



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held Virtually on
THURSDAY 28 JANUARY 2021 AT 7.00 PM

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 20 January 2021

Note: The Council has made arrangements under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to hold this meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams. The meeting can be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/wNLxzK6BZFQ>

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

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

John Halsall	Leader of the Council
John Kaiser	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Housing
Parry Bath	Environment and Leisure
UllaKarin Clark	Children's Services
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Regeneration
Pauline Jorgensen	Highways and Transport
Charles Margetts	Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Stuart Munro	Business and Economic Development
Gregor Murray	Resident Services, Communications and Emissions
Wayne Smith	Planning and Enforcement

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
62.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence	
63.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS To confirm the Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 26 November 2020 and the Extraordinary Executive Meetings held on 2 December and 17 December 2020.	9 - 48
64.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	
65.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME 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 Executive 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 www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
65.1	Bulmershe and Whitegates	Helen Palmer has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question: Question In the Topic Paper Local Green Space January 2020, prepared by Council officers to accompany the Draft Local Plan Update consultation, the site LGS09, Site	

name, Land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road, known locally as Kennet Mouth is recommended not to be designated as Local Green Space. In justification for this recommendation the following statement is made:

“The presence of overhead electricity cables and pylons has led to some visual intrusion in the open landscape, which is not considered to be local in character, and therefore does not warrant further consideration as a Local Green Space designation.”

Does the Member agree that, as the photographs I have provided to you show, any visual intrusion is insignificant, and is not a sufficient reason to refuse the designation of Local Green Space.

Personally, walking in this pleasant area, I never notice the cables. What I notice is trees, bushes, flowers, grasses, the river, water fowl, other birds, insects, fungi, lichen, people on the water and the land, dogs, boats, fresh air and the weather. It is both restful and interesting.

Will the Council ask the Officers to strike out this statement on the basis of its lack of accuracy?

65.2 None Specific

Morag Malvern has asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

How is the Borough Council planning to fully inform all EU residents here, in a timely way, of their rights to vote, and to stand as candidates, in local elections?

65.3 None Specific

Philip Meadowcroft has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Did the breaches of the Borough Constitution I identified at the January 11 Standards Meeting result from unintended or mistaken conduct or were they indicative of a wider disregard of the stipulations of the Borough's Constitution?

65.4 Bulmershe and Whitegates

Dani Esposito has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

The Topic Paper Local Green Space, accompanying the Draft Local Plan Update, the site, “*Land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road*” it

states, *“the site is not considered to be of particular local significance.”* Successive attempts to build roads over this land adjacent to the River Thames have been frustrated by residents, who, like myself (having taken up wild swimming) recognise the value of this space.

In the 1980s, *“Boot the Route”* and in response to the MRT proposals, SOAR was formed. Thousands of people signed petitions objecting to the construction of the MRT. A public meeting was attended by hundreds of people, who voted against the road in an exit poll by a majority of 90%. Earley Town Council, The Whitegates Residents Association, ACER and the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust submitted objections. It was commented on that the number of objections received to these plans was unprecedented. At the public consultations held, the overwhelming majority of comments were against the MRT.

The description in the Topic Paper as, *“the site is not considered to be of particular local significance”* is incorrect. Will they ask the officers to substitute a statement that reflects the local significance of this site?

66.

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

66.1 Winnersh

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Why was the need for a consultation for the Traffic Regulation Order for Woodward Close right turn prohibition ignored for several years and only done less than two weeks before it was due to be implemented?

66.2 None Specific

Rachel Bishop-Firth has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Even before the Coronavirus pandemic, the hidden costs of sending children to school was a significant

source of strain for many Wokingham families. Parents on lower incomes struggle to give their children the expensive blazers, jumpers with logos, sports kit with logos, and dress shoes which schools require. While one local supermarket could provide a full generic school uniform for £4.50 last September, parents at some of our schools are paying multiple times that amount for just one item of uniform because it has a colour and logo which is unique to that school. Parents may be lucky enough to pick up some second hand items in the right size, but that is less likely for shoes or reliable IT equipment, let alone school trips.

