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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 24 MAY 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM

Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Mayor), Bill Soane (Deputy Mayor), Alistair Auty, Keith Baker, Parry Bath, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowering, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Jenny Cheng, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Guy Grandison, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, David Hare, Pauline Helliars-Symons, Tim Holton, Graham Howe, John Jarvis, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Barrie Patman, Ian Pittock, Anthony Pollock, Helen Power, Malcolm Richards, Daniel Sargeant, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Simon Weeks and Oliver Whittle

1. ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2018/19

Rob Stanton, the current Mayor, welcomed the newly elected Members and addressed the Council about his year in office. He thanked the Council for the honour of electing him as Mayor and also thanked the Deputy Mayor and Officers who provided support during the year.

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Parry Bath and seconded by Charlotte Haitham Taylor that John Kaiser be elected as Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

It was unanimously agreed that John Kaiser be elected as Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That John Kaiser be elected as Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

John Kaiser made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

John Kaiser thanked the Council for electing him as Mayor, which he regarded as a great honour.

The Mayor welcomed the newly elected Members and addressed the Council. He stated that he and his family had lived in the Borough for nearly 30 years and his three children had been educated at local schools. His roles on the Executive and the year spent as Deputy Mayor had provided an insight into the wide range of services delivered by the Council and the work of many volunteers across the Borough who helped to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable residents.

The Mayor announced that the Me 2 Club based in Woodley would be his chosen charity for the year. The Me 2 Club were in their 15th year and worked to prevent exclusion and isolation by giving children and young people with additional needs the opportunity to socialise and interact with their mainstream peers. This was made possible by recruiting, training, screening and supporting volunteers, often young people themselves.

The Mayor also referred to the two major tragedies – the suicide bombing at the Manchester Arena and the Grenfell fire and expressed condolences to the victims and their families.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2018/19

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by John Kaiser and seconded by Chris Smith that Bill Soane be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

It was unanimously agreed that Bill Soane be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That Bill Soane be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

Bill Soane made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Bill Soane thanked the Council for appointing him to the office of Deputy Mayor which he regarded as a great honour and stated that he looked forward to supporting the Mayor during the year. He had moved to Woodley in 1983 with his family and had served as Mayor of Woodley in 2013. His work with the Borough Council and Woodley Town Council had confirmed his view that the Borough was a great place to live and a great place to do business.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Kate Haines, Mike Haines, John Halsall, Emma Hobbs, Philip Houldsworth, Angus Ross and Shahid Younis.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 March 2018 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to inclusion of reference to Councillor Pittock's Point of Order, and signed by the Mayor.

Ian Pittock referred to the Point of Order he raised at the 22 March meeting relating to supplementary questions which, in line with the Council's Constitution, must arise out of the original question or the reply. Councillor Pittock asked for this matter to be included in the Minutes.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6.1 Peter Dennis asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

At the junction of the Kennet and Avon canal and the river Thames there are a lot of moored boats, and plenty of tents. The residents of said boats are having fires, dumping

plenty of rubbish and indeed appear to be stripping wiring - leaving the plastic shielding on the ground. In turn this presents a health hazard for the wild life, a hazard for pedestrians and cyclists using the pavement. What do the Council plan to do to address this situation?

Answer

We are aware of the issues in this location and Officers have been working across the Council to address them. The issues include potential homelessness, flytipping, litter and general anti-social behaviour. Officers have also been working to ensure that the Public Right of Way along the Tow Path is not obstructed.

The majority of the reports to the Council have concerned flytipping and we have been in correspondence with Reading University who own the vast majority the land. As landowner, the University is responsible for addressing flytipping and has carried out their own clearances. The Council has also continued to attend and clear waste where appropriate on our land and property.

In relation to cable stripping and the resultant waste, the Council has not previously been made aware of this and will revisit the site to assess the issue and any environmental impact.

6.2 James Reid asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

The planning consent for houses in Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood requires that the speed limit on Basingstoke Road be reduced to 30MPH. Could you confirm why the Council took the decision to delay the introduction of this speed reduction by increasing the trigger point from the occupation of the 150th home to the 350th home without any public consultation and which Member of the Executive approved this?

Answer

A variety of traffic management requirements and associated speed reduction was approved with this planning consent and was secured within Section 106 agreements which have triggers associated with the delivery of these measures. The speed reduction requires traffic calming features which would be embedded in the road structure. It became apparent that the level of known planned highways work in the area, that includes the ongoing sewage and surface water works, the Basingstoke Road/Church Lane junction works, the Three Mile Cross access junction alterations, as well as other utility works in the area, would cause significant disruption. This heightened the concern that completing the speed reduction and its associated traffic calming measures would then be pulled apart, ripped up, as the other features were progressed. A minor consideration was wanting to manage the road space for the upgrades as there was a number of projects ongoing in this area on top. As such we wanted to time these so that they cause the least amount of inconvenience to road users. However, this then led to an issue associated with the planning approval associated with this work. Originally the speed reduction was due to be completed on the occupation of the 150th home as you stated, but unfortunately there was no way the other works could be completed in time. The Council was then faced with the difficult decision on how to retain the principle of implementing the speed limit reduction with its associated traffic calming features after the other work was completed and respect the trigger point. The only option was to move the trigger point, which they did, to the occupation of the 350th home.

Supplementary Question

Given everything you said, when does the Council feel that the trigger point will now be

met?

Supplementary Answer

I do not have that information to hand. I will find out and get back to you.

6.3 Manuj Bahl asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:

I have been told that the Virgin Media rollout has been stopped in the area, due to some issues between the Council and the company. Is this true and if so, what are the plans to bring high speed internet to the area?

