

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.50 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Charlotte Haitham Taylor (Chairman), David Lee, Mark Ashwell, Keith Baker, Richard Dolinski, Norman Jorgensen, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Stuart Munro and Simon Weeks

Other Councillors Present

Prue Bray
Gary Cowan
Andy Croy
Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager
Clive Jones
Pauline Jorgensen
Malcolm Richards
Angus Ross
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

77. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

78. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

79. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Keith Baker declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 84 Bus Service 12 (Woodley and Earley) and 86 Woodley Car Parking Trial by virtue of the fact that he was the Leader of Woodley Town Council. Council Baker remained in the meeting during discussions but advised that he would not be voting on either matter.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 83 Shareholders' Report by virtue of the fact that his wife was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 91 Waste and Recycling Service by virtue of the fact that the company he worked for was part of the Veolia Group. Councillor Jorgensen left the meeting during discussions and did not vote on the matter.

Councillors David Lee and Stuart Munro declared personal interests in Agenda Item 83 Shareholders' Report by virtue of the fact that they were paid Non-Executive Directors of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillors Lee and Munro remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

80. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

80.1 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Could the Executive Member tell me what representations have been received from local residents, bodies and elected representatives regarding the reduction of the 19a/c bus services?

Answer

There were two types of representations those that simply submitted comments to the consultations and those that involved in-depth conversations with organisations. The number in the first category was 455. There was also a submission from a Whitegates Interest Group which provided 300 responses.

The second category has involved actual meetings in addition to the consultation to discuss issues and the way forward. Such meetings were held with two resident associations, namely Maiden Erlegh Residents' Association (MERA) and the North Earley Residents' Association known as ACER. The outcome of those meetings were captured in their submission. At the same time Earley Town Council and Woodley Town Council set up a joint working party which included representation from the resident associations. Each individual Town Councils' Planning Committees discussed the issues and provided the core comments to the joint working party who then combined them into an agreed joint submission. Officers were involved extensively in these discussions.

In terms of the elected Borough representatives the approach was taken to work through the Town Councils as a large number of them, in fact 11, were also members of the respective Town Councils. Finally there was a non-political public meeting held in Woodley for Earley and Woodley residents on a workshop basis where over a 100 people attended.

Supplementary Question

Based on what you have said, would you agree that this has been a well responded to and serious consultation?

Supplementary Answer

Absolutely with over 750 simple responses, and those organisations spent a lot of weeks on it, I think it has been one of the most successful consultations we have had.

80.2 Jack Beresford asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Now that the Executive is considering making the Woodley car parking trial permanent, would the Executive Member consider trialling a similar charging scheme in other parts of the Borough, particularly in Wokingham?

Answer

It has been interesting to see the impact of the Woodley trial as it just illustrates that there are always different ways to achieve an end objective. I think the timing is right to look into

the concept of duplicating this approach throughout all the remaining car parks in the Borough and it is something I will certainly be investigating.

Please note that due diligence will have to be carried out as there are many different interactions that need to be considered. This will include looking at all the remaining car parks not just in Wokingham Town.

Supplementary Question

As Broad Street remains closed, will the "Free After Three" initiative continue?

Supplementary Answer

I think, obviously, this Council needs to investigate and look at the impact of that delayed closure and we will be doing that in the coming weeks.

80.3 Samantha Williams had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. As Ms Williams was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided to her:

Question

The Council proposes to negotiate a new 7 year contract for waste collection and disposal. Will the contract be flexible enough to allow for changes and have a no fault break clause after 3 years in case either party is dissatisfied with the contract?

Answer

The original OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) Notice that was issued in November 2010 was for a seven year contract for the collection of waste and recycling only; with the option of a seven year extension. The Council's contract for disposal is vested within the 25 year re3 Contract. The original contract for collection started on 1st April 2012 and runs until 31st March 2019. The seven year extension, which was allowed for in that OJEU Notice, will run from 1st April 2019 to 31st May 2026.

The reason why the seven years suits this service is that there is significant investment by the contractor in new vehicles at the start which are generally written off over the seven years. However, the current Contractor has proved to be a good partner in delivering this service and has a proven track record of working with us in a flexible way in delivering better services to our residents and we expect this to continue. Therefore, in answer to your question we feel it is not appropriate to include a three year break clause but the Council's standard terms do provide protection in relation to a lack of performance.

80.4 Keith Malvern asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question

Question

Revenue Monitoring 2017/18 Report. In the section to do with People Services pressures are reported as arising from Home to School transport. Despite the efforts the Council has made to put schools in appropriate places why have these costs exceeded the estimates?

Answer

Home to school transport budgets are under pressure because of increasing demand for primary school places from children arriving in the Borough after the initial admissions round and because of the number of children with Special Educational Needs placed outside the Borough. In the long term new schools and re-focused Special Educational Needs support will lead to a reduction in this pressure. In the short term the Council is looking at measures such as independent travel training; which could provide an invaluable life skill as well as reducing budget pressures.