The pandemic is causing financial hardship to an increasing number of families and the effects may last for years. What action will the Council be taking to encourage maintained and other local schools to ensure that uniforms and other school costs are kept genuinely affordable for parents?

66.3 None Specific

Michael Firmager has asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question:

Question

Has Wokingham Borough Council done all it could to support businesses during the pandemic effect of Covid-19 and the lockdowns?

66.4 None Specific

Caroline Smith has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

I am a member of the Earley Town Council Planning Committee and we are quite often receiving complaints from residents that they have not been informed by Wokingham Borough Council Development Control about any planning application near to their property. This matter has been ongoing for some time and the Chair of Earley Town Planning Committee has written in the past on this matter, but this is still happening.

Please can the Executive Member look into this matter and resolve it for all our residents so they are informed and therefore able to raise their concerns on a planning application affecting them?

Matters for Consideration

67. None Specific

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

49 - 82

68.	None Specific	REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FY 2020/21 - QUARTER 3	83 - 100
69.	None Specific	CAPITAL MONITORING 20/21 - END OF DECEMBER 2020	101 - 112
70.	None Specific	TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2020-21	113 - 122
71.	None Specific	WOKINGHAM COMMUNITY ENERGY (WCE)	123 - 148
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73.	None Specific	THE COUNCIL'S PROPOSED APPROACH TO POVERTY	157 - 164
74.	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe	TEMPORARY CLOSURE REMENHAM FOOTPATH NO. 4 HENLEY FESTIVAL	165 - 180
75.	None Specific	DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES	181 - 198
76.	None Specific	PROPOSED NEW RESOURCE BASE FOR SECONDARY AGED CHILDREN	199 - 218
77.	Finchampstead South	DELIVERING THE GORSE RIDE REGENERATION PROJECT - CONFIRMATION OF COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER	219 - 282

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Executive may exclude the press and public in order to discuss the Part 2 sheets of Agenda Item 77 above and to do so it must pass a resolution in the following terms:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser, Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Pauline Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Chris Bowring
Gary Cowan
Andy Croy
Lindsay Ferris
David Hare
Tahir Maher
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

44. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Charlotte Haitham-Taylor.

45. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 29 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Leader of Council at a later date.

46. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

47. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

48. STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

I have been immensely proud to lead the Council during this period of emergency. The residents have reacted to this pandemic in a responsible and cooperative manner. The staff have shown strong commitment, innovation and flexibility. Thank you all.

We have sought to steer the Borough through very stormy waters with a firm and steady hand and I am pleased to say that generally we have been successful.

We had the first outbreak of Coronavirus nine months ago. Since lockdown a month ago cases in Wokingham have been falling and are currently 109.3 having risen to 155 at peak.

It is clearly disappointing to find ourselves in Tier Two, but that is because that the tiering is harsher than it was and that we have been grouped with the rest of Berkshire excluding Slough. Our policy is to ensure that as far we are able to return to Tier One. We believe that Tier One gives our businesses the best chance to recover and allows for our residents to lead as full a life as possible. The first review will be on December 16th and is based upon a number of factors; but regrettably it is not negotiable.

Since my last statement, two great British institutions Astra Zeneca and Oxford University have announced an effective vaccine awaiting approval by the regulator. Today I read that Sanofi, Translate Bio and GSK are coming into the frame, together with the Pfizer, and Moderna. We can now be reasonably confident that the light at the end of the tunnel is real.

I appreciate that everyone is tired, and it has been going on for some time, but sadly it will go on for much longer. Whilst the vaccines are excellent news, it will take some six months before they are universal, though benefits will be felt quite quickly as the elderly, the vulnerable, care homes and health staff are vaccinated. So, we as a Borough and Borough Council are planning for the winter and spring, in the hope that next summer we will return to normal; if we remember what that is.

We understand that health staff, over eighties and vulnerable groups may be inoculated as soon as this year.

Coronavirus is transmitted by contact or near contact. If we can inculcate a permanent behavioural change we can have a low rate of infection. Your Council is doing what is within its power to do so together with its partners; care homes, schools, businesses, marshals and community champions.

