluster of chairs (at their request);
- Planned discussion with Bohunt about their ability to sponsor local schools;
- A meeting with DfE 4 March – one of their regular meetings but reflecting this agenda.

Next steps should include:

- Confirmation of WBC policy alignment with national policy:
  - to support moves to academy status, subject to capacity and resources;
  - to continue successful in establishing relationships with sponsors of new schools;
  - to be active in seeking local MATs and sponsors for schools in need of them
- Steps to ensure that local schools have access to appropriate technical and professional services, including those provided by the council
- Exploration of WBC capacity to deliver and fund the policy, in partnership with the DfE and Regional Schools Commissioner, with a further report on these matters
- Monitoring of impact on the LA's pupil-related functions including SEND, Education Welfare and the education of looked-after children
- Steps to change schools deficits to loans

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

***All figures are £,000s.***

**General Fund**

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	N/A	Revenue (General Fund)
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Potential £7k/school + detail to follow	May be opportunity costs	Revenue (General Fund)
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	As above	As above	Revenue (General Fund)

NB – Current Year is 2015/16

**Capital**

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

**Dedicated Schools Grant**

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

**Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

N/A

**Cross-Council Implications**

There are implications in conversion processes relating to the transfer of assets to academy trusts, and in longer term impacts on a range of council services including those currently trading with schools.

**List of Background Papers**

None

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<b>Date</b> 9 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 4

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Shared Building Control Services</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment Graham Ebers, Director Finance and Resources
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Resident Services

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Building Control services to Wokingham Borough Council would be delivered under a shared agreement between Wokingham Borough Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) and West Berkshire District Council (WBDC).

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) approve the creation of a 3 way Shared Building Control Service to commence in Summer 2016 between Wokingham Borough Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) and West Berkshire District Council (WBDC);
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Environment/Director of Finance and Resources and Executive Member for Resident Services to sign the legal agreement to enter into the 3 way shared service;
- 3) agree that the Council should work together with the other members of the shared service during the early stages of the shared service arrangement to consider opportunities for an alternative longer-term model for Building Control Services to further enable all parties to realise opportunities for profit to be generated and returned to these organisations;
- 4) agree that the Building Control Shared Service Joint Board (Building Control Board) is established to oversee the strategic leadership of the building control shared service and that the Executive Member responsible for this area be appointed to this Board and authorised to make decisions on behalf of the Council about the Building Control Shared Service.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The agreement allows for:

- A shared service arrangement between the three authorities
- The shared service to be hosted by Wokingham Borough Council
- Existing WBDC building control staff to be TUPE transferred to WBC (RBWM staff already transferred to WBC as part of the earlier 2-way shared service)
- A 3-phase roadmap to be developed for the shared service to identify an alternative model for delivery to generate unrestricted income to the authorities (to be the subject of a future report to Executive)

## **Background**

In April 2015, Wokingham Borough Council entered into a shared building control service with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). WBC hosts this service and all previous RBWM staff were TUPE transferred to WBC, with the whole of the shared service now operating from WBC Shute End.

To date, the existing shared service has been successful in attracting permanent staff and has appointed a manager who is now in place. Operationally, the service has made many improvements and is working through its action plan to increase efficiency and generate more business. Furthermore, the existing shared service has enabled the Council to make a saving to the general fund of £30k through cost savings and efficiencies.

## **A Larger Shared Service Model**

To build on the foundations of 2-way shared service between WBC and RBWM, it was always seen that further growth would strengthen the competitive position of the service and advance the strategic and operational objectives identified.

Since establishment of the 2-way shared service, WBDC and RBC have approached WBC to explore joining the partnership. RBC is not in a position to do this until later in the year but it is proposed for WBDC to enter into a 3-way shared service commencing in June/July 2016. Any further expansion of the shared service to include RBC will be the subject of a further Executive approval. Once the larger shared service model has been set up, an alternative model of service delivery will be investigated to allow the Council and its partners to realise a return from the trading account that is currently ring fenced. This too will be the subject of a further Executive report.

## **Analysis of Issues**

The issues and objectives of the larger shared service are similar to those considered by the Council's Executive in November 2014 for the 2-way shared service but it is more likely that these will be achieved by a larger service given economies of scale. The main difference between the 2-way and 3-way Building Control Service is that each authority will delegate its functions to the host authority to carry out its statutory duties and the type of legal agreement and the governance and responsibilities of the board will reflect this (see below).

### *Benefits for the Host Authority*

A significant benefit of the expanded shared service is that it will be able to develop specialisms and have more resource to market itself to become more competitive and win back a bigger share of the market. The alternative of having to cease the in-house service means WBC would have to procure it. The cost of this is highly likely to be greater than in-house provision as the work is the least attractive to the other providers. Other examples in the country have demonstrated this and many authorities have found it difficult to procure this work.

A main advantage to WBC in hosting the service is that it has more control over the operation of the service.