Answer

In the absence of the questioner, the following written reply was forwarded.

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to supporting broadband across the Borough and plays a key role in the Superfast Berkshire Programme. The Superfast Berkshire programme started in 2011, as part of the Government's subsidised national programme, to improve broadband coverage in areas deemed not commercially viable by the private sector. The programme is backed by all six Berkshire unitary councils and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Superfast Berkshire is currently working with BT and Gigaclear to expand Berkshire's superfast coverage to more than 99%.

The Council is aware that there are currently some issues with Virgin Media rolling out superfast broadband in parts of Crowthorne. Crowthorne is generally well served by commercial broadband delivery, as identified in the 2016 public consultation and open market report, and therefore, the Council has limited involvement in the commissioning of this service. We understand that Virgin Media needs to connect to the trunk network route within Bracknell Forest Highways. We have been advised that Virgin Media are working with Bracknell Forest Council Street Works department and private developers to resolve the situation. The Superfast Berkshire project team continue to monitor the issue.

6.4 Clive Chafer asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

David Lee was acting as chair to the Traffic Advisory Group, which Council fully supported at an earlier meeting, and which had begun to address some vital issues concerning future traffic arrangements in the Borough. With Mr Lee no longer on the Council, how will the Leader ensure the continuity of this project so as to ensure its momentum is not lost?

Answer

In the absence of the questioner, the following written reply was forwarded.

This evening I am appointing a new Executive Member for Strategic Transport and Highways – Councillor Keith Baker. He is very committed to communication with stakeholders and will be reviewing meetings to ensure that he can continue the good work that the previous Executive Member started. Once he has reviewed the position, he will contact you about this.

6.5 Jenny Lissaman asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

This Council adopted the Borough Design Guide in May 2012, its purpose being "To enhance the quality of development and make sure proposals are of the highest quality of design". One of the 9 key objectives, for example, is "To respect and be sympathetic to the character of the area in which the development is situated". Another is "To take full

account of the mass and height of development in relation to adjacent development and surrounding spaces". I am concerned that some applications approved by this Council no longer appear to comply with the requirements of the Design Guide and wonder if this could be due to the current Government's relaxation of permitted development rights or perhaps the high turnover of contracted Planning Officers who are neither familiar with the character of different areas of Wokingham or the Borough Design Guide?

Answer

The Council is committed to achieving good design through the planning decisions that it makes. Whilst the Borough Design Guide is only guidance and each case must be considered on its own merits, this document has actually been very successful in enabling the Council to defend the refusal of harmful proposals at any subsequent appeal and it is being used to inform all planning decisions.

You are quite correct that central Government has extended permitted development rights quite significantly over the last few years and this has resulted in the local planning authority having very limited or even no control over certain categories of new developments.

I am not aware of any planning permissions being granted that conflict with the Borough Design Guide in a way that is harmful. While there have been a number of new Planning Officers at the Council, no planning decision is made by only one person as all cases are checked and authorised by experienced senior Planning Officers, most of whom have been with the Council for a number of years.

Supplementary Question

Apart from building design the Borough Design Guide also covers, on page 45, 'the quality of landscape in particular the soft landscape and how it contributes significantly to the character of the local area and the quality of the residential environment, for example front gardens and boundaries.' We hear more and more in the media about how our environment affects people's wellbeing, how hedges reduce air pollution and how gardens make people happy and improve their mental health. Please will you come to Whitegates and see what happens when the aims of the Design Guide are ignored, something needs to be done?

Supplementary Answer

Thank you for the invitation, I would be happy to take it up.

7. REPORT OF RETURNING OFFICER - BOROUGH AND TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS 3 MAY 2018

The Council considered a report from the Returning Officer, set out at Agenda pages 43 to 46, which gave details of the results of the local elections held on 3 May 2018. The elections were held for 18 wards of the Borough Council and two wards of Woodley Town Council.

The report gave details of the election process, the results and the turnout for each Borough ward contested. Feedback was received at most stages of the elections process and this would be reviewed and fed into planning for future elections.

It was moved by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the report of the Returning Officer be noted.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the report of the Returning Officer be noted.

8. PETITIONS

There were no petitions received.

Lyndsay Ferris referred to a petition with over 1,500 signatures submitted to the previous meeting relating to protection of the Borough's Green Belt. The Mayor confirmed that he would write to Councillor Ferris about arrangements for debating the petition at a future Council meeting.

9. MAYOR'S OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to his earlier statement about his chosen charity.

10. STATEMENTS FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEMBERS **Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Leader of the Council, made the following statement:**

Mr Mayor, may I be the first to congratulate and welcome you to your new role, and wish you the best of luck for the coming year.

I'd just like to say a few words about the outgoing Mayor. Rob Stanton has given so many years to the Council, the Borough, and his residents serving as an Executive Member, Deputy Leader, and finally and fittingly as Mayor. In particular, I'd like to highlight his excellent record as Executive Member for Children's Services, and it seems incredibly apt that one of his last engagements as Mayor was at an awards ceremony to recognise the contribution of our foster carers. I'm sure I'm reflecting the views of everyone here when I say that you will be sorely missed – though I think perhaps we're all slightly pleased that it means our meetings will be a lot shorter!

I also want to welcome all the new Members attending Full Council. On the Labour benches, we have Carl Doran and Rachel Burgess. On the Liberal Democrat benches we have David Hare, who is very familiar with this chamber – as is Helen Power, who some of you may remember as the former Liberal Democrat Political Assistant. Finally, on the Conservative benches, we have Graham Howe representing Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe, Daniel Sargeant representing Finchampstead North, Guy Grandison returning to the Council representing Maiden Erlegh, and Jenny Cheng, who won South Lake Ward.