Our trace system is now working well and we will be rolling out in the New Year more universal testing.

Our primary task is now to ensure that every resident is safe, secure and not isolated throughout the winter. Everyone should have a warm home, food and the medicines. This administration is proud the homeless in the Borough are now very low and all homeless are looked after. We have housed all the rough sleepers except for one who insists that he prefers not to be housed. We will do the same with food and fuel poverty.

It is extremely important throughout this emergency that our residents have confidence in the Council. Statements that there are "6,300 children in poverty and rising" and that there are "one in six children living in poverty" in the Borough we do not believe to be accurate or responsible. Having said that, one vulnerable person, child or family is too much.

Next week in the Extraordinary Executive, we will be agreeing the additional financial help that we are giving families and businesses.

Similarly residents can have confidence that our Council's finances are in extremely good health, despite the huge recent financial challenges we have faced as a result of Covid. These challenges have precipitated claims of insolvency, draconian service and staff cuts in other local authorities; there have been none here.

The only time in the Borough's history that there has been a financial crisis was the period of control of the Lib Dems. We had perilous balances at only £2.3m, an uncontrolled overspend of £1.0m and had to act quickly to arrest a genuine fatal decline into insolvency,

Eighteen years of responsible leadership has, amongst other things, been devoted to restoring, maintaining and enhancing the Council's wellbeing. This has entailed replenishing balances to a safe level of approximately £10m, delivering efficiencies of many millions of pounds year on year, generating new income sources through our

commercially minded activities, whilst investing at an unprecedented level in key priorities such as highways, affordable housing and climate change.

We were financially strong and resilient coming into this emergency, despite years of austerity, in which we faced continuously escalating statutory care costs and severe restrictions in Government funding. It is this financial resilience that has enabled us to step up in the ways that we have needed for our community throughout the pandemic.

Our real terms cost of delivering services has reduced by 31% since 2011, primarily as a result of continuous improvement, giving savings of over £22m during the last five years on a net service budget of approximately £130m with very little that amounts to service cuts. Indeed, we have expanded services including waste collection and libraries, whilst other authorities have been pairing these back.

For the last five years our balances have held at approximately £9-10m. We are the lowest funded unitary authority at £84 per person whilst other authorities receive as much as £450 per person and yet we still manage to invest in services, including a capital investment programme for our community of £150-180m each year.

The Council's Treasury Management mid-year statement reports our income from investment activities at £7.2m per annum, a material sum. All the borrowing the Council has ever had to deliver all our capital road schemes, schools, affordable housing, regeneration, is at virtually no cost to our residents. Actually it is £7.52 per annum for a Band D tax payer. This borrowing has allowed us to accumulate realisable assets of almost £500m, not including value from optimising our significant land holdings.

We are one of the best council tax and business rate collectors in the country and were indeed the very highest achievers for council tax for four years running. Indeed our collection rates are holding up even in these difficult times.

Our Housing Companies are now running at a profit of over £650k per annum and net assets of £1.3m.

Our Wokingham town centre regeneration has secured committed rental in excess of 87% of its retail assets, some of which are not yet built, and has secured rental income in excess of the cost of borrowing with retailers still flocking in to take up units; even in current times. Again, we buck the trend.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment, widely feared due to its intensive and thorough inspection, awarded the highest score for Wokingham under many of its financial themes each year and the highest score on all themes in one year. We were the only council to have achieved this accolade. More recently we have been reported in national journals and in external specialist reports as having excellent financial standing and financial management.

Our financial strength and standing are not something that has materialised overnight.

We cannot rest on our laurels as we will have severe financial challenges in the future. The work we have done and continue to do should be recognised for its incredible achievement and should not be blemished by untrue statements that bring the Council into disrepute and discredits all those that have given so much.

The comprehensive spending review has not been unhelpful to Wokingham but until the overall financial settlement is made, which is expected in December, we cannot fully assess the significance for Wokingham.

Please help me to help you. Those on this call are Councillors, the press and interested members of the public. What you do and say will have an enormous impact on public behaviour towards the virus and economic recovery. Please do not make things up with Trumpian statements from Twyford or bizarre references to buying a kitchen and cars from the faculty at Royal Holloway, or because it is politically expedient, or provides a good story. To get through this successfully residents must have confidence in the Council and the press. Residents must feel that we are doing our best to keep everyone safe, secure and happy.