### *Purchasing mechanism*

17% of the shared service is funded by all partner local authorities and an estimated budget for RBWM and WBDC has been calculated to be paid to the host authority biannually in advance and reconciled thereafter with the actual costs. This will be considered and agreed by the Building Control Shared Service Joint Board (see below).

### *Services provided*

The shared service will provide a range of specialist statutory and a small number of non-statutory building control services normally associated with the requirements of a Local Authority as set out in the legal agreement. Some of these are funded by the Council but the majority (approximately 85%) are fee earning for which the fees are set on a true cost recovery basis. A list of these fee earning and non-fee earning activities for Building Control Services is contained in Appendix 1.

There will be a need for all authorities to agree common procedures, practices and levels of service delivery. It is anticipated that this will be relatively straight forward to achieve as all services operate within the same regulatory regime and strive to improve service delivery and efficiency through continuous improvement given their openly competitive nature.

### *Staffing*

The host authority will continue to accommodate the shared service for WBC and RBWM from Shute End, but there will remain an office in Newbury. Staff from WBDC will be TUPE transferred to WBC.

### *Oversight and Monitoring*

The service agreement will ensure that all parties share the risk and the benefits from the collective use of resources. A Building Control Shared Service Joint Board made up of the elected portfolio holder from each of the 3 authorities will meet annually to oversee the operation of the shared service and to review the following :

- Standards of service delivery and performance
- Fee income and costs (on a true cost delivery basis)
- Treatment of trading surpluses or deficits
- Action plan for business growth and development

An annual report will be issued by the shared service and published on the Council's website. This report will set out the matters discussed and agreed by the Building Control Shared Service Joint Board in respect of the matters set out above.

It is important to realise that there are a number of factors which will affect the delivery and development of the shared service that are outside of Council control. These include the economy, statutory changes, and the level of competition and the availability of trained and experienced staff. The board will therefore need to adopt a flexible approach to enable it to adapt and address the relevant challenges facing the shared service over time, dependent upon the conditions which it faces. However, any significant proposed changes to the fundamental principles or operation of the shared service or the contract will be referred to Executive for consideration.

### *Financial case*

Details of the financial case are set out in Appendix 2. Phase 1 of the 3-way shared service is cost neutral for WBC and the other 2 authorities. Costs will be fully recoverable for WBC but there are no immediate financial savings at the outset. The ring-fenced trading account is expected to run on surpluses each year, which will allow reinvestment through Phases 2 and 3 to return future financial benefits back to WBC and its partners.

### *ICT solution*

Initially, all 3 councils will retain their own IT systems but also have access to Wokingham Borough Council systems. As addressed above, in the future the aim would be to integrate systems to allow efficiencies to be realised.

### *Termination*

The agreement will run from June/July 2016 to June/July 2021. In the event of termination of the shared service after Summer 2021, staff would be TUPE transferred back to their previous employee organisation to fulfil the function, or in the event that TUPE is not possible, the costs of any exit by one or more partner to the shared service, including redundancies, be borne by the exiting parties.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the expansion of the Shared Building Control Service to include WBDC will have limited direct financial savings for the Council in the first stage. However, it will not result in additional cost to WBC as additional costs from the shared service will be reimbursed from the trading account. Expanding the service will enable the service to realise efficiencies and become more competitive (stage 2) after which the Council and its partners will consider opportunities for alternative models of service delivery. An alternative would allow the service to generate profit for the Council unlike the current ring fenced budget.

In summary, the main financial benefits are an indirect saving of not having to 'buy-in' the statutory service at increased cost, and the longer term opportunity for profit generation.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it cost/(save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (2015/16)	(£30k) General Fund saving already achieved from the existing 2 way service	Yes	Revenue
Year 1 (2016/17)	£0k General Fund impact	Yes	Revenue

Year 2 (2017/18)	£2k General Fund impact	Yes	Revenue
Year 3 (2018/19)	(£2k) General Fund impact	Yes	Revenue

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
None

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
Improved working with other regulatory services

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Appendix - Financials

<b>Contact</b> Clare Lawrence/Kien Lac	<b>Service</b> Development Management and Regulatory Services/ Commercial Services
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<b>Date</b> 18 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 1.5

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**Building Regulations – Fee earning activities**

- Passing/rejecting plans deposited in accordance with the Building Act
- Site inspections of building works in connection with plans deposited in accordance with Building Regulations
- Site inspections of building works for which a Building Notice has been submitted
- Considering of an application for regularisation certificate (retrospective)
- Pre- Building Regulation application advice
- Demolition notices

