



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in Council Chamber  
- Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on  
**THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

Manjeet Gill  
Interim Chief Executive  
Published on 13 September 2017

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

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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Our Vision**

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

## **Our Priorities**

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

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

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

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

## **The Underpinning Principles**

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

To: The Members of Wokingham Borough Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
33.		<b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence	
34.		<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2017.	15 - 44
35.		<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest	
36.		<b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions  A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.  The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Council  Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a>	
36.1	None Specific	Steve Bowers has asked the Executive Member for Adults Services the following question:  <b>Question:</b> The Council is currently in breach of its Statutory Duties with actions taken under the 21st Century project, how do you propose to remedy this urgent situation?  The Statutory duties are clearly laid out in the HCA – The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628396/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628396/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf</a> ) particularly clause 2.2.3.  ‘2.2.3 Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management	

arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner. Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.'

Phase 1 of the 21st Century has already seen the unilateral decision taken to split the Housing Service into strategic and operational services without any form of consultation.

This split between Strategic and Operational decision making has the potential to lead to some disastrous plans being put in place without the expertise of operational personnel. This sort of situation cannot be a good use of your existing resources, wasting time and money on inspirational projects that are impractical in the local environment and likely to lead to an even greater loss of credibility within the Borough.

We are already seeing the negative impact of Phase 1 within the Housing Service with the loss of experienced staff both permanent and short term. The replacements are short term contractors or agency temps which impacts on both the existing staff and the tenants. With Phase 2 being split into two tranches without an end date but tranche 1 only aiming for completion in April 2018 Housing are looking at another year of dealing with the fallout from lack of direction.

The Involved Tenant members of the Tenant & Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP) a fully constituted group of WBC, a group charged with scrutinising the use of the HRA budget circa £15 million, have expressed concerns over many months to both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive but no action has been taken to improve the situation in spite of promises made by both gentlemen.

Whilst we appreciate that the Council is under increasing pressure to reduce costs if the current trends continue you are in danger of losing what little trust that Wokingham residents have in your ability to run our affairs.

36.2 None Specific

Jen Challis has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

**Question:**

When the 21st Century Council Project was first announced one of the key elements was to improve local coverage and reduce the costs associated with multiple personnel having to carry out visits to localities thus helping to improve community involvement and development. Is this still one of your priorities, as the opposite appears to be happening?

The Neighbourhood Officers, Rent Officers and the Community Development Officers are front line staff dealing with your customers on a daily basis and as such their roles are critical to local communities. However over the last six months we have seen these key staff leaving, being seconded to projects, having to attend multiple training sessions thus leaving gaps in availability. The recruitment of short term replacements with little local experience also adds to the pressure on existing staff whilst they are being trained. Long term some of these replacements may become valuable members with the short term nature of their employment there is no commitment to either the area or the communities. Tenants are finding it increasingly difficult to know who to contact, in one case the Neighbourhood Officer who was introduced one week had left when they tried to contact a week later. This does not inspire confidence in residents. The Rent department has seen a massive turnover of staff which is extremely frustrating for Tenants trying to make contact and get a problem resolved. Our overall impression is of total chaos with letters being generated that no one understands even the staff whose signatures are on them. Rent arrears are a problem for the Council but the lack of credibility in your systems only frightens the innocent while the intentional non-payers just ignore them. This needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

36.3 None Specific

Brian Lee has asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services the following question:

**Question:**

The Council's 21st Century Project is having a major impact on the functions carried out by the Asset Management team within Housing Services. How much longer are we as Tenants expected to tolerate the growing staff shortages and the Councils' failure to appreciate the problems that both the team and

Tenants are having to tolerate?

The Council's embargo on the recruitment of permanent staff and the consequent use of agency or temporary contractors is costly in financial terms but also places pressure on the remaining staff who are unable to attract applications for the vacancies or retain experienced staff. Eventually the increased pressure will lead to increasing staff welfare issues and gaps appearing in the services to residents across the Borough. Prior to the start of the 21st Century project this team was a busy, proactive group who had improved the Council's property Assets bringing 99% up to the Decent Homes Standard but are now in very real danger of collapse. They have let major contracts and monitored them effectively to ensure that the Council is achieving improved value for money and that Tenant Satisfaction continues to improve. We are now in the position where staff shortages mean that not all of these functions can be fully carried out. The Council needs to change their recruitment policy now before further damage is done and your assets depreciate.

36.4 None Specific

Chris Wallace has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

**Question:**

The 21st Century Project is supposed to reduce staff costs whilst improving interaction between the Council and residents primarily through the use of enhanced IT. How will this work when there has been no input from customers and the Council's website has been downgraded in a national survey by Better Connected from 3 Star to 2 Star while other local Councils are improving?

