

# Public Document Pack

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2017 FROM 8.00 PM TO 9.40 PM

### **Members Present**

Councillors: Bob Pitts (Mayor), Rob Stanton (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Alistair Auty, Parry Bath, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Kate Haines, Mike Haines, Emma Hobbs, Tim Holton, Dianne King, John Jarvis, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, David Lee, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Ian Pittock, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, ImogenShepherd-Dubey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Chris Smith, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle, Simon Weeks, Oliver Whittle and Shahid Younis

### **75. WELCOME TO NEW COUNCILLOR**

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, newly elected Member for Emmbrook, to her first Council meeting.

### **76. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Keith Baker, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Philip Houldsworth, Barrie Patman, David Sleight, Wayne Smith and Paul Swaddle.

### **77. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Gary Cowan sought clarification regarding points of order which was provided by the Mayor. A member of the public sought to raise a point of order but this was ruled inadmissible as it was not in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained within the Council's Constitution.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17 November 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to the following amendments:

In Minute 62 'Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances Levels,' insertion of 'That Special Responsibility Allowances or Non Executive Member payments should be limited to one per Member, being the one with the highest value, to bring the Council into line with the industry standard;' between '2) that Recommendation (3)' and 'not be adopted;'

The Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 6 December 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### **78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Chris Smith declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 77 Auditor Appointment 2017/18 on the grounds that he was employed by KPMG, one of the five audit firms which the Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) could select from. He left the meeting during discussion of this item and did not vote on this item.

### **79. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

**80.1 John Russell asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question**

The Council is currently updating its Transport Plan. What is the 2016-17 budget spend on transport across the Borough and how much is being spent on the following elements : (a) Highway maintenance; (b) Traffic management of the existing road network, eg traffic lights, islands and speed controls; (d) Bus services; (e) Community transport and (f) Responsive transport.

**Answer:**

The answer is as follows:

Revenue

- £1.4million on highway maintenance, that is reactive road and footway repairs including patching and potholes;
- £480,000 on traffic management of the existing road network that includes minor traffic schemes, signing and lining, Traffic Regulation Orders, road safety activities, traffic signal maintenance, traffic surveys and data collection;
- £734,000 on bus services; and
- £98,000 on community transport and responsive transport.

On the capital side there are numerous highway and transport capital projects and initiatives and these are all listed in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Of the capital sums allocated to highways and transport there is £2.28million per annum allocated to "Carriageway Structural Maintenance" which includes the annual road resurfacing programme, where the Borough's roads are assessed to identify those most in need of treatment, including their structural condition and usage.

**Supplementary Question:**

Would the Council please make this information available to the wider public by including it on your website in order to present a more complete picture of the highways and transport expenditure across the Borough, information on an element not covered by my original question; namely new roadworks. If so could you also include on the website, details of the cost and length of new roadworks over the same period?

**Supplementary Answer:**

We will be making notes of those and we will discuss this obviously with the relevant Officers and with the finance people and the web people, and find out how much of that can be provided and how.

**80.2 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:**

**Question**

Could the Executive Member for Finance tell me what Capital investments the Council will be making in Earley as part of the 2017/18 budget?

**Answer**

The schemes included in the Budget, specific to only the area of Earley are: the expansion of Loddon Primary School £2.4m over the next 2 years and the proposed expansion of Aldryngton Primary at £4.8m over the next 2 years.

However, there are a number of other programmes in the capital vision which though Borough wide involves additional investment in Earley. Amongst these are:

- Schools urgent maintenance
- School kitchens maintenance
- Schools LED enhancement (that is lighting)
- Special Education Needs
- Enhancing provision for children and young people with disabilities
- Highway drainage schemes
- Street lighting column structural testing
- Highway infrastructure flood alleviation schemes
- Highways carriageways structural maintenance
- Highways footway structural maintenance
- LED streetlight replacement programme
- Traffic signal upgrade programme
- Wokingham Borough wide cycle network
- Sports provision across the Borough
- Waste schemes and
- Library service

I would also like to stress that even where capital investment is made outside the area of Earley, it is also of benefit to the residents of Earley, as they can utilise the roads and community facilities and other facilities beyond their immediate boundaries.