Let me pass on this Council's commiserations to those Members who were unsuccessful in seeking re-election. Michael Firmager, Mark Ashwell, Beth Rowland, and of course my able Deputy David Lee. All of them gave between them many years of committed service to our community, so on behalf of Members here tonight and the residents of this Borough, I want to thank them for everything they have done.

I suppose I must inevitably begin with the local elections. The Conservatives lost a net three seats overall – not four, as the Wokingham Paper would have you believe. But, in all the noise around these elections, a clear piece of information seems to have been lost – we were the most successful party. We won the majority of seats, and 45% of all votes cast across the Borough.

I have no doubt that the Opposition will tonight claim some great victory out of the local elections. But we should note that Labour won just two of the 18 seats they contested, and

the Lib Dems didn't even bother to put up candidates for all the wards. Quite conveniently they chose not to field a candidate in Arborfield – perhaps Cllr Cowan is not as 'independent' as he claims?

Incidentally, I note that Cllr Cowan has been making a big deal out of his announcement that he intends to form a Residents' Association party (whilst somehow also being an independent), and wrote in last week's newspaper that there has been "over 20 years of Conservative misrule". I know that a week is a long time in politics, but surely Cllr Cowan hasn't forgotten that he was a Conservative Councillor for most of those same 20 years? Indeed, as an Executive Member he was instrumental in bringing in the very housing policies he now rails against.

The truth is, just as across the country, there were no clear outright winners in Wokingham Borough – though the Opposition will no doubt try to paint a defeat as an overwhelming victory, believing as they do that history will be kind to them, for they intend to rewrite it.

The residents sent us a clear message on 3rd May – we have heard that message, and are listening to them. If our residents feel that they are not being listened to, then we need to redouble our efforts to show that we have taken on board what they have to say.

We have started on so many ambitious projects, and their size and scale means that we don't always get things right. We acknowledge that, and it is important that we seek to fix the things that are wrong – rather than writing off any attempt to do something new as an immediate failure, as our Opposition always seems to do.

Across public services, we need to see a cultural shift that moves sharply away from the ethos that says "we must leave it up to the state". Wokingham Borough Council is no exception. As I announced earlier this year, we will be undertaking work on a new Council Plan. This Plan will not simply be a long document with a set of unachievable targets, left in a drawer to gather dust the moment the ink has dried. We will be working with organisations and bodies that this Council deals with to build a working partnership that will set out not just what the Council can deliver for them, but what together we can do to achieve a better Borough.

Similarly, we want to work with residents to shape the priorities of the services they use, how they can work better, but how residents can take more responsibility. Everyone living in this Borough needs to feel that they have a stake in their community, that they have ownership of the things that happen and the decisions that are made.

For too many years, we have stood in this Chamber and said "we cannot go on like this", and yet we continued much as we have always done. If we truly want our Borough to continue to be a success for decades to come, we need to ensure that residents, including every one of us here, take more responsibility for our communities, and that this Council continues to respond to residents' needs and deliver what they see to be important. I believe that on this side of the Chamber, we have the answers to the challenges facing our Borough.

Our manifesto set out a range of ambitious policy plans that we will begin to implement or continue implementing this year. If the Opposition want to work with us, and develop joint approaches tackling our many challenges, then I welcome their contribution.

To deliver on our programme, I have reshaped my Executive team:

- Cllr Julian McGhee-Sumner will continue as Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources, and will also be Deputy Leader of the Council. He will be assisted by Cllr Charles Margetts as the Deputy Executive Member;
- Cllr Richard Dolinski will continue as Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, with Cllr Laura Blumenthal as Deputy Executive Member;
- Cllr Keith Baker will continue as Executive Member for Highways and Transport with Cllr Anthony Pollock as Deputy Executive Member;
- Cllr Simon Weeks will be continuing as Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement, and Cllr Norman Jorgensen will carry on as Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries;
- Cllr Stuart Munro will take on the reshaped role of Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning, leading on the Local Plan Update, with the assistance of Cllr Wayne Smith as Deputy Executive Member;
- Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons will be returning to the Executive to take on the role of Executive Member for Children's Services, assisted by Cllr Shahid Younis as Deputy Executive Member;
- Cllr Philip Mirfin will take on the newly created role of Executive Member for Regeneration, taking on the task of completing the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre;
- Finally, Cllr Pauline Jorgensen will step into the new post of Executive Member for Housing.

A full breakdown of the roles of responsibilities of these Members will be set out in the amended Section 5 of the Constitution.

In order for our Borough to survive as a great place to live and work, we will invest in and shape our communities to fit our residents' needs today and for years to come. We will move away from a relationship that puts the Council above local people, and instead make sure that this is a Council that does not depend on Government funding but instead works with residents to deliver the best for our community. And we will continue to be champions for this area and the people who live here, standing up for our Borough in Westminster.

This is a time of great change, in the world, in our country, and in local government. As a Conservative, I believe that we have to adapt to the times or get left behind. Let us continue forward, together, to create something that will outlast us all, something which we can all be proud of.

Lindsay Ferris, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, made the following statement:

I should like to pay tribute to a number of those who are no longer in this chamber.

Tonight, we say farewell to the outgoing Mayor Rob Stanton. Many of us on this side consider him a real Gentleman and he will be missed.