Lastly stay safe and observe the rules. Thank you.

49. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

49.1 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

Why does the Council consult the public on cuts to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme but not on Councillor pay rises?

Answer

I am somewhat surprised that you have asked this question Andy as you seem to have got the wrong end of the stick. It is my intention not to reduce those who qualify but to expand the scheme to disallow the Carers' Allowance as part of the money taken into consideration when making judgements on whether or not anybody will receive it. So there will be more carers that will actually qualify for this payment.

But let me answer your question. It is that the Council is obliged to comply with the legislation associated with these different subjects. Let me explain them in more detail.

There is a legal requirement to carry out a public consultation when considering changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. A consultation is required regardless of whether a negative or positive change, and as you heard earlier I am planning a positive change, but in Wokingham's case the key purpose of the consultation is to understand better how we can improve or how we extend the scheme. Indeed we think there is an opportunity, as I have said earlier, to disregard Carers' Allowances when taking into consideration. This will mean more carers will get the allowance.

The Local Authorities Members' Allowances, which is the second part of your question, is a regulation agreed in 2003 and it sets out the framework for Members' allowances to be awarded, in addition to detailing how the Independent Remuneration Panels, or IRP, could operate.

Wokingham Borough Council's IRP is made up of members of the public who voluntarily give up their time to conduct a biennial review of the Members' Allowances Scheme. Independent Remuneration Panel members are recruited via advertisements in the local

newspaper, on the WBC website, and via WBC social media streams. Potential candidates are then interviewed by the Lead Specialist for Democratic and Electoral Services and the Assistant Director for Governance. Successful candidates are then appointed for a three to four year term. The IRP make recommendations to the Council from an independent viewpoint and the decision as to whether to accept those recommendations is left to the elected Members.

There is no requirement within the legislation for a full consultation on recommendations from the IRP to be undertaken. The regulations underpinning Members' allowances and IRPs do however stipulate that upon receipt of a copy of a report made to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel, the local authority must as soon as reasonably practicable ensure that copies of that report are available for inspection by members of the public at the principal office of the authority and publish the recommendations and main features of the report in one or more newspapers circulating in the area. WBC adheres to these regulations, and welcomes any comments received upon publication of the report and the newspaper article. Any comments received would be passed on to the IRP ahead of the item going to the full Council meeting for debate and decision to be made by the Members.

Supplementary Question

You are right when you say that these processes are outlined by legislation but that is the minimum standard. There is nothing in legislation which prevents the Borough Council from putting out a consultation on Councillor pay rises which would inform the work of the IRP. I suspect that the reason we do not is that we will not necessarily get the answers which we want which brings me on to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The wording of the survey was very, very, poor and many people I have spoken to thought that the wording was designed in such a way as to encourage people to give answers that would result in less money going to the people who needed it the most.

Why can't we design a decent survey to get proper answers from people?

Supplementary Answer

I am looking for proper answers from people Andy and that is what I want to do. The other issue, of course, with regards to every time we go to consultation there is an element of cost involved with that. I mean we are following the legislation with all the other councils I know doing it that way. There is nobody else who doesn't do it that way and I cannot see any reason why we should change the way we do things just for it to cost the residents even more.

49.2 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

We are aware that there have been a number of issues within Optalis over the past months. Have the relations between RBWM and WBC now improved?

Answer provided by the Leader of Council

Optalis remains key to this Council's delivery of Adult Social Care and improvement journey. Optalis continues to perform well in all key measures, with many positive comments from local residents who use the services and their families. Plans are being jointly developed to create additional front line capacity in the organisation. This will

facilitate continued measured growth, by providing a genuine alternative market option. This will also stimulate further efficiencies in the wider local adult care sector. In addition to this, further opportunities for driving efficiencies and improvements are being developed in partnership with the Director of Adult Services. I would also like to thank the staff at Optalis for all the hard work they have been putting in on the front line throughout the Covid period; many of them have gone above and beyond to make sure our residents are supported and safe.