**Supplementary Question:**

Based on this would you agree that this Council is supporting Earley in a fair manner?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I believe that we spend money in Earley in a financially responsible manner.

**81. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions submitted.

**82. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that that week he had attended the Poppy Awards Presentation and on behalf of the Council, had received a certificate of appreciation.

**83. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN ASSOCIATED REPORTS**

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

- the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2017/20 as set out on Agenda pages 53 to 66;
- the Capital Programme and Strategy 2017/20 as set out on Agenda pages 67 to 84;
- the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18 as set out on Agenda pages 85 to 128;
- the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/20 – Revenue Budget Submission on Agenda pages 129 to 134, subject to the tabled amended statutory resolution 2017/18, Updated Parish Precepts 2017/18 and Updated Council Tax by Band and Parish 2017/18.

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

Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner, Deputy Leader of the Council, made a statement on the 2017/18 budget (attached as Appendix A to the Minutes).

Councillor Lindsay Ferris, the Leader of the Opposition, then made his Budget statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group (attached as Appendix B to the Minutes).

Following the two speeches, Members discussed the various aspects of the proposed budget in detail.

### **83.1 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2017/20**

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 53 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That the following be approved:

- 1) The Housing Revenue Account budget;
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be reduced by 1% effective from April 2017 in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015;
- 3) Garage rents be increased by 1.9% effective from April 2017 in line with council fees and charges;
- 4) Shared Equity Rents will be increased by 2% based on September RPI, effective from April 2017;
- 5) Tenant Service Charges are set in line with estimated costs;
- 6) The Housing Major Repairs (capital) programme for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix C;
- 7) Sheltered room guest charges increase from £8.20 per night to £9.00 effective from April 2017.

### **83.2 Capital Programme and Strategy 2017/20**

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2017/20, as set out on Agenda pages 67 to 83, be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That :

- 1) the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2017/20, as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- 2) the draft vision for capital investment over the next 10 years, as set out in Appendix B to the report be noted; and
- 3) the developer contribution S106 and CIL as set out in Appendix C to the report be

noted, noting that the S106 and CIL values are estimated and approval is sought up to the scheme budget.

### 83.3 Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 85 be approved.

Councillor Lindsay Ferris requested that it be recorded that the Liberal Democrat Group had voted against the proposals contained in the report.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That the following be approved:

- 1) Capital Prudential indicators, 2017/18;
- 2) Borrowing Strategy 2017/18;
- 3) Annual Investment Strategy 2017/18;
- 4) Flexible use of capital receipts strategy;
- 5) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy; and
- 6) Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity 2017/18.

### 83.4 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2017/20

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2017/20, including the Revenue Budget Submission for 2017/18 and the Statutory Resolution setting out the 2017/18 Council Tax levels, as amended and tabled at the meeting, be approved.

In line with the requirements of the 'The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014', a recorded vote was taken.

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
Mark Ashwell	Prue Bray	Ian Pittock
Alistair Auty	Gary Cowan	Bob Pitts
Parry Bath	Andy Croy	Rob Stanton
Laura Blumenthal	Lindsay Ferris	
Chris Bowring	Clive Jones	
David Chopping	Beth Rowland	
UllaKarin Clark	Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	
Richard Dolinski	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	
Michael Firmager		
Kate Haines		
Mike Haines		
Emma Hobbs		
Tim Holton		
John Jarvis		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		

Dianne King		
David Lee		
Abdul Loyes		
Charles Margetts		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Chris Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Oliver Whittle		
Shahid Younis		

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2017/20 including the revenue budget submission for 2017/18 be approved;
- 2) the Statutory Resolution that sets out the 2017/18 council tax levels. (Appendix A), as tabled at the meeting, be approved and that it be noted that that at its meeting on 26th January 2017 Special Council Executive calculated the following amounts for the year 2017/18 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012:-
  - (a) 67,433.40 being the amount calculated by the Council, (Item T) in accordance with regulation 31B of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012), as its council tax base for the year

(b) Part of the Council's area.