Supplementary Question

Are you confident that everyone who is entitled to home to school transport is aware of it and capable of receiving it?

Supplementary Answer

In terms of can I guarantee that everybody in the Borough who is entitled to it gets it no I can't but it is fairly well known as parents talk to one another and if one parent gets it the chances are that others will. It is on our website and all the schools know about it so it is a bit more than an informal basis. I believe that everyone who is entitled to it gets it but there will always be some exceptions.

The Leader of Council stated:

It is clearly written in the Admissions Guide about how to apply for it as well. So if you wish to apply it should be fairly clear to you how to go about it so I think parents can make an informed choice on how to do that.

80.5 Angie Burnish asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

A variety of sources were used to gauge the opinion of residents in order formulate the options listed in this agenda item and to assess their suitability.

One of the issues that has come out very strongly from the Bulmershe and Whitegates public meeting and from the Bulmershe and Whitegates residents' consultation was that the excessively long journey time on the current 12 route between Bulmershe and Whitegates and the RBH/Reading town centre mean that this route does not meet the needs of the community. This is not mentioned anywhere in this report and there appears to be no attempt to rectify this issue in any of the options that were considered by committee.

Why was the issue of excessively long journey times not included when considering the requirements for a new service?

Answer

I totally agree with you that the current 12 route, which was imposed by Reading Buses, built in that extra-long journey by forcing residents to take a long journey if you are living in Woodley. This was most unfortunate but Reading Buses told the Council that this was the only way that they could provide a service to Woodley and Earley.

As you know I was at the Woodley and Earley public consultation which you refer to which drew in a much wider audience than just Bulmershe and Whitegates. I acted as both a panellist and a facilitator alongside you and others. The output of the workshops was wide and varied including things like peak hour travel and frequency of the buses. Any bus operator submitting a tender will be assessed on many things and practicality of the route will be one of them taken into consideration. Also many other things like the length of journey, the routes covered and so on.

In terms of what specifics you put into a tender it is a balance. It is a balance between being too over prescriptive or not. If you are over prescriptive then you lose the flexibility of ideas a bus operator might have in providing the service and that is very important.

Supplementary Question

The options that you are considering here don't take into account the longer journey times. There is nothing in the report about considering a variation on the original route which most people thought was satisfactory, or a variation on it. So, tonight, will you consider sending this question back to the Transport Team so that better options can be put in front of the Committee?

Supplementary Answer

As I have said already the length of journey, which is your primary concern will be one of the key measurements of the tender responses. We have not got the tender document this is to guide the content of that tender document which will go out.

I can categorically assure you that the length of journey will be one of those key decision points; it has to be.

80.6 David Davies asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Wokingham Town Council would like to request that the successful parking model that has been trialed in Woodley is extended to the Wokingham Town area in the first instance for a one year trial period which can be monitored and then reviewed?

Answer

As I have said before it has been interesting monitoring the results which I have been doing on a regular basis and it illustrates that there are many different ways of achieving an end objective. I have already said, and I still agree, that the timing is right to look into that concept of duplicating this approach but I would need to point out that it will be looked at in the context of all the Borough car parks. The output of that review, obviously, will come back to a future meeting if there is something to do.

80.7 Carl Doran had asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. As Mr Doran was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided to him:

Question

Currently a large number of the bus services that run on the 12 route from Reading town centre terminate at The Chequers in Woodley and thus do not serve Bulmershe and Whitegates ward.

The proposed Option 3 does not clearly state a requirement for the new bus to serve the whole route throughout the day with no service terminating partway along the route.

Will this requirement be clearly stated in the tender document?

Answer

Can I say right up front is that I agree with residents that have clearly indicated that the current service is not fit for purpose for a whole host of reasons including premature termination.

Option 3 clearly addresses many of the significant issues like missing peak hour service and 2-hour gaps which residents wanted to restore.

Having 100% of all trips covering all the route will probably be difficult. Reading Buses have many examples (including the 12) which do not cover all the route on other services. However, through tendering the service, there will be a requirement in Option 3 for the bus service to provide the whole length of the route between the hours of 7am and 7pm. Details will be considered in the creation of the tender document and looked at when responses have been received.

81. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

81.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Can you give a full explanation on how Wokingham Borough Council applies the Community Infrastructure Levy to Planning Applications?

Answer

CIL, Community Infrastructure Levy, is administered on the basis of a national set of regulations which have mandatory effect once adopted by the Council. These were adopted on 6 April 2015. Wokingham's discretionary element is the charge to be levied which was tested by an Independent Government Public Inquiry; as was the indicative infrastructure CIL spending list, which we know as the 123 list.

A full explanation of how CIL is administered in relation to planning applications in accordance with these regulations can be found in the Council's 'Community Infrastructure Levy Guidance for Applicants' document on the website and I have sent you a link to that this evening. Operationally Wokingham has the highest residential CIL rates outside of London. The Council's detailed CIL rates are also set out in the link that I will send you.