As you are aware, in terms of the relationship between the two Council co-owners of Optalis, there has been an ongoing dispute in terms of agreeing an equitable split of central costs as laid out in the shareholder agreement. I am pleased to announce that RBWM have agreed to settle two parts of that dispute with positive ongoing negotiations to resolve the third and final element. So, the short answer to your question is yes there is an improvement I am positive about the future, but we do need to let these negotiations conclude over the coming weeks.

Supplementary Question

I have concerns about the current arrangements and feel that they may be unstable in the future. Do you also share that view?

Supplementary Answer provided by the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services

I think I have shared publicly before that the last 18 months we have been looking at Optalis and we have had a change of strategy. There has also been a review of governance; basically in everything the Company does. It obviously follows that just because a company was doing something when it was set up it does not mean that it is the right thing in perpetuity and that is what has driven this discussion.

I would say that relationships with Optalis have improved dramatically since the appointment of the new CEO, David Birch, and as John answered we are in a much better place than we were.

There are negotiations going on basically to resolve the third of the issues regarding future costs at the moment. I am hopeful of a positive outcome. Things have been much better with Optalis over the last six months and hopefully they will go that way. We within WBC are fully focussed on getting a relationship which works with Optalis but work most of all basically for our residents because that is who we are all here for to serve.

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

Question

Have you received any notification of changes to planning for the future proposals by the Ministry for Housing Community and Local Government as has been hinted at by the news media due to MPs revolting against the Government white paper?

Answer

We have not heard anything yet, official or unofficial. The only things that I have picked up is what you have probably alluded to that was in The Telegraph and reported through the BBC. But we have not had anything official yet. But let us hope that it is a U-turn.

Supplementary Question

There has been an appeal decision recently by the Inspectors saying that a two-storey extension was perfectly allowable based on the new rules. So does this mean that the new rules are actually in effect or not?

Supplementary Answer

I presume you were talking about permitted development rules. There is a document that was circulated by Marcia some time ago as a result of the question that Andy Croy asked me at the full Council meeting. I have asked Marcia to resend that note out to explain all the rules on permitted development and the latest rules on temporary permitted development through Covid. So you can look at that.

I do not know what actual one you are referring to but there are some circumstances where permitted development can be allowed but it does go through, what they call, prior approval through the Council. So it would have to go through a prior approval and it could get permission if it meets the criteria. Marcia is in the process of sending an updated note out to all Members.

49.4 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question:

Question

Under our 'Love Wokingham' brand, Wokingham Town Council has setup a virtual access point for many of our local businesses in the town, which directs people to the online presence for our local shops and businesses. We have our own website and regularly promote these businesses on social media. During the lockdown windows we have been putting out lists of restaurants who are delivering takeaway food. A sort of virtual High Street, which we have not been charging for.

I can see that Wokingham Borough Council have decided to start up a Virtual Christmas Market for small local traders on a Facebook feed, for which they are, rather shockingly charging £20-£50 to use. Considering that there is clearly no web site development and this looks like a very minimal service, I am wondering what value it offers.

What is Wokingham Borough Council actually investing in to promote and support all virtual businesses across the Borough?

Answer

Firstly, I would just like to point out that Love Wokingham is funded by both the Borough and Town Council and its promotion of local businesses has been agreed between the two authorities. Therefore it is, itself one of the ways we are promoting and supporting businesses.

Just to give you a bit of background. You asked the question what other things we are doing and then I am going to come back to the fee:

- Approximately £19million of business rate relief have been provided;
- £20million of businesses grants have been provided, including discretionary;
- Website promotion of businesses providing virtual services;
- Provision of clear advice and guidance to help businesses operate in Covid-19 safe manner;
- Promotional signage to encourage safe local shopping;

- Social media promotion to encourage local shopping.

In terms of the virtual market fee, the Wokingham Virtual Christmas market was set up following the cancellation of an in-person ice rink and Christmas market style hut event due to Covid-19. To help support local businesses that would have been involved in the market we decided to take the market aspect virtually and online. Following some research it was decided to use a Facebook group style event in order to get the market up and running for the longest period.