Arborfield and Newland	1,263.4
Barkham	1,526.9
Charvil	1,409.3
Earley	11,755.9
Finchampstead	5,725.0
Remenham	321.9
Ruscombe	501.5
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,053.1
Shinfield	5,144.0
Sonning	808.3
Swallowfield	1,006.0
Twyford	2,994.5

Wargrave	2,098.3
Winnersh	3,897.1
Wokingham	14,685.2
Wokingham Without	3,109.9
Woodley	10,133.1
	67,433.4

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

2. Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding Parish precepts) is £91,660,197. This includes £4,300,902 in respect of the Adult Social Care precept for 2017/18; this is based on a 3% increase on the 2016/17 council tax level and a 2% increase on the 2015/16 council tax level.
3. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2016/2017 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011. However, the precepts shown below for the parishes of Arborfield, Earley and Winnersh are provisional and are subject to approval at the parishes annual precept meetings between February 14th and February 22nd 2017. The precept shown below for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is also provisional subject to approval at a meeting of the Fire Authority on 27 February 2017:-
  - (a) £300,610,752 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils
  - (b) (£205,018,692) being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act
  - (c) £95,592,061 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year (Item R)
  - (d) £1,417.58 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by 1(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the 'basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
  - (e) £3,931,863 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the table below).

	2017/18			2016/17			Council
	TAX	PARISH	PARISH	TAX	PARISH	PARISH	Tax
	BASE	PRECEPT	BAND D	BASE	PRECEPT	BAND D	Increase
		£	£		£	£	%
Arborfield and Newland	1,263.4	95,150	75.31	1,260.0	87,866	69.73	8.00
Barkham	1,526.9	46,342	30.35	1,440.6	42,342	29.39	3.26

Charvil	1,409.3	40,715	28.89	1,399.6	39,655	28.33	1.97
Earley	11,755.9	812,780	69.14	11,704.0	778,784	66.54	3.91
Finchampstead	5,725.0	126,944	22.17	5,665.3	123,848	21.86	1.41
Remenham	321.9	23,150	71.92	317.5	22,250	70.08	2.63
Ruscombe	501.5	10,266	20.47	497.9	10,266	20.62	(0.72)
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,053.1	30,000	28.49	1,044.2	25,035	23.98	18.83
Shinfield	5,144.0	341,047	66.30	4,780.7	316,950	66.30	0.00
Sonning	808.3	35,568	44.00	806.9	34,700	43.00	2.32
Swallowfield	1,006.0	19,308	19.19	995.1	19,108	19.20	(0.06)
Twyford	2,994.5	77,921	26.02	2,961.5	67,798	22.89	13.66
Wargrave	2,098.3	168,345	80.23	2,085.0	161,465	77.44	3.60
Winnersh	3,897.1	110,521	28.36	3,801.3	107,801	28.36	0.00
Wokingham	14,685.2	766,961	52.23	14,294.6	710,990	49.74	5.01
Wokingham Without	3,109.9	145,543	46.80	3,107.1	145,415	46.80	(0.00)
Woodley	10,133.1	1,081,303	106.71	9,840.1	1,039,607	105.65	1.00
<b>Total / Average</b>	<b>67,433.4</b>	<b>3,931,863</b>	<b>58.31</b>	<b>66,001.4</b>	<b>3,733,880</b>	<b>56.57</b>	<b>3.07</b>

- (f) £1,359.27 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relates.