But to put it in perspective the Council's headline residential rate for CIL is £365 per square metre of net additional floorspace but when indexation is taken into account, as this was set 2½ years ago, the actual rate payable today is £405 per square metre of net additional floorspace. This equates to £40,500 for an average 100 square metre three bedroom house. This is clearly very much higher than the contributions we were able to secure in the past. However given the amount of development coming forward in the Borough it is not felt that this exceptionally high CIL rate is adversely impacting the viability of development.

I would just stress that CIL is only payable on applications granted after 6th April 2015 and you will be aware that a number of the SDL locations were covered by the original Section 106 arrangements.

100% relief is available from these charges if it is for social housing, self-build housing or charitable development for charitable purposes and the applicant simply needs to fill in the appropriate form to demonstrate how they meet the relief on this.

All of the CIL contributions collected are partially split between the Council and the towns and parish councils where the CIL money is accrued and that rate varies between 15-25%; dependent on whether the town or parish has actually got a local plan in place.

If current market conditions continue it is forecast that the Council will collect £75m in CIL contributions between this year and the end of the current Local Plan period in 2026 and as I have already mentioned between 15%-25% of that will be handed directly over to the town and parish councils where the development is taking place.

All the funds that are allocated are done through the Council's budget setting process and recommendations for CIL allocations over the next 10 years will be made through the Council's Capital Programme which goes to the Executive in February.

Supplementary Question

Have you looked at all the alternative options for the collection of CIL to ensure that how the Council is implementing it is the best possible way in line with the legislation?

Supplementary Answer

I fully understand the question Gary and thank you for giving me the opportunity to clarify that. We were one of the first adopters of CIL and I think we followed the broad Government guidelines. I think subsequent to that some councils overlooked how it was being adopted and have found, shall we say, more imaginative ways of looking at that. As you know David Lee and myself in particular are looking very much at the issues around five year land supply and this is one of the areas we are currently keeping under review.

I would point out that if development is delayed of course that does not stop the infrastructure coming forward because the Council is very confident of the money coming forward. Because frankly if a developer has planning permission to build 1,500 houses they are going to build 1,500 houses albeit it may not be at the rate that we would like them to build them. The other thing, of course, is if they delay their CIL payments actually increase through indexation so that may actually work as a counter-productive thing for them.

81.2 Angus Ross asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Has the eventual destination of the food waste collection been agreed yet, so giving a financial saving to the Council and also will the vehicles to be used be suitable for the small residential streets around the Borough which current collection vehicles just manage to cope with?

Answer

The final destination for food waste is not yet determined because it will form part of the new re3 Waste Disposal Contract but we are confident that the savings in the report can be achieved. It would be worth pointing out that all food waste generally in the UK that is already collected, and as you know we have a report later that indicates a scheme that we are bringing forward, all food waste is normally sent to anaerobic digesters which actually produce methane gas which is in turn used to generate electricity through a turbine process.

About 400 properties around the Borough are not accessible by our normal waste vehicles due to being in exceptionally narrow or steep roads and they currently have their waste collected by a much smaller non-standard vehicle but we are confident that arrangements can be made to ensure that those smaller vehicles can be adapted in such a way to enable every resident to participate in our proposed food waste collection scheme.

Supplementary Question

Can you give an indication of the amount of household waste that will be diverted from the blue bag to the energy from waste stream and from the less expensive food waste to the anaerobic digestion system.

Supplementary Answer

Currently it is believed that 30% of the content of blue bags is food waste and we are planning and anticipating that initial take-up of this, once the scheme beds in, will be 50% of residents will participate in the food waste collection scheme. So that will clearly take a very significant amount of food waste out of the process.

It is also worth noting that normal waste costs us a £170 per tonne to process but food waste, because it is being recycled, only costs £60 per tonne so there is an automatic saving there which helps.

The vehicle size is planned to be the same but it will have a pod immediately behind the cab for the food waste. So the vehicle that comes round will collect food waste, black box recycling content and blue bag residual waste all at the same time.

81.3 Pauline Jorgensen asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question

Could the Executive Member tell me whether any of the items on the capital programme have Carillion as a contractor?

Answer

We have no current contracts with Carillion and we are not committed to Carillion in any way in delivering the Council's current and future capital programme.

81.4 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

If the Woodley Car Parking is such a success, when will the offer of the same trial be extended to car parks in Twyford and Wokingham?

Twyford, in particular has almost no night time economy, it likely to be more profitable from the same scheme.

Wokingham desperately needs the option of free overnight parking at this time and on Sundays. Woodley is vibrant on Sundays and has many shops and cafes open. Even the library is open on Sundays.