I should in particular like to acknowledge Beth Rowland, who represented South Lake Ward in Woodley so well for the last 22 years. She has represented her residents in many ways and has worked tirelessly on their behalf for this period.

I should also like to remember my friend Bob Pitts, who has now retired to the Isle of Wight.

I should also like to thank David Lee and Mark Ashwell for their contributions.

Welcome to all the new members, but especially Helen Power and David Hare who join our team.

The role of an Opposition Leader is to provide a credible alternative to the ruling Group. I will not just oppose, or be critical of what has been proposed, but I will provide constructive alternatives where appropriate and to give cross-party support where it is deserved.

Last Autumn the Liberal Democrats launched the first phase of our Manifesto under the Heading "Homes for Local People", and our second phase earlier this year. We plan to build on these and will develop and enhance our proposals over the coming months, so that residents of Wokingham Borough will have a clear opportunity to see what we would do if we ran this Council.

The recent local elections have given the ruling Group food for thought and many residents will now expect action from the Leaders of this Council. We shall keep them to account.

In this regard I have restructured the Lib Dem team, so that we will now have shadow members of the Group covering all the Executive positions. This will enable us to build up our knowledge and experience, which is so vital in keeping the ruling Group on their toes.

Finally, I acknowledge that there is now a third Group on the Council and of course we have Gary our Independent Councillor who I am sure will provide us with some interesting questions throughout the year.

11. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

11.1 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

If and when it is approved, how soon after would you be able to deliver the Winnersh Relief Road part 2: since you own the land, have the money from the LEP, have the design because it hasn't materially changed, you have the contractor agreed for construction, it is less than 450 metres long and has no bridges, nor needs no network rail approval and most of the roundabout work can be done off road?

Answer

No road scheme is ever straightforward. This may be a short stretch of road but the standard processes and procedures remain the same irrespective of the length. You are correct in saying that it does not need Network Rail approval but due to the proximity of their assets the Council is obliged to have discussions with them. The same proximity of assets applies to Highways England who also have to be engaged in discussions. There are also issues over utilities routing and levels linking into Reading Road. Resolving these simply takes time. As I go through the projected timetable, it is important to understand that the ability to meet these timings depends on not discovering unforeseen obstacles and of course the weather that can delay any project.

In March 2018 application number 180760, I am sure that is in your memory, was received

for the Winnersh Relief Road Phase 2. This was a full planning application for the proposed development of a relief road connecting the B3030 King Street Lane and Winnersh Relief Road and Phase 1 to the A329 Reading Road. This includes two new roundabout junctions on the A329 Reading Road, two new minor residential access roads and associated works including traffic signals, crossings, drainage, footways and cycleways. This road forms Phase 2 of the Winnersh Relief Road and part of the western section of the Northern Distributor Road. Public consultation commenced on 23rd March 2018 with 109 letters delivered to potentially impacted neighbours. A total of 88 comments have been received to date. Determination of the planning application is anticipated in the Summer, around about August. On the assumption that the planning application is approved the period of August 2018 to May 2019 will be dedicated to creating the detailed plans to create the new road. This will include the contractor organising what they need to complete the project including staff. It also includes dealing with any planning conditions imposed, especially around such things as archaeology and ecology.

Please remember also that the programme needs to be managed around the nesting season to enable the clearance of the site, and not forgetting, as we saw earlier today, the unpredictable weather having an impact as well. So putting all these points together brings the Council to a Spring construction, starting on site around April/May 2019, with a 10 months construction period, which brings the Council to a target opening date of around March 2020. Finally, can I remind you that these milestone dates are target dates and will be influenced by many things so I cannot guarantee that they will be met. No one can. Clearly the Council and its contractors will do everything in their power to make sure these milestones are met. If and when any delays are looking likely I will endeavour to ensure that local Councillors will be kept fully informed.

Supplementary Question

Since the residents of both Wokingham and Winnersh are looking forward to this road as much as possible why were some of these consultations that you planned to do after the planning application was approved, not done already so that could be already finished so we could actually be started sooner? The nesting season does not actually start during November, December and January. You can start building then.

Supplementary Answer

I do not recall mentioning any consultations after the planning approval so I am not quite sure where that is from. I have given you a detailed timetable which is what you requested.

11.2 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Is this administration content with its current policies on TPO trees where they cut them down without reference to anyone, do not keep records of the removed TPO trees and worst of all it refuses to consult with members, Parish/Town Councils and residents for that matter. Are we all an irrelevance or an irritant in the eyes of this uncaring administration?

Answer

The Council receives approximately 400 Tree Work Applications (TWAs) per year to carry out works on protected trees.

Members are notified of these applications for information, the details are posted on the Council's website in the same way as planning applications. Members and the public can comment and their comments will be taken into account.

Government guidance requires that the primary issues to be addressed are the health of the tree and the impact on protected species. While amenity issues are also considered, these are not the primary factors and if the tree is in poor health or having a detrimental impact on other structures, this could override amenity issues.

Details of all decisions on Tree Work Applications are kept and displayed on the Council's website as with planning permissions.

The Local Plan Update is revisiting the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Appraisal and through the Local Plan update process there is an opportunity for anyone to comment on the Council's tree policies.