4. That it be noted that for the year 2017/2018 the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley has issued a precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is due to approve its precept on 27th February 2017, and their provisional precept has been used based on the report going to their management committee on 14th February 2017.
5. That the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2017/2018 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

### **SUMMARY OF COUNCIL TAX 2017/2018**

#### **Valuation Bands**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
Wokingham Borough Council	906.18	1,057.21	1,208.24	1,359.27	1,661.33	1,963.39	2,265.45	2,718.54
Thames Valley Police Authority	113.52	132.44	151.36	170.28	208.12	245.96	283.80	340.56
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	41.66	48.60	55.55	62.49	76.38	90.26	104.15	124.98

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



Arborfield and Newland	956.39	1,115.78	1,275.18	1,434.58	1,753.38	2,072.17	2,390.97	2,869.16
Barkham	926.41	1,080.82	1,235.22	1,389.62	1,698.42	2,007.23	2,316.03	2,779.24
Charvil	925.44	1,079.68	1,233.92	1,388.16	1,696.64	2,005.12	2,313.60	2,776.32
Earley	952.27	1,110.99	1,269.70	1,428.41	1,745.83	2,063.26	2,380.68	2,856.82
Finchampstead	920.96	1,074.45	1,227.95	1,381.44	1,688.43	1,995.41	2,302.40	2,762.88
Remenham	954.13	1,113.15	1,272.17	1,431.19	1,749.23	2,067.27	2,385.32	2,862.38
Ruscombe	919.83	1,073.13	1,226.44	1,379.74	1,686.35	1,992.96	2,299.57	2,759.48
St. Nicholas Hurst	925.17	1,079.37	1,233.56	1,387.76	1,696.15	2,004.54	2,312.93	2,775.52
Shinfield	950.38	1,108.78	1,267.17	1,425.57	1,742.36	2,059.16	2,375.95	2,851.14
Sonning	935.51	1,091.43	1,247.35	1,403.27	1,715.11	2,026.95	2,338.78	2,806.54
Swallowfield	918.97	1,072.14	1,225.30	1,378.46	1,684.78	1,991.11	2,297.43	2,756.92
Twyford	923.53	1,077.45	1,231.37	1,385.29	1,693.13	2,000.97	2,308.82	2,770.58
Wargrave	959.67	1,119.61	1,279.56	1,439.50	1,759.39	2,079.28	2,399.17	2,879.00
Winnersh	925.09	1,079.27	1,233.45	1,387.63	1,695.99	2,004.35	2,312.72	2,775.26
Wokingham	941.00	1,097.83	1,254.67	1,411.50	1,725.17	2,038.83	2,352.50	2,823.00
Wokingham Without	937.38	1,093.61	1,249.84	1,406.07	1,718.53	2,030.99	2,343.45	2,812.14
Woodley	977.32	1,140.21	1,303.09	1,465.98	1,791.75	2,117.53	2,443.30	2,931.96

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

Arborfield and Newland	1,111.57	1,296.82	1,482.09	1,667.35	2,037.88	2,408.39	2,778.92	3,334.70
Barkham	1,081.59	1,261.86	1,442.13	1,622.39	1,982.92	2,343.45	2,703.98	3,244.78
Charvil	1,080.62	1,260.72	1,440.83	1,620.93	1,981.14	2,341.34	2,701.55	3,241.86
Earley	1,107.45	1,292.03	1,476.61	1,661.18	2,030.33	2,399.48	2,768.63	3,322.36
Finchampstead	1,076.14	1,255.49	1,434.86	1,614.21	1,972.93	2,331.63	2,690.35	3,228.42
Remenham	1,109.31	1,294.19	1,479.08	1,663.96	2,033.73	2,403.49	2,773.27	3,327.92
Ruscombe	1,075.01	1,254.17	1,433.35	1,612.51	1,970.85	2,329.18	2,687.52	3,225.02
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,080.35	1,260.41	1,440.47	1,620.53	1,980.65	2,340.76	2,700.88	3,241.06
Shinfield	1,105.56	1,289.82	1,474.08	1,658.34	2,026.86	2,395.38	2,763.90	3,316.68
Sonning	1,090.69	1,272.47	1,454.26	1,636.04	1,999.61	2,363.17	2,726.73	3,272.08
Swallowfield	1,074.15	1,253.18	1,432.21	1,611.23	1,969.28	2,327.33	2,685.38	3,222.46
Twyford	1,078.71	1,258.49	1,438.28	1,618.06	1,977.63	2,337.19	2,696.77	3,236.12
Wargrave	1,114.85	1,300.65	1,486.47	1,672.27	2,043.89	2,415.50	2,787.12	3,344.54
Winnersh	1,080.27	1,260.31	1,440.36	1,620.40	1,980.49	2,340.57	2,700.67	3,240.80
Wokingham	1,096.18	1,278.87	1,461.58	1,644.27	2,009.67	2,375.05	2,740.45	3,288.54
Wokingham Without	1,092.56	1,274.65	1,456.75	1,638.84	2,003.03	2,367.21	2,731.40	3,277.68
Woodley	1,132.50	1,321.25	1,510.00	1,698.75	2,076.25	2,453.75	2,831.25	3,397.50