Answer

As I have said already it has been interesting to see the trial progress and the timing is right to look into the concept of duplicating this approach as I have said before. It is interesting that you mention Twyford specifically that needs some sort of assistance. I would like to point out that the Twyford car park in Polehampton Close has had a massive advantage over every other car park for years. They charge for one hour 40p compared to 70p for everybody else. For two hours it is 60p compared to £1.20 for everyone else. That is approximately half of what all other car park users having been paying. Now this is

not to suggest that Twyford should not be considered in any future review, including this potential extension, as normal due diligence is going to have to be paid on any work.

Supplementary Question

My concern is with the extended work that is going on in Wokingham at the moment. At the end of the "Free After Three" parking initiative, what more can the Council do to support traders in Wokingham?

Supplementary Answer

We are going to review it and we are going to look at all those factors. I only took the role on on Friday and I have already had many conversations on the three points of the March delay, the Woodley trial and the "Free After Three" and they are all going into the melting pot. I am going to do a lot of pressuring to make sure that we can come to the other side of that review as quickly as possible.

81.5 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

Question

Bearing in mind the low level of settlement we receive here at Wokingham Borough Council I am extremely concerned at the high level of overspend that has accrued in the Peoples Services area this financial year. Can you advise how an overspend of £1.332M (made up of £771k in Adult Services and £496K in Children's Services) has been allowed to happen, the majority of which seems to have happened, or has been identified more recently? I sincerely hope this was not anything to do with the recent issues we had in this Department!

Answer

The overspend for People Services of £1.267m relates predominantly to pressures in adult social care packages, agency staffing across social care, central services, and home to school transport as we have discussed already.

Improved and strengthened financial controls are now being deployed across this service, such as operational forums, to ensure that Wokingham residents are provided with resources and personal budgets at the appropriate level to balance risk and outcomes, whilst the Council and our partners deliver on wider system targets such as Delayed Transfers of Care (DTCOC).

Activity within the service, such as the number of older people admitted to long term care home settings, is delivering well against strategic targets when compared to the practice regionally. However, local price pressures mean that spend continues to outstrip available resources. Recent residential care home placements made are at around 20% higher than those leaving similar placements during the same period in the previous year.

Whilst a co-ordinated approach to reviewing contract inflation requests from providers was taken forward earlier in this financial year, a number of organisations raised further funding concerns, that resulted in a movement to the forecast. Most significantly, the impact of applying the national living wage to sleep-in support has created a pressure to something over £300k to this Council.

Agency spend in the current financial year includes transitional senior management team arrangements and operational pressures such as support for newly qualified social workers and a considerable local increase in child protection referrals.

A review of all ongoing posts has been undertaken to ensure business criticality can be evidenced, and an enhanced approval process has been established to review all future requests across the Directorate.

The People Services Leadership Team has implemented a co-ordinated recovery plan to ensure that financial controls are kept under close review and all ongoing service decisions are risk assessed and taken in the context of the current financial position. This will be the subject of high level accountability and oversight being led by the Leader, the CEO and Lead Member in addition to the Director of People Services.

The budget pressures identified in the year will inform the budget proposals to go before full Council in February 2018.

Supplementary Question

What measures are you going to put in place to prevent such a large figure occurring again?

Supplementary Answer

When we have expensive placements where we have the decision by the courts to grant national living wage for sleep-in they are things that we just could not have predicted would actually happen. So everything else that we have got we are ahead of the curve but we have had more expensive placements within the Borough and it is well documented that where we do take over the responsibility for someone when they have run out of money, when they are in a privately funded care home and they now come under our control whether they are in their late 70s or 80s, the outcomes of moving them are not good. So we have to balance that between the Council's budgets and we want to save money versus the outcomes to them. So it is constantly under review but it will be a continued pressure.

81.6 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question: Question

This is a question on the Capital Monitoring report, Agenda Item 79.

At the July Executive meeting, at the end of Q1 of the 2017/18 financial year, it was reported that the value of the capital programme for this year was £124,044,000 all of which was planned to be spent this year.

At the October Executive meeting, at the end of Q2 of the 2017/18 financial year, it was reported that the value of the capital programme for this year had gone up by £700,000 to £124,744,000, but the amount that would be spent this year had gone down to £99,236,000 meaning £24,600,000 had slipped into next year.

At this Executive meeting, at the end of Q3 of the 2017/18 financial year, it is reported that the value of the capital programme for this year has gone up again, this time by £3 million, to £127,720,000 but that the amount that will be spent this year has gone down again, by £4 million to £95,337,000, with the amount that has slipped into next year now therefore reaching £31,528,000.

This means that currently 25% of the programme has slipped into next year. At the present rate of progress, that figure could be even higher by the end of Q4.

In February, you will be proposing a new capital programme for 2018/19. That programme has £60,705,000 of previously planned work and £31,528,000 of work that has slipped, meaning it will have a value of over £91 million. That is very close to this year's total deliverable programme before you add any new schemes in the budget.

A similar pattern of unrealistic timescales, failure to understand capacity to deliver, and working to wish lists rather than business planning, has been repeated year after year, with similar results, with no-one in the Executive seemingly able to exercise any competent control.