**Non Chargeable Activities**

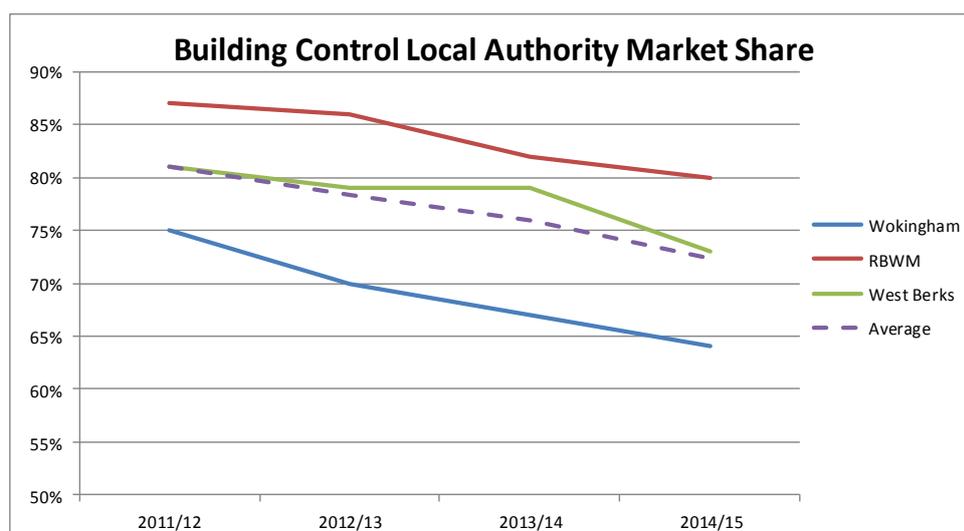
- Liaison with the fire authority and other statutory agencies
- Enforcement of building acts and policies
- Unauthorised works inspections
- Guidance and advice to the public and customers about building regulation matters (first hour)
- Functions associated with improving facilities for disabled people and to improve health and safety
- Dealing with dangerous Buildings

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## **Shared Building Control Services**

### **Background**

Local Government building control services compete with the private sector. Since the market has been opened up to private firms (known as Approved Inspectors), local authorities have lost business. Recent market share figures reflect this ongoing trend:



Compounding this is that the private sector Approved Inspectors are able to cherry pick the high value work for the larger building developments, meaning that the business lost is generally the premium work for which the highest fees can be charged. Local authorities, who have a statutory duty to offer a Building Control service as a 'provider of last resort', are increasingly left with the high volume but low value activity.

The consequence is that local authority building control services across the country have found it very difficult compete and to attract and retain staff for a number of years.

### **What has already been done?**

In April 2015, Wokingham Borough Council entered into a shared building control service with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) as a first move towards addressing this situation. WBC hosts this service and all previous RBWM staff were TUPE transferred to WBC, with the whole of the shared service now operating from WBC Shute End.

The key drivers for the current shared service arrangement the expansion of this now proposed are:

- Survival and viability of relatively small Local Authority Building Control Services in the face of competition from the private sector
- Safeguarding against having to 'buy-in' a service at increased cost to WBC

- Economies and efficiencies from combining to form a larger operation
- Service resilience and adaptability to respond to market conditions and customer demands
- Dependability and consistency of service
- Improving the customer experience in meeting their needs
- Opportunities for commercial development and to generate additional business
- Opportunities to diversify the business through offering a greater number of non-statutory services to generate non-restricted fee income
- Encouraging innovation
- Broaden the skills base
- Encouraging career development and improve recruitment & retention

To date, the existing shared service has been successful in attracting permanent staff and has appointed a manager who is now in place. Operationally, the service has made many improvements and is working through its action plan to increase efficiency and generate more business. Furthermore, the existing shared service has enabled the Council to make a saving to the general fund of £30k through cost savings and efficiencies.

### **A Larger Shared Service Model**

To build on the foundations of 2-way shared service between WBC and RBWM, it was always seen that further growth would strengthen the competitive position of the service and advance the strategic and operational objectives identified.

The proposal for the larger 3-way shared service (and possible 4-way if RBC joins in due course) is a staged process as set out below:

#### ***Phase 1 – Combine Current Services***

Expand the existing 2 way shared service to a 3 way shared service to include WBDC. The WBDC service has been well managed and it is considered that integration of this with the current 2-way service can be achieved relatively easily..

#### ***Phase 2 – Improve Efficiency and Competitiveness***

Further work to look at ways of improving the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the service:

- Optimise the organisation structure to better match staffing resources with activity and generate some further savings.
- Creation of new specialist functions and roles,
- IT platform integration of all three authorities to increase productivity and offer a more consistent service to customers.
- Single site operation

By virtue of their statutory responsibility, the 'trading accounts' of local authority building control services are ring-fenced and the Council is unable to make a profit from the mainly statutory activities undertaken. However, efficiency improvements and more focused use of resources will open opportunities to grow the business to include activities outside of the 'ring fenced' statutory services. Profits from providing these non-

statutory building related services such as consultancy and advice can benefit authorities directly.

A possible further part of Phase 2 will be the joining of RBC into the shared service arrangement which would be considered by a future Executive meeting. While the service would benefit from being 4-way as opposed to a 3 way model, if RBC does not join in the future, this would not undermine the ability of the shared service to achieve the objectives set out above.