- 3) that in the event that there are any changes to the provisional precept of the Fire Authority, arising from their precept setting meeting being held on 27 February, the Director of Corporate Services is delegated authority to enact all relevant changes to the MTFP, Statutory Resolution and council tax levels.

### **84. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2016-17**

The Council considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2016/17 as set out on Agenda pages 135 to 160. The Treasury Management Mid Year Report 2016/17 detailed the treasury management operations during the first six months of 2016/17.

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 135 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the mid-year Treasury Management report for 2016/17 be approved;
- 2) the actual 2016/17 prudential indicators within the report be noted;

**85. AUDITOR APPOINTMENT 2018/19**

The Council considered a report regarding the appointment of the Council's external auditor as set out on Agenda pages 161 to 164.

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations within the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) it be noted that this report was presented to the Audit committee on 5 December 2016;
- 2) Option A, as recommended by the Audit Committee and as set out in the report, i.e. opting into the Public Sector Audit Appointment process be approved.

**86. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Council considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 165 to 167, relating to the outcome of a Community Governance Review.

It was proposed by Councillor Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Councillor Alison Swaddle that the recommendations within the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That the following be agreed:

- 1) that no changes be implemented following the Community Governance Review (CGR) that was initiated in February 2016;
- 2) that the matters considered by the review should be reconsidered by a new CGR at a later date. It is recommended that this is after formal planning applications have been submitted for that part of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) that is currently within the Wokingham Without Parish.

**87. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Council considered a report regarding proposed changes to the Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group, as set out on Agenda pages 169 to 174.

It was proposed by Councillor Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Councillor Prue Bray that the recommendations within the report be approved.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the following changes to the Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group be agreed:

- a) that Appendix A – Process for Appointing Independent Remuneration Panel Members be amended as follows:  
*“1. Advert placed on the website etc and in the local newspaper if appropriate.”*
  - b) that Rule 4.4.3.2d)iii) be amended as follows:  
*“To review, revise as necessary and recommend adoption of the Risk Management Policy and Strategy to Executive when changes occur.”*
  - c) that Rule 8.2.1 be amended as follows:  
***“8.2.1 Meetings of the Planning Committee***  
*The Planning Committee shall meet as scheduled in the Timetable of Meetings agreed by Council.”*
- 2) the Terms of Reference of the Constitution Review Working Group be noted.

#### **88. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2017/18**

The Council considered the proposed Timetable of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year as set out on Agenda page 175.

It was proposed by Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the 2017/18 Timetable of Meetings be approved.

Councillors Lindsay Ferris, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Ian Pittock commented that consideration should be given to holding a Council meeting in January to enable further opportunities for debate.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That the Timetable of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year, as set out in the Agenda, be approved.

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## **Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner, Deputy Leader of the Council – Budget Speech**

Before I move on to talking about the Budget, I would also like to welcome Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey to her place. I am sure that she will bring her well-known dynamism and hard work to the Opposition benches. That's three welcomes in about the space of 25 minutes so you are doing pretty well.

First of all, I would like to explain why I am delivering the Budget speech this year, rather than the Leader of the Council. Unfortunately, Councillor Baker has to be away for a long-standing family commitment, and asked me if I could propose the Budget instead.