Supplementary Question

I did ask a question on similar lines at the March Executive which was headed EM1. I had the good fortune to get a reply from both you and the then Deputy Leader, now sadly departed. Your reply referred to the fact that I had asked the question about 6 months' ago and there was a long email correspondence on this on protected trees, probably going back 12 months' or so. You are correct when you said that no statutory duty to consult, so this administration does not consult. Emails I received from this Council went further by implying that Parish Councils and of course our residents know nothing about trees and our Officers know everything about trees so it was a waste of time consulting with them so we do not. My question is in two parts: As our residents are viewed, or appear to be viewed as useless, this Conservative administration is incapable of proper judgement by not consulting on the massacre of thousands to date, not forgetting the ones to be butchered in the future. Is this Conservative administration so irresponsible by not keeping records of trees that they have allowed to be felled, or is it a deliberate policy to hide from residents?

Supplementary Answer

I am not sure there was much of a question in there, more of a statement and defamation of Councillors and all sorts of people. I will just remind you amongst other things Gary that you were the Executive Member for the Environment for a couple of years not so long ago. These tree policies have not changed in that time.

11.3 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:

The handling of the town centre regeneration project has caused considerable distress for residents in my ward. People have told me how difficult they find it to navigate the town, especially older people, parents with prams, and those with disabilities. Many vulnerable people, such as people with learning disabilities, have lost their independence as they simply cannot find their way around the town. Traffic congestion has been utterly appalling and is turning many people away.

The project has suffered unexpected delays and some local businesses I have spoken to have seen their takings plummet as people go to Bracknell or Reading instead of subjecting themselves to the chaos of the town centre. More action needs to be taken now to ensure residents can continue to use their town successfully while the works are completed. What concrete steps will be taken to improve the town centre for residents and businesses during the remainder of these works?

Answer

Before dealing with the specific issues you raise, it is worth recapping on the reasons behind the regeneration and improvement work that is taking place in Wokingham. The works now progressing stem from a realisation that we had to make massive investment to secure a vibrant future for the town centre. This need was clearly articulated by residents and businesses, who had rightly realised that the town centre was in danger of a slow and painful death if we did not intervene. The town centre lacked the range of shops and other attractions to draw in and keep visitors and, thus, it was losing far too much retail spend to our neighbours. Much of the land in the town centre was in the hands of private investors who lacked the ability to get a regeneration underway.

The solution to this crisis was set out in our Core Strategy and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan both which were adopted in 2010 after significant consultation and engagement and is being delivered through a multi-million pound investment programme. We have become a major landowner in the town centre in order to ensure the necessary regeneration takes place and that the benefits will come to community as a whole. It is vital that people understand this in the context when considering the current, temporary problems.

On the specific points you raise, we are very aware of the disruption caused by the Market Place Improvement works and share your frustration at the unexpected and unavoidable, delays. Wokingham town centre has been more difficult to get to and the get around and we have apologised to residents and businesses for that.

However, our contractor Balfour Beatty, has worked extremely hard to maintain access to all shops and other businesses at all times and the site has remained fully accessible for all residents: given the scale of the work they are undertaking, this is a significant achievement. To give you some indication of the scale, enough earth has been excavated from the site to fill an Olympic swimming pool and contractors are now laying the 3,000 square metres of high-quality York Stone paving that will provide the fantastic finished product. They have had to deal with extremely difficult and unforeseen underground issues and are rectifying problems with exiting utilities pipeworks.

We have taken access very seriously and members of the project team and the contractors have met CLASP, that is the local self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, to listen to their problems and respond wherever possible. Through this engagement with CLASP, vulnerable adults have met directly with those on site so that they felt more comfortable to approach them if they were experiencing difficulties navigating the area. CLASP has also helped us improve signage.

It should be pointed out that the Market Place improvements will create a far more accessible town centre and that one of the main benefits will be to provide an even surface and uncluttered area that will be a lot easier for older people, those with mobility issues and people pushing prams and buggies, to get around. During the design stage two dedicated sessions were held with disability access groups who helped to shape the final design to reflect some of their specific needs.

We know this is a difficult time for the town centre and have worked with the town council and local business via the Wokingham Business Association to promote and support businesses during the works. This support has included organising and publicising events to draw people into the town, producing promotional online videos that have reached thousands of people, paying for advertising in the local media and providing free advice to businesses hoping to apply for Business Rates reduction. We will continue to work with

the Town Council and town centre businesses to promote the town during and after the Market Place works.

Ultimately, the key to promoting the town centre is to talk it up – there are many great reasons to come into Wokingham, even during the current works, and there will be even more once they (and the wider regeneration) are complete. I would have thought that all members who represent town centre wards would be able to provide genuine support to local businesses by backing the town rather than attempting to run it down.

Supplementary Question

It is clear that residents in Wokingham are not happy with the way the regeneration has been handled. With this in mind will the Executive Member meet with me and with local residents to discuss our ideas, such as better access routes across the works to avoid lengthy diversions to get from A to B, much larger maps and much larger information boards at each key intersection, wider walkways to allow better access for prams and wheelchairs, more directional signs to shops, and lastly meet and greet staff at key intersections to help direct people at busy periods?

Supplementary Answer

Thank you for your suggestions. I do note that you are actually meeting with the Head of Regeneration and a senior Planning Officer. I will attempt to come and join you at that meeting so that we can actually discuss this further. With regards to meeting people we are planning a series of new sessions with all stakeholder groups where we are going to be looking forward with the joint regeneration and highways responsibilities that I now have for the town centre. Previously I was only responsible for regeneration so therefore I could not comment on highways. Gladly this now incorporates highways so that is a more efficient way of dealing with the whole process so I am sure you will share with us when we do have these stakeholder groups and will encourage your input as well.

11.4 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

This Council has only 14 female councillors out of the total of 54 councillors who serve on it. I also feel we are not proportionately representing many other groups that live in the Wokingham Borough Council area. What is this Council proposing to do to ensure that we are representing our community appropriately?