### ***Phase 3 – Maximise Potential***

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the shared service, the Council and its partners will consider opportunities for an alternative longer-term model for Building Control Services (Phase 3) which could include :-

- Spinning off the BC service into a separate vehicle to deliver services and to allow surpluses/profits to be distributed. Options include
  - Arms-length trading company
  - Social enterprise
  - Other suitable vehicles
- Offering services beyond the partner authorities where capacity is created from sharing expertise and resources.
- Expanding the shared service to include or to sell services to other authorities
- Developing a business to sell other services not currently provided by the service to generate profit,

An alternative model should enable any surpluses or profit to be realised and returned to the partners as dividends or distributions, including those which are currently ring-fenced. This could make a significant difference to the financial case for the project and would be subject to further Executive approval in due course.

### **Financial case**

The financial arrangement for local authority Building Control is unique in that it is the only statutory service within the Council that is exposed to open competition, whilst being restricted by the provision of the Local Government Act that prevents it from making a profit.

There are 2 sources of funding for the service:

- i. WBC General Fund – for non-chargeable activities that the Council has a statutory obligation to provide for which it cannot charge a fee, such as identifying unauthorised building work, enforcement & prosecutions, demolitions and dealing with dangerous buildings. This is therefore a real cost to the Council and any efficiencies in the shared service will help to reduce this cost, although as it only accounts for 15% of WBC activity (17% across the 3 authorities), any General Fund benefit will be relatively low.
- ii. Fee income – for chargeable services such as the passing of plans for building works and site inspections. This accounts for 85% of WBC's activity (83% in the 3-way) and is where the service competes with other Approved

Inspectors for business from residents and commercial customers. Fee income is expected reflect the true cost of providing the service for local authorities. Therefore, efficiencies generated from combining to form the shared service in Phase 1 and Phase 2 will create surpluses on the ring-fenced trading account which cannot be used for anything other than reinvestment in the building control service or to reduce fees to customers. The potential for the shared service partners to benefit from surpluses on the trading account will only be achievable if a viable alternative model can be implemented in Phase 3.

#### *Financial Impact on the General Fund*

Savings of approximately £30k have been realised this financial year (2015/16) from the 2-way shared service.

For the expanded 3 way shared service, it is expected that there will be very limited further savings to be achieved in phase 1 upon implementation. The position will essentially be cost neutral for the General Fund (being 17% of the shared service):

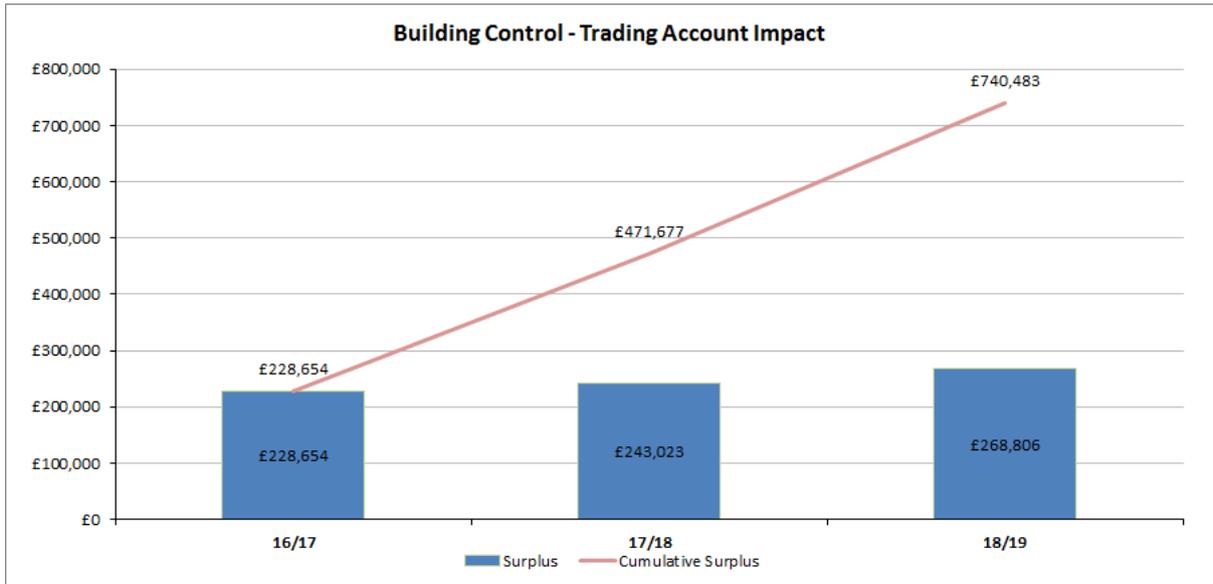
Cost/(Saving) £'000	General Fund Impact			
	WBC	RBWM	WBDC	TOTAL
Year 1 (2016/17)	0	0	0	0
Year 2 (2017/18)	2	2	2	6
Year 3 (2018/19)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(6)

WBC will however, as hosts, have protection against any reasonable increases in costs to run the shared service by being able to charge legitimate increases in WBC direct costs or overheads to the shared service.