Looking at the newspapers the other week, Councillor Baker and I were amazed to see Reading Borough Council complaining about their supposed impoverished finances, telling the world that we here in Wokingham are spoilt by the Government, which was news to us. We were so astonished that Councillor Baker felt compelled to write to the paper to point out that in 2017/18, 76% of our core spending will come from residents' Council Tax. By 2019/20, the end of the four-year settlement, this will rise to 91%. By contrast, for 2017/18, for Reading it is 68% which will come from Council Tax. Put another way, the Government grant received per head will be £81.70 for Wokingham and £236.55 for Reading, nearly three times the Wokingham number and I did get them to check that and it is correct sadly.

The reduction in Council grants is not the only pressure on the Council's Budget. Positive changes brought in will have an impact on our finances too, as they must, including the National Living Wage, the Apprenticeship levy, council tenant rent reduction to name but three. These stand alongside growth in Children's Services and Health and Wellbeing at £2.9million. When you put this together, and net off any potential increased income from Council Tax, this leaves a savings target of £5.4million. With these facts in mind, my fellow Executive Members have worked hard to get to this final Budget. They have had to be extremely flexible as the financial landscape has changed. I would like to thank them and their officers for their supreme effort.

Because our finances have changed in such a way that the Council Tax now accounts for more than 81% of our spending power, it is vital that we continue to see a healthy income from the Council Tax. We are fortunate then that we have an extremely strong tax base, and that we have extremely efficient officers who collect a rate of 98.85%, one of the highest in the country.

Last year, the Council realised that making efficiencies in individual service areas, in isolation, was no longer viable. With an ambition to avoid any cuts in services, something quite radical had to be put in place in order to achieve savings. That is where the 21st Century Council project comes in. This is a fundamentally different method of operating, which will result in £2million of savings next year and £4million of savings in future years. It involves personalising our services – giving residents the choice of how they access those services, providing more online and self-service access, whilst ensuring that those who need to see a real person can do so.

We could have clung to the belief that the best way of doing things is the way we have always done them in the past. Instead, we have had to radically reshape the nature of what we do and how we do it. We on this side of the chamber know that it is our duty,

even in times of financial difficulty, to invest. By investing in our services, we are investing in our residents' future security and wellbeing.

This Budget includes a significant level of new capital investment in the Borough for 2017/18. A total of £152.8million shows our commitment to the provision of infrastructure and regeneration across the Borough. Much of this is funded by developer contributions or by borrowings that we will more than repay in future years, as is the case of the Town Centre Regeneration or our Housing Company development projects. All of our borrowing is undertaken at fixed interest rates, at a time when these rates are incredibly low so there is no danger of the Council being affected by a sudden rise in interest rates.

All communities across the Borough will benefit from this Capital Investment Strategy. They will get the benefit of improved Highways infrastructure, new school places in our high performing schools and our income generating development schemes. It shows the ambition the Council has for regenerating the Borough and our innovative ways of generating Capital funding.

This year saw the first major Wokingham Town Centre regeneration project get underway, and more companies have signed up for the leases. Whilst we appreciate that there are a number of people who had concerns whether this regeneration would take place, we are pleased to see that a number now actually see that things are beginning to move and progress is being made.

Our companies continue to grow and mature, setting a high standard for local authority companies across the country. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are joining Optalis, which will triple turnover: a great success that will save taxpayers' money whilst improving our social care. Wokingham Housing are well on the way to completing the work at Phoenix and Fosters. Meanwhile, Loddon Homes, a subsidiary of Wokingham Housing, has become the first Council company to be granted Registered Provider status as a 'for-profit' company.

Leisure is a key component in the Health and Wellbeing agenda. Therefore, it is important that this Council provides facilities that residents can use to keep them fit and well. We are approaching the magic figure of 100 hectares of new country parks (or SANGS as they are more commonly known) paid for by developer contributions. It is important to note that residents can get a lot of their daily exercise by simply walking for short periods of time which they will be able to do in these new parks. The Leisure contract for managing the Council's leisure centres is up for renewal soon and a capital budget has been put in place to upgrade or rebuild existing centres. This is a leisure spend, but it will have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents.