You have just been appointed as the new Executive Member for Finance. What are you doing to ensure that the Council's capital programme is actually realistic, and deliverable both to budget and in the promised timescales?

Answer

I think it is worth putting into context the sizes of the variances you are referring to; a variance of £0.7m amounts to 0.6% of the budget, £3m is a variance of 2.4%. These are not projected overspends or underspends but revisions to profiling of expenditure. Furthermore increases to the capital budget are made in year when new resources become available such as developers' contributions, new grants and contributions from other organisations.

The Council's Capital Programme now includes many large infrastructure schemes that span a number of years. It is not uncommon or unreasonable for the profiling of these to be refined once the initial budget has been approved and the precise timing of expenditure becomes clearer as the projects move from feasibility, planning, through to delivery.

Our capital finance specialists meet regularly with our key project and programme managers to update predictions and find ways to improve the accuracy of our capital monitoring. This has included the receipt of more detailed information on projects and a new profiling methodology for the Capital Programme in accordance with The Royal Institute of British Architects planned stage process. Work will continue to do what we can to improve the financial arrangements, however it should be recognised that it contains by its nature, sizeable and often uncontrollable, fluctuations.

It is however worth noting that the forecasting of the most significant component of the Capital Programme, the actual scheme overspends and underspends, is extremely accurate when compared with previous years. Furthermore, the total capital spend delivered last year totalled just under £80m.

Supplementary Question

Among the items that have slipped is the 21st Century Council project. Back in September, when we proposed some re-evaluation of this project, the Conservative Group argued strongly that it could not be delayed as it was critical to the Council's finances. Does the fact that this project has now slipped mean that you accept that you were wrong in September and we were right or does it mean that you simply haven't managed to control the project properly?

Supplementary Answer

It means that we have had some changes in Peoples' Services which we did not envisage; we lost the Director and we have a new Director coming in. We have got a number of things that have changed within Peoples' Services, both within adults and within children's.

What I am very keen to do is that we don't make any rash decisions on how we are going to correct those and that we actually have a detailed view and with Paul Senior being our interim Director, who is new to the organisation, he is undertaking a root and branch review and he will report to my colleague Richard Dolinski later on in the coming weeks and it will be reviewed by the Executive then. But we anticipate that if we had not had those changes and we had not had some of the other things that have come through we would actually be on target. So this is one area that we are all over. We will review it and we will constantly update it and it is my job to ensure that this improves performance going forward.

81.7 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

What else are you going to do to enable Wokingham Borough Council to reach its 50% recycling target by 2020?

Answer

Due to the work that is currently being undertaken by the Council and re3 we will be able to add in 2018/19 an additional 1.5% to 2% by adding new materials to the kerbside mix. Then in 2019/20 if the proposals for the food waste are approved tonight then we estimate that that will add a further 7% so that then takes us to between about 48.5% and 49%.

Right now we also have an initiative underway to encourage people to take more glass to the bring banks and that is proving successful so that would bring a bit more.

Therefore, we are confident that with these initiatives combined with other work to improve our performance at the household waste recycling centres and through the glass banks that we will achieve the 50% recycling by the end of 2020.

Supplementary Question

We are very pleased that you have listened to the Liberal Democrats and have introduced food recycling. Will you think again about recycling more plastic, such as food trays and tetrapak and the kerbside collection of glass?

Supplementary Answer

As far as adding extra materials is concerned it is certainly something that we are pretty well advanced with so we will be making announcements on that in a few weeks' time.

In terms of glass within our Borough the bring banks are pretty successfully used. There is still a fair amount of glass that goes into the residual waste hence the initiative that we have getting voluntary groups and school groups and so on to promote bringing more glass to the bring banks. I think at the latest there is 70-80 organisations signed up to that so it is proving pretty successful.

In terms of kerbside collection of glass we did a study and it is estimated that it would cost about £600k a year extra to carry out the operation of collecting glass at the kerbside. There would then be all the capital costs of vehicles and boxes and so on so it would be a considerable extra cost and since we already collect a large proportion through the bring banks and encouraging people to do more we feel it is more prudent to push on in that way rather having kerbside collection of glass.

81.8 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

The agenda item refers to the option of reinstating the previous 19a/c routes and gives a likely cost of £150k-£200k. But it does not make this an option for consideration (unlike some more costly options), nor is there any description of how this would meet residents' needs.

Given that the 19a/c routes met residents' needs far better than any of the other options and is cheaper than some of them, why was this not considered as one of the options?

Answer

It has been made clear by Reading Buses, the company wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, that the former 19a/c was simply not financially viable. Twice they came to the Council and asked for heavy subsidies; first at the original award of the contract and then last year when they asked for more. As a professional, and arguably successful bus operator, I think we should listen to them as they know a little bit more about running a bus route than you or I do.