In addition, the expected resource and effort that WBC as hosts would have to invest in leading the shared service through Phase 1 to 3 will be captured as project expenses of developing / investing in the shared service, and will be an allowable cost against the shared service trading account going forward. This ensures that WBC are not left in an adverse position, bearing the cost within its General Fund. The real benefit to the Council's financial position in Phase 1 is the development of the business to allow it to retain an in-house service at a reduced cost relative to having to 'buy- in' the service from an external provider.

#### *Financial Impact on the Trading Account*

It is projected that the Trading Account will have a surplus of £740k by the end of year 3, which the Shared Service will hold on behalf of all 3 authorities. As this is ring-fenced, it cannot be distributed to the authorities.



However, reinvestment of some of the surplus will enable the shared service to grow and move towards an alternative model of delivery more quickly and effectively, and this will provide the real opportunity for the service to benefit the Council and its partners financially in the medium to longer term. Also, this surplus will allow the Council to legitimately reimburse itself for the project costs associated with business growth and development and setting up any further delivery model.

*Note: all financial year figures above are calculated on a full 12 month year. If the shared service starts part way through the year, the impact will be reduced proportionately.*

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Extension of Health Visiting, Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) and School Nursing</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Stuart Rowbotham, Director of Health and Wellbeing Judith Ramsden, Director of Children’s Services
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Julian McGhee-Sumner, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Lead Member of Children Services

**OUTCOMES/BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Extension of the existing provision of Health Visiting, Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) and School nursing to enable a full re-modelling of the 0-19 service offering.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive accepts both a 6 and potential 12 month extension of the Health Visiting, School Nursing and FNP service, giving a new expiry date of either April or September 2017, this will allow a period of time to work on the integration plans jointly; Public Health, Children’s services and key stakeholders, both extension times have been requested to ensure that the integration is fully completed.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Proposed 6 and 12 month extension of Health Visiting, FNP and School Nursing summary of services below:

**All services have a role in delivering early health for children and families as recorded in the early help and innovation strategy, the key areas within the strategy are:**

- Help in the early years of a child or young person’s life (including pre-natal interventions);
- Anticipating where need may arise in priority groups, often by an understanding of wider family and community risks;
- Providing early response services at the right time to meet family’s needs and to keep them in control of resolving their issues and problems;
- Stepping in to prevent escalation of children, young people and families needing any sort of specialist service;
- When specialist intervention is needed, delivering permanent resolution in good time.

**The Health Visiting and FNP services are the foundations for good health and wellbeing, particularly for those most disadvantaged and aim to:**

1. Improve the health and wellbeing of children and reduce inequalities in outcomes as part of an integrated multi-agency approach to supporting and empowering children and families;
2. Ensure a strong focus on prevention, health promotion, early identification of needs, early intervention and clear packages of support;
3. Ensure delivery of the Health Care Professional HCP to all children and families, including fathers, starting in the antenatal period;
4. Identify and support those who need additional support and targeted interventions, for example, parents who need support with parenting and women suffering from perinatal mental health issues including postnatal depression in accordance with NICE guidance;
5. Promote secure attachment, positive parental and infant mental health and parenting skills using evidence based approaches;
6. Promote breastfeeding, healthy nutrition and healthy lifestyles;
7. Promote 'school readiness' including working in partnership to improve the speech, communication and language of babies and toddlers and working with parents to improve the home learning environment;
8. Work with families to support behaviour change leading to positive lifestyle choices;
9. Safeguard babies and children through safe and effective practice in safeguarding and child protection. This will include working with other agencies to intervene effectively in families where there are concerns about parenting capacity, adult mental health, alcohol or substance misuse, domestic abuse or child abuse;
10. Develop on-going relationships and support as part of a multi-agency team where the family has complex needs e.g. a child with special educational needs, disability or safeguarding concerns;
11. Deliver services in partnership with local authorities to support 'troubled families' and be 'lead professional' or 'key worker' for a child or family where and when appropriate. Link with work undertaken by FNP nurses to ensure seamless delivery of care to families;
12. Improve the Health and Wellbeing journey for children, families and local communities through expanding and strengthening Health Visiting Services to respond to need at individual, community and population level.

**School Nursing, aims to:**

1. Provide a core offer of **Universal provision** to all school age children attending state-funded schools, including Free Schools and Academies.
2. Safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and to implement child protection measures when required.
3. Deliver a targeted service in line with evidence based needs at population and individual level to at-risk and vulnerable groups of children, young people and their families known to the service and registered with a Berkshire school.
4. To provide a skilled and experienced team of staff that work flexibly across a range of settings and localities to ensure that parents and schools have access to the services and support they need.
5. To support a range of public health initiatives to meet identified priority health needs and populations as decided jointly with the local authority though local

monitoring and performance management arrangements (see performance monitoring framework).