Answer

I greatly value increased diversity and the benefits it brings in representing the diverse needs of our community.

The Council has always provided general information to all who may be interested in standing for election to become a Councillor. However, later this year, the Council will be undertaking further promotional campaigns for all parts of our community who may have an interest in standing in future elections to the Borough Council.

I'd ask that any Councillor who has an interest in this important subject to send me their ideas and work with me on an effective campaign to ensure that we are representing our community appropriately.

However, it's not just up to the Council to attract Councillors to stand for election, but also up to political parties and how they attract candidates from a diversity of backgrounds. If our electors have a wider choice at the ballot box then our Chamber will be more diverse.

But I will be the first to acknowledge that there are challenges, I have faced barriers in my journey to become a Councillor, and I know that these are not just isolated incidents. But I am also a firm believer in not positively discriminating, instead making sure that people, from whatever background, have equality of opportunity, and making sure that there are no barriers to any particular person who would wish to stand to become a Councillor and represent their local area. There are many organisations within different political parties to encourage more diversity in politics. This may be a solution to some of the issues, but I do not believe that it is the only way to bring about change.

I am proud to lead this Council as a politician, but I do not stand here as a female Leader of the Council, but as the Leader of the Council.

Due to time constraints the following questions received written answers.

Lindsay Ferris requested that measures be considered for future meetings to enable more questions to be answered.

11.5 Helen Power asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided:

What are you doing to resolve the Anti-Social Behaviour problems being experienced by Woosehill residents that have significantly increased this year and will increase again over the summer months?

Answer

The Council and Police are undertaking a number of actions to address the issue:

Working with the Cleaner and Greener Team within the Council to improve the physical environment by removing a bench that was being used by young people as a meeting point and turning off street lights to discourage young people from congregating in the area. They are also working to find a solution to prevent young people from using dog mess from the bins to vandalise properties.

There are suggestions that the increase in ASB is in part fuelled by substance abuse. To address this, the Council has also funded SMART, the substance misuse service to support at risk young people in schools and provide treatment where necessary.

The Police are taking enforcement action against identified young people; the Police have increased their patrols of the area, increased stop and search, implemented dispersal orders giving them powers to disperse individuals for 48hrs and writing to parents of children involved in ASB. The Council are supporting these actions by increasing the number of Warden Patrols in the area.

11.6 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided:

Is the repair of the massive hole in the bus stop in Rushey Way near to Ryhill Way on track to be repaired before 25th May?

Answer

This whole activity should never have taken so long to which the Council sincerely

apologises for the extreme inconvenience felt by residents. I want to pay tribute to Cllrs Jorgensen and Smith for their tenacity in trying to resolve this issue over this excessive time period. I personally have followed Cllr Jorgensen's many social media postings as she prodded and probed to establish what was going on. I have instructed Officers to fully evaluate why it has taken so long to establish a set of learnings which will be incorporated into any similar future activities.

What should have been a routine piece of work, already completed elsewhere, was impacted by unanticipated issues around the stability of the ground beneath the concrete plinth underpinning the layby. In all the previous works on bus laybys such instability was not present.

When this instability was discovered work was suspended whilst highways engineers tried to establish a way forward. Initially it was unclear what was causing this instability and time was taken to develop a plan of action.

There was agreement that a specialist company was needed to investigate the soil structures in this area to provide data on what was needed to bring that stability. Following a wait for the consultants to be free to carry out this work they then had to schedule time in their laboratories to complete the investigation. This investigation found that extraordinary soil structures were concentrated in this area which turned a straightforward action into a highly complex one.

The completion of these works are a top priority and I can confirm that work started on May 21st and is scheduled to finish by tomorrow.

I would like to apologise, again, for the extreme inconvenience felt by residents. We thank local residents for their patience during this excessive period.

11.7 Ian Pittock asked the Leader of the Council the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided:

I am assuming that the Leader of the Council supports all requirements that maintain and improve security throughout the Council. Some Members have long been allowed access to Council buildings using ID cards identifying them as belonging to an organisation called 'Wokingham District Council', which ceased to exist ten years ago. Changing these is a small cost in light of the example that Members should be setting to staff. How long does the Leader need for transition, or should that be implementation, to ensure all Member's ID cards bear the words 'Wokingham Borough Council', what price security?

Answer

The transition of changing Members passes to the new style is an on-going process and is reliant on the cooperation of Members to proactively engage with Facilities to change their pass. There is no security risk with Members having earlier style ID cards.

Democratic Services advise Facilities of the current list of 'active' Members following an election or indeed if a Member resigns or is no longer able to fulfil their role. Facilities cancel the pass of any such Member that is no longer active.

Democratic Services write to each Member asking them to either destroy or return their card to Facilities.

Facilities are unable to produce a list of all those Members that retain their old WDC cards

as the software we have for the cards only retains the original date of issue and does not update on renewal.

Democratic Services have written to all Members inviting them to bring in their old WDC cards this evening, or on another occasion that suits them, so that they can be renewed. This is a good opportunity to also remind Members to check and challenge people entering areas of the building requiring passes.

11.8 Chris Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided:

Please can the Executive Member provide an update on highways works within Hillside ward?

Answer

The only current highway works within the Hillside Ward are the works to the bus stop in Rushey Way near to Ryhill Way. I have already provided details of that activity in an earlier answer.

In addition, there is also surfacing works planned for Redhatch Drive, between Radstock Lane and Wychwood Close during the period 23rd August to 31st August under a road closure.

