

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 30 MAY 2019 FROM 7.30 PM TO 7.55 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Pauline Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Rachel Bishop-Firth
Prue Bray
Gary Cowan
Dianne King
Ian Pittock
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Bill Soane

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Charlotte Haitham Taylor and John Halsall.

Councillor Dianne King, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration, attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Haitham Taylor. In accordance with legislation Councillor King could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader of Council.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions were received.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

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

Question

What comments has Wokingham Borough Council made to the Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading New Local Plan Public Inquiries?

Answer

Comments on the pre-submission version of the local plans for both the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading Borough Council were considered through

Individual Executive Member Decisions in the usual way. Full information is available on the website.

By the way of an overview an IEMD report on the Reading Borough Local Plan was considered and agreed on 10 January 2018. Our comments raised an objection until the lack of policy and accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers was addressed within the Reading Borough.

Our consideration carefully considered the planned housing provision in the Reading Borough. Whilst there would be a modest shortfall against the level of housing need as defined by the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, this was being addressed through a separate Memorandum of Understanding between Western Berkshire Housing Market Area authorities - Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council, West Berkshire Council and ourselves.

This agreement stated that the modest shortfall would be addressed within the HMA authorities, as agreed by Government planning policy. It is important to note that no agreement was made to commit Wokingham Borough Council to provide any additional homes, indeed we have expressed to our partners that we would not do this. It is important to note that under the Government's new standard method for calculating housing need, Reading Borough actually have a surplus now of housing supply, so actually no shortfall exists going forward.

With regards to the Royal Borough, an IEMD report was considered and agreed on 16 August 2017. Four representations were submitted to their draft local plan. In broad terms, our comments were raised to ensure that the authorities in the Eastern Berkshire Housing Market Area planned separately and appropriately to meet the full housing needs.

For the avoidance of doubt no approach has been made to Wokingham Borough Council to provide development on behalf of the Royal Borough. If such an approach was made then we would strongly resist it as being inappropriate.

Supplementary Question

Looking at the request from Reading and the reply from Mark Ashwell, which I thought was quite appropriate, they do make the point about the Western HMA will help to deliver the housing needs in the other areas and I am pleased that you are not dealing with it as I was saying.

But one of the other areas that did concern me was that Tony Page said in his letter that "in Reading's unmet need we would wish to see the delivery of affordable homes" which we have seen is important for Reading. But they want to have nomination rights over the affordable housing delivered to meet their needs if we deliver any and it would also be essential to engage in discussions that developer contributions and community infrastructure levy issues.

So not only are they saying that if you can build some properties for us we would want the CIL, the infrastructure levies, and all the bits and bobs that go with it. So I would really like an assurance that we would not do this?

Supplementary Answer

I am more than happy to give you the assurance that that will not happen.

5.2 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question which was answered by the Deputy Executive Member in her absence:

Question

Why was there an increase of £4,027,164 for Elms Field in the capital spend last year? (Capital Programme Outturn Report p53 of the agenda)

Answer

The increase in budget was provided to offset the CIL contribution required under the Elms Field Scheme. The CIL contribution was not included in the Medium Term Financial Plan since this is a “payment” by the Local Authority to the Local Authority and not a cash transfer. The CIL contribution has been identified within our wider communications over the years and is not an additional cost to the scheme

Supplementary Question to the Executive Member for Finance and Housing

There are two actual figures for Elms Field on there – both of around £4m. There is also a comment in the figure below which says “approx. £500,000 – I can check this one” which seems a rather casual approach to putting a report together. But the bit I would like to ask you about is the first line of that page “The Council are asked to retrospectively approve and note the budget adjustments...” There is over £13m worth of spend there. Do you think it is acceptable to retrospectively approve £13m worth of spending?

Supplementary Answer

No.

5.3 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Regarding Agenda Item 8, the consultation on Future Housing in Wokingham Borough, I would like to ask if it has been considered how the costs of carrying out this consultation could be better managed. It could be combined with other literature that WBC distributes or if it could include responses via a web site survey, which would reduce postage costs and make the process more convenient?