In order to manage companies that were interested in becoming a stallholder we set up an application form in order to explain rules and responsibilities and also have a form of business identification; including insurance, hygiene certificates and website. This was to ensure consumer safety whilst we provided a platform for products to be sold on. A small admin fee applied to enter to the value of £20 for a small sole trader, self-employed or craft type business and a £50 fee for national or regional business with many shop premises. So far all of the 40-plus stallholders who have paid have entered at the £20 charge level.

The admin charge was introduced so that the page could be managed to allow only those stallholders entered to post, which prevents a build-up of hundreds of posts per day that you see in other market groups.

So in summary the stallholders receive:

- Support on any questions/queries they may have during the market time frame;
- Help to create an eye-catching post;
- Statistics on when to post, based on judging by the consumer habits for the previous week;
- Promotion of the market via WBC's social media channels, of which our Facebook alone has an average monthly post reach of one million;
- A virtual market open for 38 days, if joined from the start, which is one of the longest running in the country

This all takes away all the behind the scenes leg-work a small business would normally have to do allowing them to focus solely on their products and the selling. Consumers and stallholders are primarily from within the Borough, not just Wokingham town centre or the larger towns, but we also welcome consumers from surrounding areas to help the local business grow and access a new consumer group other than those local to them.

The secondary aim of the market alongside supporting local business and creating some Christmas cheer in some tough times is also to extend the reach of those businesses by giving them a platform to interact with people and make connections that will hopefully extend and help their business going into 2021.

It should be noted that reaction to the Christmas Market has been extremely positive and we have had no complaints from the businesses that have so far signed up.

Supplementary Question

While that sounds great, and all this sort of stuff, I would be interested to know how much revenue this is generating and what value for money these businesses are getting?

Particularly at this time I am also curious to know what is happening in other towns? I know what is happening in Wokingham.

Supplementary Answer

Obviously I have not got all that detail but I will try and get that dug out for you and get that back to you.

49.5 Tahir Maher asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

Will the Council set up specific arrangements to assist with loneliness, which is currently impacting on many residents across the Borough? It not only impacts on the older population but during this pandemic it is impacting on younger people as well. Existing issues that were present before are now becoming increasingly chronic.

This Council needs to consider and work at three levels to address loneliness:

One to one:

- Launch a local campaign to raise awareness of the health effects of loneliness and isolation amongst target risk groups. Make sure this information is available both off and online;

Neighbourhood:

- Support the voluntary and community sector to further strengthen referral partnerships with frontline healthcare staff and social workers;

Strategic:

- Agree a long-term plan to act to prevent and reduce loneliness, so that it is part of the Council's strategic intent; to regularly measure loneliness and mapping need through needs assessment and/or lifestyle surveys. Results of this can be used to monitor the impact of interventions.

Answer

We already working in several key ways to address this.

First of all on a neighbourhood level we are very aware that Covid has significantly contributed to many residents feeling lonely and isolated. The Council many months ago set up the Wokingham Borough Community Response and one of the key aims was to provide welfare calls to vulnerable and lonely residents. The Council has funded additional money into The Link Visiting Scheme to increase their befriending scheme which involves one to one and group work and that is all about supporting a reduction in loneliness.

The Council has also for many months funded the One Front Door service, which is operated by the CAB, and widely publicised the number at many opportunities so that vulnerable residents, including those experiencing loneliness, can contact One Front Door to get the support needed. During the Covid-19 outbreak we have supported several thousand residents in need. As part of this local Covid groups have formed right across the Borough and these groups have provided a responsive neighbourhood support service to aim to get a real community approach to supporting people in need.

So to give you the latest figures on welfare calls in the last two weeks we have made 6,500. 1800 people already known to Adult Social Care have been contacted. 4,700 calls

and letters to other vulnerable people on the Government list. 150 referrals from that have gone to the CAB and 110 referrals to the Link Befriending Service.

That means that our proactive work has been all about picking up people who are suffering from loneliness and we are trying to do something about it.