These are the planned activities but as you would expect there will be ad hoc works such as potholes which occur which need to be dealt with. Such potholes are investigated within a short period after they have been reported. The purpose of such investigations is to establish how safe they are which dictates the reactive time required to fix them.

May I point out that when evaluating the safety aspect of a pothole Officers look at it from the perspective of a cyclist. Whilst a car will be able to drive over some potholes a cyclist cannot. If they are considered to cause a potential safety issue then a temporary patch will be initiated that day. Since speed is of the essence in carrying out a temporary patch it will not be to a standard which means no more attention is required. That comes later after the pothole has been made safe following a works order being issued.

16. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING

At this point in the meeting, 8.45pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 9pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. The Motion was moved by the Mayor and seconded by the Deputy Mayor.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the meeting be extended after 9pm for a maximum of 30 minutes.

12. POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL AND ALLOCATION AND APPOINTMENT TO SEATS ON COUNCIL COMMITTEES/PANELS/BOARDS

The Council considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 47 to 58, on the political balance of the Council and the appointment to the Council's Committees/Panels/Boards in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.

The report set out a number of recommendations which the Council was asked to consider.

It was proposed by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED That Council:

- 1) having reviewed the representation of the political groups on the Council, confirms that it has 42 Conservative Group Members, 8 Liberal Democrat Group Members, 3 Labour Group Members and 1 Independent Member (as set out in Para 1.1 of the report);
- 2) approves the appointment and composition of Committees and Boards as set out in Para 2.1;
- 3) approves the allocation of seats on Committees and Boards on the basis that, of the 86 seats (as set out in Para 3.6), 68 be allocated to the Conservative Group 13 be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group and 5 be allocated to the Labour Group;
- 4) approves the proposals submitted by the respective Group Leaders and that those Members be appointed to the Committees and Boards as set out in Appendix 1;
- 5) agrees that the principles of proportionality be applied when Members are appointed to Sub-Committees, Panels or Working Groups;
- 6) notes the appointment of the Independent Persons to assist the work of the Standards Committee and the co-opted Parish/Town Council Representatives as set out in Appendix 1;
- 7) notes the elected Member representatives on the Health and Wellbeing Board, as set out in Appendix 1, as nominated by the Leader of Council in accordance with Section 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

13. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND BOARDS 2018/19

The Council considered the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Council Committees/Panels/Boards, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 2.

Ian Pittock referred to the findings of the House of Commons Select Committee report into the operation of Overview and Scrutiny in local government. The Select Committee recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen be elected by members of the relevant Committees. Councillor Pittock referred to the ongoing consideration of this issue by the Council's Constitution Review Working Group and suggested that the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen be decided by the relevant Committees, Panels and Boards.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor stated that she was happy to withdraw the names of proposed Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.

RESOLVED: That the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Council Committees/Panels/Boards be agreed at the first meeting of each body in the new Municipal Year.

14. APPOINTMENT TO PANELS/WORKING GROUPS/JOINT COMMITTEES AND VARIOUS BODIES 2018/19

Members were asked to consider a list of nominations to various Panels, Working Groups, Joint Committees and Various Bodies, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 3.

Where more nominations had been received than places available, individual votes were taken.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Members be appointed to the Council's Panels/Working Groups/Joint Committees and Various Bodies, as set out in Appendix 3 to these Minutes.

15. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2018/19

Members were asked to consider a list of nominations to various Outside Bodies, as circulated to the meeting as Appendix 4.

Where more nominations had been received than places available, individual votes were taken.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Members be appointed to Outside Bodies as set out in Appendix 4 to these Minutes.

APPOINTMENT TO PANELS / WORKING GROUPS / JOINT COMMITTEES AND VARIOUS BODIES 2018/19

Adoption Panel – 1 Member		
Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Kate Haines	1	1

Adopt Thames Valley Regional Adoption Agency Governance Board – 1 Member		
<i>For Information Only</i>		
Conservative Group		
1	Executive Member for Children’s Services	

Borough / Parish Liaison Forum – 5 Members		
Conservative Group (4)		Liberal Democrat Group (1)
1	David Chopping	1 Ian Pittock
2	Graham Howe	
3	Dianne King	
4	David Sleight	

Substitutes – 3 Members		
Conservative Group (2)		Liberal Democrat Group (1)
1	Jenny Cheng	1 Prue Bray
2	Guy Grandison	

Building Control Board – 2 Members		
<i>1 Member must be Executive Member with responsibility for Building Control</i>		
Conservative Group (2)		
1	Executive Member with responsibility for Building Control	
2	Simon Weeks	

Constitution Review Working Group – 4 Members		
Conservative Group (3)		Liberal Democrat Group (1)
1	Chris Bowring	1 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
2	Pauline Jorgensen	
3	Chris Smith	

Corporate Parenting Board – 10 Members		
Conservative Group (8)	Liberal Democrat Group (1)	Labour Group (1)
1 Kate Haines	1 Prue Bray	1 Rachel Burgess
2 Pauline Helliard-Symons		
3 Emma Hobbs		
4 John Kaiser		
5 Dianne King		
6 Abdul Loyes		
7 Daniel Sargeant		
8 Shahid Younis		

Fostering Panel – 1 Member		
Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 UllaKarin Clark	1	1

Highwood Management Conference – 2 Members	
<i>1 Member from Conservative Group and 1 Member from Liberal Democrat Group</i>	
Conservative Group (1)	Liberal Democrat Group (1)
1 Laura Blumenthal	1 David Hare