6. Provide a flexible, accessible and proactive service, in and out of school hours and terms, using technology and other approaches to ensure the service is readily accessible directly by the children and young people who attend the Berkshire schools and their families.
7. Record information and data as agreed with the commissioner to monitor progress, outcomes and improvements in the health of school age children and young people.
8. Ensure that children with identified health needs have continuity of support throughout their school career and where appropriate are communicated to partner agencies (e.g. schools, colleges, social care).

## **Background**

The foundations for health and wellbeing are established in early childhood. Ensuring every child has the best start in life is one of PHE's seven key priorities.

The 0-19 Healthy Child Programme is fundamental to improving the health and wellbeing of Wokingham's children, young people and their families and offers the opportunity to integrate services to meet their needs. The 0-5 element is led by health visiting services and the 5-19 element is led by school nursing services. These professional teams provide the vast majority of Healthy Child Programme services.

The universal reach of the Healthy Child Programme provides an invaluable opportunity from early in a child's life to identify families that are in need of additional support and children who are at risk of poor outcomes.

Commissioning responsibility for the 5-19 element of the Healthy Child Programme has been the responsibility of Wokingham Borough Council since 2013. Commissioning responsibility for the 0-15 element of the programme transferred to the authority on 1st October 2015. Funding for the whole 0-19 programme is now part of the Public Health Grant allocation.

## **Analysis of Issues**

The current public health contract with BHFT for Health Visiting, School Nursing and FNP is due to expire on 30th September 2016.

These contracts are currently managed on behalf of the Council by the Berkshire Public Health shared team at Bracknell Forest Borough Council in line with the joint agreement.

A Berkshire-wide 'Health Visitor and Family Nurse Partnership Transition Board' was established to ensure a smooth and safe transition of these services to local authorities. The board, led by Public Health shared team, included representation from each local authority, the NHS, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT, the provider) and other stakeholders worked in collaboration to agree service specifications, financial and reporting requirements under six individual contracts with each local authority. This was successfully completed and Wokingham Borough's Public Health service is now responsible for all public health services for children and young people from 0 to 19 years of age.

Discussions have been held with the other local authorities through the Transition Board and the decision was taken that going forward each authority will procure a new service.

Wokingham Borough Council are now free to fully review delivery of services for children and young people and gives us the opportunity to integrate children's and young people's health services in line with the Early Help Strategy with wider Children's Service and develop a more efficient, integrated and user-focussed service that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council.

In order to procure the new service we will be required to extend the existing contract by both a 6 and potential 12 month period, this will allow a longer period of time to fulfil the

longer terms vision of an Integrated 0-19yrs service, involving the Children's and Young people partnership and Children Services.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£915,499.98 for 6 months Health Visiting and FNP  £165,075 for 6 months school nursing	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£915,499.98 for 6 months Health Visiting and FNP  £165,075 for 6 months school nursing	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	0	0

#### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

The costs associated with the extension are being met from existing ring fenced budgets within Public Health and have been included into next year's budget as previously planned.

#### **Cross-Council Implications**

None specific to the extension.

#### **List of Background Papers**

None

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<b>Date</b> 16 March 2016	<b>Version No.</b> 002

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Model for Community Asset Transfers</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 31 March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Graham Ebers, Director Finance and Resources
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Philip Mirfin Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities

<b>OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY</b>
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The customers and users of community assets will be able to deal with use related matters at a local level through Town or Parish Councils or Community Groups.
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<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That the Executive approves the Heads of Terms to be used under the Model for Community Asset Transfer, as developed by the Member Task and Finish Group.
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<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>
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A report was approve by Executive on the 28 <sup>th</sup> January setting out the proposals for developing a process to fast track Community Asset Transfers by establishing a model of terms and conditions to be developed by the Task and Finish Group.
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The terms and conditions now agreed by this Group are attached as Appendix 1
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Approval of these terms will ensure that best endeavours are applied to:-
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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- deliver a more effective use of community assets in the future and in particular to avoid arrangements that do not generate an optimal position for the Council.</li> <li>- supports the Efficient Government agenda in streamlining the processing of applications, approvals and service delivery for community asset transfers.</li> <li>- provides an extension of delegated powers that will save Member and officer time in respect of processing applications and will establish a consistent approach to the transfer of properties. (The Council's Constitution currently states that leases over 14 years require approval from the Executive. A further report to the Constitution Review Working Group seeking delegated powers for the grant of Community Asset Transfer leases for up to 30 years, will follow).</li> </ul> |
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## **Background as set out in the 28<sup>th</sup> January report.**

### **What is Community Asset Transfer?**

Community Asset Transfer is an established mechanism used to enable community ownership and management of publicly owned land and buildings. The General Disposal Consent allows a range of public bodies to transfer the ownership and management of land and buildings they own to local communities at, where appropriate, 'less than best consideration' – i.e. at less than full market value. This may be through the sale or long-term leasing of land or premises.