On top of that we have the Wokingham Wellbeing Board Strategy which identified social isolation as one of its three key priorities. It set up a sub group involving the Council, the voluntary sector and Health and this reports on a regular basis to the Wellbeing Board. The Wokingham Integrated Partnership has an agreed work programme and this is specifically a project supporting isolation. This Partnership has involved the setting up of a Friendship Alliance, which is the Council, Involve, AgeUk, The LINK and the Wokingham Volunteer Centre. We have spent over £100k funding this project. This was initiated circa 12 months ago and is progressing well. Key parts of this project are:

- Expansion of the Volunteer Transport Scheme;
- Establishing a network of Friendship Champions across the Borough;
- Undertaking community engagement work; and
- The 'Link Express' which will involve a small group of well trained volunteers visiting older people within 2 to 3 weeks of referral to begin the process of improving mood and wellbeing through social connection.

So yes I agree with you that loneliness is a key priority for us. It is a key thing and we are very much aware that people are in need across our Borough and need help with this. We are doing a lot of things to try and do something about it.

Supplementary Question

It is nice to know that there is so much comprehensive work being done. Can you quantify your success in terms of where we were, where we are going to and so forth? Can you quantify that because it is quite, quite varied?

Supplementary Answer

This is obviously a difficult thing to measure because you are talking about people's emotional health. I think the best way I could quantify it right here, right now is obviously referring to the statistic I quoted earlier which is from the phone calls we have made that we have picked up 110 people who have said to us, when we have proactively called them, that they are lonely and they need help and they need someone to talk to basically. That is 110 referrals to The Link Befriending Service. Now The Link Befriending Services is something we are funding. It is something we are supporting. It is something we are promoting and it specifically exists to help people and I am sure that he will not mind me saying this but Councillor Halsall is one of those volunteers who is ringing people up, talking to people on a regular basis, to try and make sure that they are not alone.

We are very aware of our role to support the vulnerable and needy in our community during this difficult time and to make sure that no one is left behind.

So in answer to your question that is probably the easiest answer I can give you tonight. We are continuing down this road because we know it is the right thing to do and the feedback we are getting, which I would be happy to share with you, through the individual e-mails I have received tells us that it is the right thing to do.

Response from the Leader of Council

If I could add to that Tahir I was speaking today by invitation to a group of CCGs and health workers, some 200 leaders in the Health sector, and they were exemplifying our neighbourhood approach and what a model approach to reach out to our community, particularly in this area.

49.6 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

With reference to agenda item 50; Monitoring Customer Satisfaction, the report makes the following statement on 'From feedback to improvement': "Both quantitative and qualitative information is captured, which helps better understand the customer experience from first point of contact to resolution. Evaluating the customer journey in this way will help to understand strengths and weaknesses in ways of working, and actions that need to be taken to improve":

My question is what Members will be involved, and how then will that improvement manifest itself publicly?

Answer

As a Council we exist to serve our residents and our community. The 'Voice of the Customer' project is a key way that we are putting customer services and resident satisfaction at the heart of everything we do as a Council. While we already perform highly on our key measures of customer service, this project will allow us to better understand our resident's journey from identifying they have an issue or query, through to making contact with us and onwards to a hopefully successful resolution.

Gathering feedback from residents, either directly or via their elected representatives, will enable us to better understand their reasons for contacting us and help us to better redesign either our service provision or our channels of communication to better meet the customer service needs.

We would welcome comments and input from Members around this voice of the customer project. Councillor Frewin has already been in contact with Council Officers and has volunteered his help and career expertise in this area, which has been greatly appreciated so far. If other Members wish to offer their insight or expertise, I will gratefully receive it.

How will it manifest itself publicly is a great question? I don't want to pre-empt the results of the work before it is undertaken but I would hope that we:

- will make it easier for residents to directly interact with us;
- will design services in line with the way residents want to use them not how we want them to use them;
- find more ways to support those less able and those reliant on the support of others to access our services; and
- resolve and respond to issues more quickly and use those resolutions to better inform our decision making and our future communications.