When you tender for a subsidised bus route it is important that you do not constrain the thinking of the bus operators who tender by saying this is the precise route we want. You need to identify the key components required from the new service and evaluate how each tender response addresses them. Some of these key components were not provided by the former service such as a link from Silverdale Road in Earley to Asda and the Brookside Doctors' Surgery. Your suggestion in your question might be fine with your residents in Whitegates but this service needs to cater for all residents in Earley and Woodley not just those in your Ward.

Supplementary Question

Given the concern about the options, will you refer the options back to the Transport Team so that they can come up with options that are seen to meet the needs of all the residents in Woodley and Whitegates. Secondly, will you and the transport team engage residents and ward Councillors in the area as part of the development of the tender document to ensure that document meets the needs of my residents and some of your residents as well?

Supplementary Answer

The first part I have already explained is falling into the trap of wanting to define a specific route. The tender document will not do that because we want to give the bus operators the freedom and flexibility to be creative and actually maybe get a service that is better than the previous 19a/c. In terms of another consultation on the tender document we believe that the massive consultation results, of which you have been a major participant, that we have had with 750 responses and major organisations also responding we have got, including that public meeting, we have got what the residents want. Those are the core requirements and that is what will be in the tender document.

So no I do not think that we need to go to another consultation.

82. REVENUE MONITORING 2017/18 - END OF DECEMBER 2017

The Executive considered a report which set out Quarter 3 monitoring data relating to Revenue expenditure, the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Schools Block.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and stated that the General Fund was reporting a net adverse variance of £1.337m against planned spend of £131m. The adverse variance was mainly due to a number of issues relating to People Services including pressures in adult social care packages, agency staffing and the cost of home to school transport. A recovery plan was in place to ensure that financial controls would be closely monitored and ongoing service decisions risk assessed and taken in the context of the current financial position.

The report stated that the Housing Revenue Account was showing a net favourable variance of £6k against planned spend of £0.872m and the Schools Block was reporting a net adverse variance of £0.730m.

The report also gave details of potential General Fund carry forward requests totalling £470k and stated that the Council's investment portfolio included current investments of £85m.

In response to a question from Councillor Norman Jorgensen about underspending care budgets in Children's Services, Councillor Ashwell explained that this was the result of an invest to save approach. In relation to foster carers, for example, the cost of recruiting foster carers directly was about half as much as using an agency.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the forecast outturn position of the Revenue Budget and the level of balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Schools Block and the Authority's investment portfolio be noted;
- 2) the potential General Fund carry forward requests of £470k, as set out in Appendix B of the report, be noted.

83. CAPITAL MONITORING 2017/18 - END OF DECEMBER 2017

The Executive considered the Capital Monitoring report for the third quarter of 2017/18.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and stated that the monitoring data at the end of Quarter 3 indicated an underspend variance forecast against budget of £855k. The current approved Capital Budget stood at £127.720m. It was now estimated that £93.337m would be spent in 2017/18 with the underspend of £855k. The remaining budget of £31.528m would be carried forwards in to 2018/19.

The report also gave details of two ring-fenced Capital grants relating to:

- £228k from the Home and Communities Agency for the development of 52 Reading Road, to provide accommodation for young adults and;
- £214k Disabled Facilities Grant to fund adaptations and facilities to enable residents to continue living in their homes.

In response to a question from Councillor Ashwell, Councillor McGhee-Sumner confirmed that the development at 52 Reading Road was on time and on budget.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Capital Monitoring report for the 3rd quarter of 2017/18, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be noted;
- 2) the release of funding of the 2017/18 Capital programme by the receipt of ring-fenced capital grants and contribution be approved and noted for:-
 - Grant to develop 52 Reading Road (to provide accommodation for young adults) from the Home and Communities Agency (Platform for Life Programme) of £228k;
- 3) an increase in the overall value of the 2017/18 Capital Programme due to the receipt of ring-fenced capital grants be approved and noted for:-
 - Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) of £214k.

84. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2017/18

The Executive considered the Treasury Management Mid-year Report 2017-18.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and stated that it summarised the Treasury Management operations during the first half of 2017/18. The two main functions of Treasury Management were, firstly, to ensure adequate cash flow for the Council's day to day activities and, secondly, to fund the Council's Capital plans.

The report stated that, as at 30 September 2017, the Council was forecast to exceed its investment return budget and there had been no external loans taken out during the same period.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the mid-year Treasury Management report for 2017/18 be noted;
- 2) the actual 2017/18 prudential indicators within the report be noted;
- 3) it be noted that the report has been considered and supported by Audit Committee;
- 4) the report be recommended to Council for approval.

85. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

The Executive considered the Chief Finance Officer's Report which was reported to Members each year as part of the Budget setting process.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and summarised the implications of the local government finance settlement on the Council. Wokingham remained the lowest funded unitary authority in England and changes to Government funding through the Revenue Support Grant meant that by 2019/20 the Council would move to a negative grant of £7.1m.

The report highlighted some of the significant financial risks facing the Council, including potential increases in client care costs, forward funding of the Council's investment priorities and the Government's Business Rate Retention Scheme.