Although its evolution pre-dates current Government policy, the potential opportunities and benefits of Community Asset Transfer have been brought back into focus by more recent national policy developments encouraging community self-help and ownership through initiatives such as the Big Society and a number of powers introduced via the Localism Act 2011.

### **What is WBC's current position?**

Central government is encouraging local authorities to reduce the number of assets in its control and to empower communities to deliver services at a local level. These goals can be addressed by transferring assets from Borough Council control to local Town Council and Parish Council (TC/PC) or Community Groups control in accordance with Borough requirements through the terms of the lease. This has the advantage of devolving powers to attract funding, utilising Section 106 funds and support at a local level and delivering revenue savings for WBC, with a potential for shared profit for both parties.

In this connection, it is proposed that consideration be given on a case by case basis to commuted sums under S106 agreements being transferred with the asset to the relevant Town or Parish Council or Community Groups.

WBC currently does not have a policy regarding this method of transfer, but a number of recent initiatives and some emerging requests suggest that we should explore whether we develop a policy around Asset Transfer. This policy would need to satisfy our ambition to both generate income and reduce revenue costs to achieve value for money, but also to enable us to serve broader community outcomes.

Whilst it is incumbent on the Council to secure best value for the community there have previously been examples of Towns, Parishes and community groups making requests to the Council to lease assets where agreements have failed to maximise the use of the asset and maximum benefits have therefore not been delivered. This has involved the Council in more financial support/exposure than had originally been anticipated. The proposed Model for Community Asset Transfers through lease agreements for up to 30 years, is designed to deliver a more effective use of community assets in the future and in particular to avoid the mistakes of the past.

As a proposed new policy and procedure, this requires Executive approval.

Currently:

- Leases up to 14 years can be approved by the Service Manager, Strategic Property in consultation with Director of Finance & Resources.
- All leases over 14 years require approval from the Executive.

This report proposes that powers be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities, and the Executive Member of the current service to approve Community Asset Transfers under leases of 14-30 years that comply with this recommended policy framework.

Proposals for community lease disposals/projects will need a robust business case or agreed proposal based on a pro forma produced by Borough Council officers and backed by feasibility studies and option appraisals. All bids will be evaluated to establish that overall the best community and commercial value is being achieved. This information will also be required to support any capital or revenue bid if the Council is making a financial contribution. Tenancies at Will pending a formal lease will no longer be granted in order to protect the Council's interest and occupation will not be permitted prior to a formal lease being completed.

Lease disposals at nil or less than market value under the social wellbeing powers of Circular 06/03 should be the exception. In these circumstances the loss of value must be fully justified by identified and tangible benefits to the Council in bringing forward a specific priority.

If there are competing groups seeking to occupy the Council's assets, a tender process may be required and preference will be given to the proposal that offers the best value for Wokingham Borough Council.

### **Where do we want to go?**

Where mutually beneficial, the business case for making this recommendation is that incremental savings will be achieved by the Council from the reduced cost of providing community beneficial facilities with the potential opportunity of receiving income on a profit sharing basis in the future. Moreover, further savings in the Council's staff resources could be made from reduced day to day management requirements.

Much of this runs in parallel with discussions concerning the relationship between the Borough and the Town and Parish Councils and how we can improve joint working in the future to provide community facilities and services. Equally, we will want to debate the advantages and disadvantages of transferring assets to community groups. The Community Asset Transfer Model facilitates such transfers without detriment to either party.

### **Policy Framework as set out in the 28<sup>th</sup> January report.**

	The Policy Framework under which the model will operate is proposed as;
1	Safeguarding of the Council's financial interest by securing the best financial

	return.
2	Seek best use of Council owned assets and to ensure services and community value is delivered by the local community for the benefit of the community
3	To support third party public sector bodies in taking over the responsibility of assets where this is in the best interests of the Borough Council.

The recommended process for delivering this objective includes:-

- 1) Completion of Area Reviews, consultation with Service Heads and consideration of findings by the Asset Review Programme Board.
- 2) Consult with Ward Councillors and Lead Members and publicise to all other Members via the Political Assistant Officers. If any Member has concern regarding the action it will be reviewed by The Executive.
- 3) Communication with Towns and Parishes and then other public sector bodies to seek expressions of interest. If property is already occupied by a viable Community Group, then they will be approached first.
- 4) Review expressed interest.
- 5) Public bodies or Community organisations to create a business case (based on a pro forma produced by Borough officers) and draft terms to be agreed through negotiation with the third party using the Asset Transfer Model as a starting place.
- 6) If draft terms are acceptable and agreed, proceed and finalise by way of a legal agreement.

### **Analysis of Issues**

The options are:-

- 1 - To do nothing and continue to process each application on an individual basis without consistency or policy or procedures in place.
- 2 – To refuse all applications and retain the assets within WBC control at the risk of failing to comply with government guidance and appeals by community bidders.
- 3 – To adopt a model for community asset transfer that provides a framework for Officers and community bidders.