On schools, Councillor Haitham Taylor or Richard Dolinski who is sitting in for her today, is spearheading our campaign to fight for a fairer funding formula. She is ably supported by our local MPs and Members of the Executive. We could have put together petitions or held endless debates in this chamber but rather than read from the Corbyn Book of Protest as a Leadership, we are actually working to bring about real change.

Nonetheless, our Budget is providing £14million of significant increase in primary school capacity, and the first new secondary school for many years has been built, providing the long awaited school in the south.

Highways are also receiving a real boost, with £18million for new roads and enhancements to existing ones.

These are just a few highlights of the capital programme. The Medium Term Financial Plan contains the full details of investments, and I have no doubt that my Executive colleagues will speak on their individual portfolios shortly.

It is a time-honoured Conservative principle that public bodies should spend within their means, whilst protecting and expanding the services that people need most. It is a principle we have to stick to since the financial crash, and it is a principle that we continue to take into action with this Budget.

In holding the reins of power, we must sometimes do what is hard. So, I say to the Opposition: do not take the easy option of carping, making gimmicky gestures, or throwing out vague generalisations on how you would have done it better. Join together with us tonight and vote for this Budget. This is a balanced Budget that provides for our residents in a time when other councils are cutting services. If you are serious about being in power: be bold, as we are being bold; be strong, as we are being strong; and show leadership, as this Conservative administration continues to show leadership.

I commend this Budget to the Council.

## **Councillor Lindsay Ferris, Leader of the Opposition – Budget Speech**

For the fourth time, I as Leader of the Group am pleased to welcome Imogen here and I was going to ask Keith how his holiday was but, I think I have to say Keith where for art thou.

Within the Lib Dem team we discuss and agree policies openly so I shall focus on our major concern which is the size of the future debt contained within this Budget and the impact that this could have on the Council, whilst the team will concentrate on their portfolio areas, highlighting differences between our approach and yours.

I acknowledge that many of the ruling group are trying to do their best for our community in these difficult times but we in the Opposition Group feel you need to stand up against the Government more strongly than you have done. Often there is deference to them just because they are of the same party as you. If you are not prepared to say what is needed in so many areas, including local business rates, school funding, or the threat to take the local money away from our area, then we will, loudly, clearly and often. What we have from you at the moment is just not good enough and local people are beginning to realise it.

We fully support the proposal to increase council tax by 3% to cover the adult social care. I mentioned to Anthony recently that we would have done the same. However, in the medium to long term we do not believe that council tax is the correct means by which adult social care should be funded. We believe that there needs to be a national debate on this topic and one that is cross party. Norman Lamb MP has made a sensible suggestion as to how we could move forward and something like his proposal would be a better way to fund this important area. On the subject of the council tax of 1.94%, this is rather predictable. You mentioned the figure to the Chief Executive several months ago within plus or minus 0.01%. However, we believe that you have missed an important opportunity to provide a much needed boost for additional funding to our services. If you had gone for a referendum last summer or autumn to seek the views of the residents in Wokingham to raise council tax above the 2% ceiling, I believe you may well have got that approval. I do not think you will now though. I have been advised that the cost of such a referendum is around £150,000. You continually bleat on about having a poor deal here in Wokingham but when you had the opportunity to do something locally yourselves you fluffed it. Remember it is your Conservative government that is cutting our funding, no one else.

The Budget we have before us is the most risky, potentially dangerous Budget I have seen in all my time on Wokingham Borough Council. At the moment we are a medium risk, medium borrowing Council but with the implementation of all the projected borrowing we will soon become a high risk, high debt council, with little room for movement. My fire is therefore aimed at the Executive Member for Finance for presenting such a Budget. You expected it. I told you it was coming. You are currently planning to borrow a further £82million alone this coming year and by 2019/20 this will have grown to £191million. At that time the external debt is estimated to total £271million. Internal debt is to rise to £29million this coming year, further rising to £70million in 2019/20. This means you are using our investments to pay off debt. If the level of investments falls too low then the viability of the council and the ability to pay its way comes into doubt. This is a very dangerous concern.