Answer

All households in the Borough will be sent a postcard or letter explaining the purpose of the consultation, following on from the ‘Homes for the Future’. This will include a web address with a link for an online survey. A freepost option which will also allow paper responses to be sent back to the Council for those not able to go online.

Together, both these methods ensure residents are able to respond to the consultation. However, combining this consultation with other Council communications would dilute its prominence, as we found out through the ‘Homes for the Future’, and likely result in a much smaller number of responses. The cost of the consultation is therefore considered appropriate to its purpose and importance.

The consultation will be advertised in multiple ways, including via the Borough News, Council website, news releases, e-newsletters and social media and hopefully every Member in their own ward will have their own communication that will go out and that will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Supplementary Question

I would like to know what independent advice you have taken on the structure of the questions?

Supplementary Answer

If you consider we did the 'Homes for the Future' and both myself and Councillor Munro spent quite some time going out to nine areas. We did resident groups, we sent a booklet to every household in the Borough and we got nearly 1,500 responses. I hear that is a record but we need more than 1,500. For the purposes of what we want here I think we need a much larger percentage because if we are going to take on Government we need to make sure that the residents of Wokingham are behind us. So I think we are trying every angle possible and as I said earlier I am relying on all of you as ward Members to make sure your residents do respond because we have got one chance and we need to make sure that we get it right this time.

5.4 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Can we ask more questions on this proposed survey other than do the residents want us to build more houses instead include questions such as but not limited to:

- the types of housing the residents want, bungalows, flats, smaller homes, or;
- the proposed locations for the new housing;
- whether we should build new SDL's or not;
- whether we should build the infrastructure first for the housing estate before the first house is built as they do in Cambridge;

And do this with an online web service or a WBC website.

Answer

Let me go back to the 'Homes for the Future' consultation then I will come back to that as it is an important part.

As you know from November 2018, we started in Winnersh which was the first event that we did, until February 2019 the Council publicly consulted on the Local Plan Update (the LPU), under the banner of 'Homes for the Future.' This was extensive and, as I previously said, was advertised throughout a number of areas through ward Members and it asked various questions, as you all know, on future development in the Borough:

- Whether new housing should be built in new communities, with supporting infrastructure, and if so, where are the most suitable locations? You know I think we had at the time, and they did increase as we went through, we had up to 303 sites;
- What types of housing or jobs would be most suitable in parts of the Borough, for example, apartments, smaller houses, offices etc.
- With reference to all these areas of land promoted for the future development in the Borough, there are also areas where we would promote or would be supported?

Responses could be submitted, as I have said earlier, via the online survey, and again we had nearly 1,500 responses from our residents, by filling out a response form, or writing to

the Council. The consultation included eight public drop-in events across the Borough, as I said in Winnersh, one in Twyford, one in Wokingham Town etc with the opportunity to talk to Officers. On some occasions we had over 20 staff there and as I said on most of them, apart from one I was at, to go through the Local Plan process.

The submitted comments, and detailed technical work will inform the next stage of the plan, which will be a public consultation on the Draft Local Plan that we hope to come out this autumn. This will allow all interested parties to submit their comments on the proposed development strategy for the sites for housing, employment, open space and other land uses.

Supplementary Question

What exactly are you planning to ask – the questions actually?

Supplementary Answer

We have already asked those questions. If you have been on-line for the 'Homes for the Future' consultation we asked most of those questions around: what type of housing; where do you want it; how high do you want to go up; do you want to go more than three storeys? So we have covered a vast amount of ground within that consultation that has already happened.

For this consultation it is going to be a simple question: "Do you agree with the Government's imposed housing numbers".

6. REVENUE MONITORING 2018/19 - OUTTURN

The Executive considered a report setting out the revenue outturn position for the Council for the 2018/19 financial year.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing informed the meeting that at the outturn position for the General Fund (revenue) was reporting a total spend of £129.03m against a planned budget spend of £128.25m resulting in an adverse variance of £0.78m which was only 0.61% of the total budget. In relation to the Housing Revenue Account this was showing an adverse balance of £30k; which in comparison with the total budget was relatively small.