### **Task and Finish Group**

The Group met on 9<sup>th</sup> December and 10<sup>th</sup> February and agreed a Model for Community Asset Transfer for Executive approval.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save) Income Generated	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See Other Financial Information	Depends on the assets that come forward for transfer	Depends on the assets that come forward for transfer
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See Other Financial Information	Depends on the assets that come forward for transfer	Depends on the assets that come forward for transfer

**Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

Currently budgets are provided for the management of community assets with little or no income being received to offset the costs. It is anticipated that use of a Model for Community Asset Transfer will reduce revenue costs.

The overall financial impact will depend upon the number and nature of Asset Transfers agreed.

**Cross-Council Implications**

Staff resources will no longer be required to deal with day to day management of the community assets that are transferred and this resource can be directed towards support in line with WBC policies and aspirations.

**List of Background Papers**

None

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Date 18 March 2016	Version No. 1

**Heads of Terms for Community Asset Transfers to be agreed under Delegated Powers**

1.	Property	Land, buildings and structures forming .....
2.	Term	Up to 30 years with effect from 1/4/..... NB A term of over 30 years will require Executive Approval
3.	Break Clause	Operable by ..... Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation after the 2nd and 5th years of the term. Thereafter, tenant only break by giving one year's notice with one exception as detailed below.  Break clause to be operable by WBC with 6 months' notice if it is found that the property is not being used for its intended purpose, the tenant's failure to fulfil their repairing obligations is having a detrimental effect on the asset or the management of the asset is having a negative impact on the Boroughs reputation.  Break clause operable by WBC on a minimum of 2 years notice in the event that the land or any part thereof is identified for an alternative use within adopted planning policy documents.
4.	Use	Community use and any additional social or commercial use to be subject to WBC consent as landlord which will not unreasonably be withheld.
5.	Rent and Income	The Tenant will either pay a market rent subject to RPI reviews at five yearly intervals or will pay the Borough up to 50% of the net profit rent generated from the asset.  Net profit to be income less all expenditure including an allowance of 1% of gross income for management fees.
6.	Hire Charges & Concessions	Room hire fees to be set by the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation  Existing concessions and contracts to be honoured, WBC use to continue on the current terms (subject to inflation) for the first two years of the lease and WBC to be granted 10% discounted booking rates for use of facilities for the duration of the lease.
7.	Phased Budget & Financial Support	WBC to offer a contribution based on 80% of the average WBC budget excluding repairs and maintenance on expenditure incurred over the previous 3 year period. (Budget

		<p>income and expenditure to be disclosed to the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation prior to transfer).</p> <p>This will reduce by 20% each year to enable the project to become established. All operational running costs including responsibilities for maintenance will be met by the lessee as will any short fall from the transferred budget.</p> <p>An agreed schedule of items will form part of this agreement, e.g., car park maintenance.</p> <p>Alternatively a reduced flat rate contribution from the Borough may be agreed subject to five yearly review.</p>
8.	Insurance, Repair & Maintenance and Condition Surveys	<p>Premises will be let to the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation on full repairing and insuring leases. Responsibility for insurance will remain with WBC and the cost of the premium recharged to the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation subject to Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation agreement that best value has been achieved.</p> <p>A copy of the current Condition Survey is to be attached to the lease.</p>
9.	Rates and Taxes	<p>Responsibility of Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation and subject to any concessions that WBC is able to provide.</p>
10.	Cleaning	<p>All aspects of cleaning to be the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation responsibility, including litter / waste bins/waste management.</p>
11.	Improvement and Investment	<p>Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation to provide detail of initial improvements and investment committed to generating increased use of the facilities and increased income.</p> <p>Improvements and investment to be delivered within 2 years of the date of the lease following agreement by WBC and Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation.</p> <p>WBC not to unreasonably withhold tenants request to improve or alter premises.</p>
12.	New signage	<p>Signage to direct all enquiries to new providers to be put in place within 3 months of the lease completion.</p>
13.	Public Notice and Communication	<p>The Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation to take responsibility to inform the local community of the changes to management arrangements and proposed changes to the use of the assets (which will be compliant with planning consents and lease user clauses).</p> <p>The Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation is also required to carry out periodic reviews (a minimum of every five years) to ensure activities remain in line with the community's needs and aspirations.</p>

		WBC to provide community engagement and consultation advice as required.
14.	Business Plan/Agreed Proposal	The Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation will be required to demonstrate affordability within 5 years, unsupported by WBC.
15.	WBC Service Contracts	The Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation will be given the opportunity to benefit from WBC contracts through a framework agreement for maintenance of parks and open spaces, waste etc. and the Condition Survey contracts. There is a possibility that the Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation may need to buy into existing contracts until those contracts are reviewed.
16.	Community Service	The Town/ Parish Council or other Community Organisation to support the Community Service Arrangements by participation in providing work for the Community Pay Back Scheme and/or Blue Sky (or future similar service provider) or similar schemes by employing these services where possible, provided that value for money is achieved in accordance with WBC guidance and approvals.