Finally, the report sought endorsement of the Council's response to the draft local government finance settlement consultation exercise.

In response to a question from Councillor Lee, Councillor McGhee-Sumner confirmed that extensive lobbying was continuing in order to highlight the unfairness of the Council's financial settlement. This included discussions with the Prime Minister and leading Ministers. Councillor Haitham Taylor urged all Members to lobby their respective MPs and parties on this issue.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Chief Finance Officer's (CFO) report and the issues contained within, including the local government finance settlement and the sections on key risks be noted and considered when setting the Council Tax for 2018/19 and agreeing the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP);
- 2) the Council's response to the draft local government finance settlement, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be supported.

86. 21ST CENTURY COUNCIL - UPDATE

The Executive considered the quarterly monitoring report for the 21st Century Council project.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and highlighted recent developments such as progress in launching Phase 2 Tranche 1 of the programme. Tranche 1 was due to incorporate Environment, Income and Assessments, Customer Services and Children's Social Care. However, following the departure of the Director of People Services, the incoming Interim Director was undertaking a stocktake within Adults and Children's Services. As a result Children's Social Care was not included in Phase 2 Tranche 1 of the programme.

The report stated that the delay relating to People Services created a risk relating to the full realisation of the planned savings in the business case. However, it was anticipated that these savings would be delivered in 2019/20.

In response to a question from Councillor Norman Jorgensen, Councillor McGhee-Sumner confirmed that Towns and Parishes were engaged in the change programme with an update to be considered at the next Borough Parish Liaison Forum on 5 February 2018.

RESOLVED: That progress in implementing the 21st Century Council programme be noted.

87. SHAREHOLDER'S REPORT

(Councillors David Lee, Norman Jorgensen and Stuart Munro declared personal interests in this item)

The Executive considered a report which provided the Budget monitoring position of the Council owned companies and an operational update for the period ending 30 November 2017.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and highlighted a number of areas including the financial performance of the companies and the success of the housing subsidiaries. It was anticipated that Wokingham Housing Ltd. would deliver, year on year, around 50-70 homes which would generate an annual profit of around £1m per annum for the Council.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor announced that Keith Baker had resigned from his role as a Non-Executive Director for Optalis and that the Optalis Board had appointed Councillor Philip Mirfin to that Non-Executive Director role.

In response to a question from Councillor Baker, Councillor McGhee-Sumner confirmed that tenants who had moved into the new Phoenix Avenue units were very happy with the quality of their accommodation.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Budget monitoring position for the month ending 30 November 2017 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 30 November 2017 be noted.

88. BUS SERVICE 12 (WOODLEY AND EARLEY)

(Councillor Keith Baker declared a personal interest in this item)

The Executive considered a report which examined the options for the retendering of the 19/c bus services which operated between Woodley, Earley and Central Reading.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport introduced the item and reminded the Committee of the background to the current report with the ending of the 19a/c services and the introduction of the interim service 12. Following a consultation exercise the consensus was that the current service did not meet the needs of the community.

The report set out five options for the future delivery of the service and recommended Option 3 as the most cost effective option that would meet community requirements identified through the consultation exercise.

In response to a question from Councillor Norman Jorgensen, Councillor Baker confirmed that engagement and joint working with Earley and Woodley Town Councils had been very positive and provided a template for future co-operation between the Borough, Town and Parish Councils.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Option 3, presented within the report, be taken forward to allow the tender process to commence;
- 2) the associated Budget growth required for Option 3 be agreed in principle.

89. PUBLIC PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP FEES AND CHARGES

The Executive considered a report which set out proposals for Public Protection Partnership fees and charges for 2018/19.

The Executive Member for Environment introduced the report and reminded Members that the Public Protection Partnership carried out environmental health, licensing and trading standards services on behalf of Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils. Councillor Jorgensen confirmed that fees and charges were set by each individual Council.

The report included recommended fees and charges for 2018/19 based on cost recovery and an increased average of 3% indexation. The report also proposed a change to the fee to administer Animal Boarding licences following the development of a revised process.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the 2018/19 fees and charges within Wokingham Borough for Public Protection services, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be applied;
- 2) the fee for Animal Boarding for 2017/18 be varied as set out in the report and then in line with Resolution 1) above.

90. WOODLEY CAR PARKING TRIAL

(Councillor Keith Baker declared a personal interest in this item)

The Executive considered a report which gave details of the outcome of the Woodley Car Parking Trial which had been operating since September 2016.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport introduced the report and gave details of the background to the trial which arose following Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative's (WTCMI) proposal of an alternative charging regime to the Borough-Wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime.

The report stated that analysis of parking data had demonstrated that the trial system met the wider objectives originally proposed by WTCMI and met the financial requirements set out in the Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating across the rest of the Borough.