The Council are investing large sums of our money into IT systems and staff training but no one has bothered to ask us what we want to see improved. There are many residents in the Borough who are disabled or disadvantaged who cannot access your IT services and the helpline is less than helpful, nine times out of ten they don't know the answer nor do they know who might. Reporting problems on the website appears to be a complete waste of time with no acknowledgments at the time or later by email. Web pages over 5 years out of date, updated pages having incorrect information, the list is endless. The communications about 21st Century, even the minutes from the Scrutiny Committee, are all papering over the problems being experienced by

your customers. Everything is supposedly on track, everyone is on board with the changes and the Council will save huge sums of money. No it's not. If two out of three, on track and on board, are false can you be sure that the predicted costs and savings are true. Involved Tenants have questioned changes to the Housing Service and yet again there is a total lack of communication or consultation on this area of your business. Rumours of the Housing Service splitting into multiple areas within the Council are hopefully just that because the destruction of the most organised, experienced and dedicated team will come back to haunt you. By all means change what needs to be changed, to improve services, but don't ruin the parts that work in your drive for change.

36.5 None Specific

Keith Malvern has asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

**Question:**

Why have you had to find an extra £400K this financial year to cover Local Plan activities when the schedule of work was already known?

36.6 Arborfield

Helen Power has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

**Question:**

Will the Executive Member please advise why the number of pupils per year (Published Admission Number) for Bohunt School has changed from the agreed 180 (September 2016) to 240 a year, which means the present buildings are only big enough to accommodate 11-16 year olds, not 11-18 year olds, as was intended, with the increase in pupils meaning consequent impacts for other local schools and a presumed requirement to build the additional wing to accommodate the 6th form pupils which the current buildings were supposed to cater for?

36.7 None Specific

Peter Humphreys has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:

**Question:**

Back in April I phoned the Council and was reluctantly put through to the finance department as I wished to ask some questions about the accounts extract published in WBC's Borough News. My key question was how much in total WBC had received in developer contributions (s106 and CIL) in 2016/17 and was expecting for 2017/18. I was told by an

officer that he didn't have the information immediately to hand but that he would get back to me.

A month later, well past the target response time, I received an email stating my questions were "not a valid request as they were asking for an opinion/explanation/justification, not for recorded information held by the Council". That response is of course complete nonsense to put me off asking embarrassing questions. I pursued the matter with WBC's legal department.

After various exchanges of emails the officer presumably read the definition of the word "question" in the OED and had a change of heart and my other queries were accepted and answered but not the key question re developer contributions.

Contrary to stated official policy the officer has not subsequently replied to my follow-up email. I thus wish to know who within the Council (officer or / and councillor (s)) issued the edict to block this information from public view.

36.8 None Specific

Diane Heyes has asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services the following question:

**Question:**

The buildings insurance premiums for about 250 shared ownership and leasehold tenants which under our lease agreement have to be negotiated on the tenants behalf by the Council has trebled over the last few years. Our bill this year is £490 for a 2 bedroom semi detached which is buildings insurance only. This is apparently due to the small size of the overall pool and a small number of significant claims. The rises have created a significant difference between shared ownership tenants and neighbouring fully owned properties who have the benefit of insuring through a much larger pool.

Please would the Council take steps to provide cost effective insurance on our properties and ensure that the premiums do not rise faster than the general market rate for household insurance. If this is not possible please would the Council allow its tenants and shared equity owners to purchase cheaper insurance in the general private market themselves.

36.9 Shinfield South; Swallowfield Ian Young has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

**Question:**

Bearing in mind:

1. That Hyde End Road is a busy commuter route, for Wokingham and local residents travelling to and from Basingstoke and Junction 11 of the M4 a significant section of the road is only just over 5 metres wide instead of the standard 7.3 metres
2. The recent photographic evidence, sent to the Council, showing HGVs and buses mounting the pavement to avoid each other, and endangering the lives of pedestrians. This section of road has a blind bend, and the introduction of a new bus service, using buses 3 metres wide, is making the problem much worse

does the Council accept the need to provide an improved and safer route for pedestrians, and a wider road for vehicles?

36.10 Maiden Erlegh Guy Grandison has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

**Question:**

Can the Executive member for Highways give an update on the Bus Service down Silverdale Road and why the morning peak services were removed?

36.11 Shinfield South Simon Cooper has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

**Question:**

As a result of an accident that occurred at my property on the 21 January that sadly resulted in the loss of life of a passenger of the vehicle and the subsequent two serious accidents, the continued speeding issues that have been reported to both Thames Valley Police and Wokingham Borough Council, please can the member responsible for Highways Chris Bowring advise on what actions will be taken and by when to resolve the speeding issues that plague Grazeley residents before another serious accident occurs and can Chris please advise what would be required to lower the speed limit in the village?