Now if we look at the individual increasing borrowing areas, and this is on page 97 of the MTFP, what do we find? Forward funding; this is monies associated with SDL developments. It is used to pay for infrastructure including schools and roads etc. The Council has to provide this infrastructure irrespective of the rate of which the houses are built and sold. Any slow down in this market will leave the Council exposed to considerable levels of borrowing and increased costs. These additional costs will be supported by the General Fund, paid for by council tax. This increase is £47.3million over the next three years and I categorise this as high risk.

Wokingham Housing, next line, or it is one of the lines. This is money borrowed by Wokingham Housing Limited from Wokingham Borough Council and is used to pay for social housing and other related areas. If anything should happen to the viability of WHL then the Council would be exposed to increased debt. This increase is £31.23million over the next three years. I think this is a medium risk.

Town centre regeneration. This is money borrowed by the Council to pay for the regeneration of the town centre. I am not sure if you are aware that any additional costs, interest etc. is being ploughed back in to the regeneration project, making it more expensive and therefore less viable. It is very susceptible to market forces and changes to the economy. This increase is £74.22million over the next three years and I categorise it as very high risk. In fact when I had a discussion with our Director on this subject, the word risk was mentioned many times.

Invest to save. This is money borrowed by Wokingham Borough Council to pay for new facilities such as leisure centres. This increase is £26.06million over the next three years. Whilst this is more conventional council type borrowing, it is still not without risk.

Standard allocation. This is the one area I do not think is risky. This is money borrowed by the Council to allow the Council extra freedom to use on non-specified projects. This is just under £12million over the next three years and I consider it to be low risk.

Internal borrowing. The Council plans to use its current investments to largely cover this area. During 2017/18 the Council used £29million of its investments, leaving only £40million. Over the three year period internal borrowing will increase by £70million. The use of these investments is extremely risky as it has the effect of the Council selling its own silver. Once it is gone there is no fall back. If this area falls too low, and the £40million seems to be a low ceiling figure, then the actual work in the Council could be seriously impacted. This, I feel, is not safe use of funds. This is extremely high risk.

I am going to summarise now. Of the £260million plus to be borrowed over £191million can be categorised as extremely high risk or high risk. This covers about 75% of the total projected debt. Anthony, you seem to be gung ho with the Council finances. I will bet that you do not do the same with your own. Levels of projected debt I have mentioned are eye wateringly high. I can see no contingencies within the Budget to meet unexpected need. It seems to me no more than a 'let us hope for the best' or 'it will be alright on the night' approach. In addition you have also left an overspend of £800,000 from the 2016/17 financial year which shows up as a £700,000 spend requirement in 2017/18. For a long time now you have gone on about an overspend in budget dating back from 2002. Well, you have left an overspend that is at least three times the 2002 figure, so perhaps you would like to comment on that. No, this Budget shows almost a complete disregard for the residents and council tax payers of Wokingham Borough. I believe you are being foolhardy to propose such a risky Budget, particularly at a time of uncertainty. Without a

doubt interest rates are going to rise, inflation is growing and projected costs are more than likely to increase to a higher level than that currently forecast. I have yet to see the cost of a road, for example, go down. Often they double or even triple in cost. I see no contingencies in the Budget to cover this type of thing. If I had enough votes I would propose a vote of no confidence in you but that would depend on whether enough of your Group would stand up against you. Last year I joked about the Capital Programme being a load of tripe. This year it is too serious for me to make such comments. The Council is at yet another crossroads and it is difficult to see which way the finances will fall. In conclusion, all I will say is that this is a wasted opportunity Budget produced by an absent, waste of time Leader of the Council, laying waste to Council services. We shall be voting against this Budget because we feel the levels of borrowing, not necessarily the council tax rise or the adult social care element, I hasten to say, are far too high making it a very risky Budget indeed, if not unsafe.