RESOLVED: That, in place of the Borough-wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating elsewhere, the Woodley Car Parking Trial be made permanent including the increase of the 1 hour parking charge increase in the Woodley car parks of Crockhamwell Road, Headley Road, Lytham Road East and Lytham Road West from 70p to 80p.

91. BERKSHIRE PENSION FUND POOLING

The Executive considered a report which stated that the Government required Local Government Pension Funds to join an investment pool by 1 April 2018.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and confirmed that the Berkshire Pension Fund Panel had agreed to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Local Pension Partnership. The aim was to achieve economies of scale and efficiencies for the benefit of fund members and employers.

RESOLVED: That the Berkshire Pension Fund Panel's expected decision to pool 100% of Berkshire Pension Fund assets with Local Pensions Partnership be noted.

92. APPROPRIATION OF LAND WITHIN THE APPROVED ALIGNMENT OF THE NORTHERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

The Executive considered a report which recommended the delegation of authority to carry out the process for the appropriation of land within the approved alignment of the Northern Distributor Road (NDR).

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning introduced the report and confirmed that the Council owned a small parcel of land at Cantley Recreation Ground which was included in the planning permission relating to the NDR. The land was not used as part of the open recreation area or the formal playing fields.

The report stated that appropriation of the land would assist in the development of the NDR, specifically in smoothing out the current sharp bend in Bell Foundry Lane. The proposal was compliant with the relevant statutory tests in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In response to a question from Councillor Ashwell, Councillor Lee confirmed that the proposal would not impact on the provision of sports pitches and spectator facilities at Cantley Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Delivery and Infrastructure in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning to:

- 1) carry out the process of appropriation for part of the land at Cantley Recreation Grounds for the planning purposes of open space or other land within the Council's ownership to that required to deliver the Northern Distributor Road (NDR) pursuant to Sections 122(1) and (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the Act), Section 233 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and;
- 2) consider representations, if any, received and determine whether or not to appropriate for planning purposes open space or other land required to deliver the NDR until such time as such powers are formally delegated under the relevant provisions of the Council's Constitution.

93. RUSCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA DESIGNATION

The Executive considered a report which recommended agreement to the request from Ruscombe Parish Council that it be given consent to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning introduced the report and stated that the development of a neighbourhood plan would enable the Parish Council to develop planning policies which would influence where new homes, shops and offices should be built and the necessary infrastructure to support such development.

The report stated that the application from Ruscombe Parish Council had been subject to a consultation exercise and that no adverse comments had been received.

RESOLVED: That the designation of Ruscombe Parish as a Neighbourhood Area be agreed.

94. LOCAL DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME

The Executive considered a report which recommended the adoption of a Localised National Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme.

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and stated that funding for the scheme was made available following the Spring Budget 2017. The aim was to help those businesses facing a large increase in their business rates following the 2017 revaluation.

The report stated that 540 properties had been identified which met the criteria for an award under the scheme. It was proposed that each property receive an initial allocation with residual funds allocated before the end of the financial year on an equal basis.

In response to a question from Councillor Weeks, Councillor McGhee-Sumner confirmed that businesses seeking relief from the scheme would have to apply to the Council.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the proposed Localised Discretionary Relief Scheme, as set out in the report, for 2017/2018 be agreed;
- 2) authority for approval for allocation of grant for subsequent years be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services and Executive Member for Finance on the same equal pro-rata basis as 2017/2018.

95. WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE

(Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item)

The Executive considered a report which recommended the implementation of a food waste collection service from April 2019 and the extension of the current waste collection contract with Veolia for a further seven years from April 2017.

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement introduced the report and reminded Members that, at its meeting in September 2017, the Executive had approved the introduction of a food waste recycling scheme subject to the service being shown to be operationally and financially viable.

The report stated that implementing food waste collection and extending the Veolia contract would both effectively be cost neutral. The weekly blue bags contained around 30% food waste. Capture of half of the food waste would allow the Council to divert around 5,000 tons of waste from the most expensive disposal route. It would also increase recycling rates by 7% bringing the overall rate close to 50%. In the meantime, Veolia had demonstrated an excellent service record. Extending the waste collection contract with Veolia would maintain existing service levels and provide stability as the Council was rolling out the 21st Century change programme.

In response to a question from Councillor Dolinski, Councillor Weeks confirmed that food waste would be collected in sealed food waste containers with lockable lids. This would reduce the risk of damage and spillage currently caused to the blue bags by wild animals.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the introduction of a weekly separate food waste collection from April 2019 based on the business case provided within the report be approved (please note that approval was given by Executive on 28 September 2017 on the provision that a food waste collection service was demonstrated to be operationally and financially viable);
- 2) the extension of the current waste collection contract with Veolia for a further 7 years from April 2019, as allowed for in the contract, be approved;
- 3) any further related and subsidiary decisions to conclude the contract negotiations with Veolia be delegated to the Director of Localities and Customer Service in consultation with the relevant Executive Member;
- 4) a Member/Officer working group be established to oversee the introduction and rollout of the new food waste service.