- 37. PETITIONS**  
To receive any petitions which Members or members of the public wish to present.
- 38. None Specific PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE, FRANCIS HABGOOD AND THE DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR THAMES VALLEY, MATTHEW BARBER**  
To receive a presentation from the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police Francis Habgood and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Matthew Barber.
- This is expected to be approximately 20 minutes in duration after which there will be an opportunity for Member questions of no more than 15 minutes in duration.
- 39. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
To receive any announcements by the Mayor.
- 40. None Specific TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2016-17** **45 - 74**  
To consider the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2016/17; which was approved by the Executive on 27 July 2017 and considered by the Audit Committee on 13 June 2017.
- RECOMMENDATION** That the Council is asked to:
- 1) note that this report was presented to the Audit Committee on 13 June 2017 and the Executive on the 27 July 2017;
  - 2) approve:
    - (a) the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2016/17; and
    - (b) the actual 2016/17 prudential indicators within the report.
- 41. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**  
To receive any statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members, and Deputy Executive Members.
- In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.23 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 20 minutes, and no Member shall speak for more than 5 minutes

42.

**STATEMENTS FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES**

To receive any statements from Directors of Council Owned Companies.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.24 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 10 minutes, and no Director, except with the consent of Council, shall speak for more than 3 minutes.

43.

**MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

To answer any member questions

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

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

43.1 None Specific

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

**Question:**

Page 68 of the July Executive Report (Local Plan Update Options Development) relates to a duty to co-operate and it states that the Council has been and continues to work closely with other local authorities. Can I have dates these meetings took place, who was present and copies of all the meeting notes?

43.2 None Specific

Lindsay Ferris has asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services the following question:

**Question:**

It has come to my attention that a number of our residents, who are leaseholders of WBC owned properties, have been hit with increases of over 100% in their Household Buildings Insurance for the year 2017/2018. Many people are struggling to make ends meet at the moment and such a large increase could cause significant financial problems for such residents. It would also appear that these residents are unable to find their own Insurance due to various policies within WBC thereby leaving them with an unreasonable take it or leave it, anti-competitive approach from this Council. What is the Executive Member going to do to rectify this position?

- 43.3 None Specific Prue Bray has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:
- Question:**  
How does the income so far received from the charging for overnight and Sunday parking compare to the income predicted? Please include information on the trial in Woodley, which substituted an additional charge for the first hour instead of Sunday and overnight charges, and provide the figures by individual car park.
- 43.4 Hawkedon Tim Holton has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:
- Question:**  
I and the residents of Hawkedon are concerned that the junction with Hatch Farm and Earley Way North, which is already very congested, will become even worse if that is possible. I have already spoken at length with the Executive Member on this issue, and I would like confirmation that the lights at this junction and Showcase roundabout can be linked to ensure the free flow of traffic.
- 43.5 None Specific Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:
- Question:**  
What departments have been included and are already participating in Phase 2 of 21st-Century Council?
- 43.6 None Specific John Jarvis has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:
- Question:**  
Could the Executive Member explain the Council's approach to grass-cutting for the benefit of residents who are writing to me concerned about the failure to cut grass until it is so long the resultant mulch is both unsightly and prevents use of the landscaped areas? There are particular concerns that during this summer holidays grass cutting of playgrounds etc did not occur until after the children had returned to school.
- 43.7 None Specific Dianne King has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:
- Question:**  
I have read that some councils are threatening fines of up to £2500 if residents overload bins or put them

out late or too early amongst other things. Could I ask the Executive member to reassure my residents that this will not be happening in Wokingham?

**44. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS**

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions in relation to the latest circulated volume of Minutes of Meetings and Ward Matters

**45. MOTIONS**

To consider any motions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.11.2 a maximum period of 30 minutes will be allowed for each Motion to be moved, seconded and debated, including dealing with any amendments. At the expiry of the 30-minute period debate will cease immediately, the mover of the Motion or amendment will have the right of reply before the Motion or amendment is put to the vote

45.1 None Specific

**Motion 398 submitted by Lindsay Ferris**

There are areas within the 21C project that do need to be introduced. However the general view is that many aspects of the 21C project have yet to be proven.

The current morale of staff at Wokingham is extremely low. In addition not only have staff been made redundant, (under Phase 1), but a significant number of staff have just left due to the uncertainty caused by such a dramatic change. In addition many Members are still unclear as to what is the correct way to proceed and how it impacts their relationship with the Council and the wider public.

The Council is about to recruit a new Chief Executive with an expected timescale of early 2018 before any chosen candidate is likely to be in post. Any new Chief Executive would want to review the 21C project on his/her appointment. It is therefore proposed that Phase 2 of the 21C programme be delayed until after the appointment of the new Chief Executive. This would give time to review how Phase 1 has progressed and to resolve any issues arising.

45.2 None Specific

**Motion 399 submitted by Charlotte Haitham Taylor**

This Council reaffirms its commitment to condemn all forms of discrimination designed to exclude individuals or groups from social and public life. This

Council will further agree to review its existing practices to ensure that discrimination does not occur within our Borough, except where there is a legal or moral requirement to focus on or exclude a particular group or groups.

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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