Joint Public Protection Committee – 2 Members	
<i>Must be Executive Member with responsibility for Public Protection and his/her deputy</i>	
Conservative Group	
1 Executive Member with responsibility for Public Protection	
2 Deputy Executive Member with responsibility for Public Protection	
Substitute	
To be agreed by Executive Member	

Joint Waste Disposal Board – 2 Members	
<i>Must be Executive Members</i>	
<i>Appointment is for four years to 30 June 2022</i>	
Conservative Group	
1 Norman Jorgensen	
2 Simon Weeks	

School Admissions Forum – 2 Members	
<i>1 Member from Conservative Group and 1 Member from Liberal Democrat Group</i>	
Conservative Group (1)	Liberal Democrat Group (1)
1 Graham Howe	1 Prue Bray

Schools Forum – 1 Member

1 representative of the Local Education Authority. Under Regulations the Executive Member with responsibility for Education and the Mayor are not eligible for appointment to the forum. (Note: They may attend as non-voting observers)

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Shahid Younis	1	1

Secure Accommodation Panel – 1 Member and Substitutes

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 John Halsall	1	1

Substitutes

Any Member of the Corporate Parenting Board

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – 2 Members

1 Member from Conservative Group and 1 Member from Liberal Democrat Group

Conservative Group (1)		Liberal Democrat Group (1)	
1 Philip Houldsworth		1 David Hare	

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Community Safety Partnership – 2 Members

*1 Member from Conservative Group and 1 Member from Liberal Democrat Group
1 Member must be the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel Representative*

Conservative Group (1)		Liberal Democrat Group (1)	
1 Barrie Patman		1 Lindsay Ferris	

Place and Community Partnership – 1 Member

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Dianne King	1	1

Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel – 3 Members

1 Member from each Political Group

Conservative Group (1)	Liberal Democrat Group (1)	Labour Group (1)
1 Philip Houldsworth	1 Prue Bray	1. Andy Croy

Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership – 1 Member		
Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Angus Ross	1	1

Substitutes (1)		
Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Simon Weeks	1	1

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel – 1 Member		
Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group
1 Barrie Patman	1	1

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2018/19

1 Member to be appointed on an annual basis unless otherwise stated

Organisation	Conservative Appointment	Liberal Democrat Appointment	Labour Member Appointment	Ind Member Appointment
Age UK Berkshire			Andy Croy	
Age Concern Twyford and District	John Jarvis			
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment - Local Liaison Committee	Barrie Patman			
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Jenny Cheng			
Berkshire Maestros	Chris Bowring			
Berkshire Museum of Aviation	Malcolm Richards			
Berkshire Pension Fund Advisory Panel	John Jarvis			
Bracknell and Wokingham College <i>(Note: appointment is for 4 years)</i>	Graham Howe			
Citizens Advice Wokingham	Parry Batth			
Finchampstead Baptist Church Advisory Board <i>(Member should</i>	Simon Weeks			

Organisation	Conservative Appointment	Liberal Democrat Appointment	Labour Member Appointment	Ind Member Appointment
<i>be a ward member from either Finchampstead North or Finchampstead South)</i>				
Keep Mobile	John Kaiser			
Local Government Association (LGA) General Assembly (3 Members)	1. Charlotte Haitham Taylor 2. Stuart Munro	1. Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		
Mid & West Berks Local Countryside Access Forum <i>(Note: appointment is for 3 years)</i>	For information only: Angus Ross appointed until May 2020			
Readibus Management Committee	Guy Grandison			
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service <i>(4 Members; affected by political balance, Conservative Group gets 3 Members)</i>	1. Pauline Helliard-Symons 2. Angus Ross 3. Alistair Auty	1. Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		
Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust - Board of Governors	Jenny Cheng			
Sonning & District Welfare and Educational Trust	Mike Haines			

Organisation	Conservative Appointment	Liberal Democrat Appointment	Labour Member Appointment	Ind Member Appointment
South East Employers (SEE) Full Committee (2 Members)	1. Alistair Auty 2. Stuart Munro			
<i>Substitutes</i>	1. Angus Ross 2. Barrie Patman			
South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (<i>and Armed Forces Champion</i>)	David Sleight			
Standing Conference on Archives	Pauline Jorgensen			
Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association (SASIG)	David Sleight			
Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal Joint Committee and Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Ltd	For information only: The Leader of Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, will agree the representation at meetings of these bodies Charlotte Haitham Taylor Stuart Munro			
The Piggott Trust	Graham Howe			
The Polehampton Charity	For Information only: John Jarvis appointed until July 2019			

Organisation	Conservative Appointment	Liberal Democrat Appointment	Labour Member Appointment	Ind Member Appointment
The Poors Land Charity <i>(Note: appointment is for 4 years until May 2022)</i>	Bill Soane			
White Waltham Airfield Consultative Committee	John Jarvis			
Wokingham and District Association for the Elderly <i>(observer only)</i>	Dianne King			
Wokingham Borough Sports Council	Guy Grandison			
Wokingham Borough Sports Sponsorship Fund	Ken Miall			
Wokingham Job Support Centre Management Committee	Stuart Munro			
Wokingham Volunteer Centre	Dianne King			
Wokingham Waterside Centre	Chris Smith			
Wokingham Youth Counselling & Information Service (ARC)		Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		

Organisation	Conservative Appointment	Liberal Democrat Appointment	Labour Member Appointment	Ind Member Appointment
Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative <i>(2 Members, 1 Substitute)</i>	1. Keith Baker 2. Jenny Cheng			
<i>Substitute</i>	Richard Dolinski			
Woodley Volunteer Centre	Richard Dolinski			

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