Councillor Kaiser advised that the Schools' Block had a variance of £1.05m which was less than 1% of the total budget of £130m. This figure included the cost of special needs which increased by over 15% last year.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the 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 General Fund carry forward requests of £2,043,820, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be agreed;
- 3) the significant reduction in the overspend on the general fund revenue account achieved since the last report be noted; substantially this is a result of the continuous improvement work in the Adults' Social Care and Customer and Localities directorates.

7. CAPITAL OUTTURN 2018-19

The Executive considered a report setting out the capital programme outturn for 2018/19.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing went through the report and advised that its purpose was to set out the capital programme outturn position for 2018/2019, seek approval for relevant budget carry forwards and demonstrate effective and safe use of the Council's resources to deliver services.

Councillor Kaiser highlighted that in 2018/19 the Council, against a working budget of £146.5m, had made a total capital investment in services of £132.2m. It was noted that the underspend of £14.3m was mainly due to a re-appraisal of two schemes and once they had been reviewed a new bid/scheme would be raised, evaluated and if agreed added to the programme.

In addition Members' attention was drawn to the fact that for the second year running the Council had delivered more capital investment than in any other year of the Council's history; a large percentage of which related forward funded infrastructure eg roads to improve congestion around the Borough.

Councillor Jorgensen asked for further information on the £73.8m of prudential borrowing that had been used to fund capital expenditure in 2017/18 and particularly that £30m of this funding had come from internal borrowing. Councillor Kaiser explained that the £73.8m figure was mainly predicated on expected S106 and CIL money which enabled forward funding as much as possible of projects eg roads, even though the Council had not yet received the money from the relevant developer. Councillor Kaiser provided the example of the Winnersh Relief Road which was being forward funded as it was deemed an important part of the infrastructure for that area.

With regard to an earlier question from Councillor Bray about retrospective approvals Councillor Kaiser advised that he would look into this matter and find out why it had happened.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Quarter 4 adjustments to the capital programme, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved;
- 2) the 2018/2019 Capital Outturn, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- 3) the re-profiling of budgets into future financial years, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

8. FUTURE HOUSING CONSULTATION

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed public consultation which would seek residents' opinion on the Government's housing requirement for Wokingham Borough.

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement outlined the proposed consultation and the reason for it and advised that it had been widely publicised following mention of it at full Council in March. Councillor Smith proposed a change to the recommendation to state that the Executive was recommending the consultation to the Special Council

Executive Committee which would be meeting after the Executive. This amendment was agreed by the Executive.

Councillor Jorgensen noted that it was proposed to have a mixture of on-line surveys and postcards and queried what protection there would be to stop people voting twice and how the electronic voting would be validated? In addition because of the importance of the consultation and wanting to ensure that the views of residents would be taken forward, and there would be no legal issues that could prohibit this, Councillor Jorgensen asked whether any advice had been taken about whether the electronic voting was valid? Councillor Smith confirmed that this particular question had been raised and considered and as a result every household would be provided with a unique reference number and validation checks would be carried out on both the on-line and freepost options.

RESOLVED that the Special Council Executive Committee be recommended to:

- 1) approve the future housing consultation, in the form set out in paragraph 3.1;
- 2) authorise a supplementary estimate of £45,000-£80,000, to fund the consultation;
- 3) authorise the Director of Corporate Services and Director Locality and Customer Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree minor amendments, if necessary, prior to consultation.

9. PROCUREMENT BUSINESS CASE - DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM

The Executive considered a report relating to a procurement business case for the proposed acquisition of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the recommissioning and awarding of all the Council's passenger transport contracts.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport informed the meeting that the proposal was simply to switch on some functionality that the Council already owned therefore there was no cost associated with the proposal. The DPS would enable dynamic purchasing which would be in line with OJEU requirements and would allow the Council to purchase services from a subset of already verified suppliers, which should speed the process up and be more cost effective.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) agreement be given to the commencement of the implementation of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the recommissioning and award of all the Council's passenger transport contracts;
- 2) the implementation of the Proactis (Procontract) Dynamic Purchasing System be approved;
- 3) for future transport contract award decisions over £500k the DPS would be delegated to the Director for Localities and Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport;
- 4) any real savings derived from the implementation of a DPS be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee once ascertained.