Supplementary Question

I welcome that and I think it is a very positive action to take but what I don't want to see is the decisions being taken as to how we are improving our service done, how can I say

through PR, without the involvement of Members. I would think every Member would commit themselves to being able to offer help or comment on this. So what I would suggest is when you get to a situation where you have found the various weaknesses that you do speak to Members and ask them for their observations. I think it is a very positive move and I do welcome it so thank you for that.

Supplementary Answer

Just on that point I have already committed to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that once the new Customer Service Strategy is ready to be delivered that I will take it that Committee so that it can go through the formal scrutiny process.

Customer service is an ongoing thing we are not going to stop it. It needs to be at the heart of everything that we do so it is an ongoing prerogative of every Member if they have got an idea of how we can improve our customer service I want to hear it.

49.7 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

David Hare asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

Thank you for Agenda item 49: Support and Care Procurement. This will bring in a framework agreement and resolve the fact, over time, that there are many individual contracts and spot purchases in WBC Adult Services. I hope this will enable a consistent and good quality service for all users, while, in the long term, also reducing cost. As Liberal Democrats, we would encourage this type of development to stabilise services and costs. How is the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services, going to ensure that, while developing this framework, people in care settings do not have disruptive or unnecessary changes to their care?

Answer

Our ambition is for Wokingham Borough to be one of the best Boroughs in the country for adults and carers in need of support and care to live, where they feel safe, included and to be a key part of our community. Our procurement, basically which this is part of, will help us achieve this ambition and with our partners will enable us to prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal support and care and where possible to improve people's health and wellbeing, focusing on prevention and self-help.

Supported Living is a service designed to help people with a wide range of support needs to retain their independence by being supported in their own home. Home care is looking after a person from the comfort of their own home.

At any one time there are approximately 700 people who are in receipt of a supported living or a home care service. Approximately 30 adult care packages are let every month totalling 360 per year. Providers on the framework will support vulnerable adults, adults with disabilities and older people to achieve the desired outcomes that are important and personal to them. They will help deliver Wokingham's ambitions for adult social care in the Borough, to ensure that all residents are enabled to achieve their personal goals and ambitions, in a context which promotes safety, independence and choice.

It is the intention that through this procurement exercise we will continue to meet all of our obligations under the Care Act, ensuring a sustainable and vibrant market that provides high quality services to residents and offers value for money for the Council. At the centre of this is our aim to ensure that services are personalised and are in the best interest of our clients. We recognise the importance of ensuring continuity for all residents and minimising disruption.

The Care and Support Framework is being developed in collaboration with our local market and social care providers and they will have the opportunity to work with us when making this framework. We will continue to work with all our care providers and make this as open and transparent as possible. It is anticipated that virtually all of the providers we currently work with will join the framework. These providers will transfer with their current packages of care, with the client experiencing no disruption in service.

There will be a six month mobilisation for the new framework. We will work closely with providers that may choose not to engage with the procurement exercise or may be unsuccessful in their tender submissions. These packages will be reviewed, and a decision may be made to change provision to a framework provider where it is in the best interests of the client. This would be managed and clients would be fully supported via a social worker. Alternatively clients can be offered direct payments allowing them to receive their existing service with their existing provider if they choose to do so.

We recognise that at times people's needs may be better met by providers who are not on the framework and our process will allow us to use these providers as we need, ensuring that the clients' interest is the main focus and priority.

Supplementary Question

My supplementary is two-fold in some ways because you said that you would hopefully be able to reduce some people's care because this was all streamlined and so on and I wondered how that will happen? I would have hoped that they were getting the care they need at the moment.

Also the fact that you say that you might well be able to use services outside the framework. I am not sure how that works because you are setting up a framework and then you say we could also use providers outside the framework if you need to.

Supplementary Answer

All existing contracts for care will remain in place until the framework starts. So there will be no change to any resident who is using a contract at the moment.

To deal with your second point first we want the best for our residents and we will always, if somebody wants to use another provider and wants to bring that into the discussion, we will always look at those people. The framework is not a rigid set of rules and it will change over time to reflect basically what is happening in the market place, what people want, and what the situation is that people want.

Our aim is very much to use this to drive quality, to increase choice and to create more stability as well as for the sake of the Council to create more financial control over what we are doing going forwards.

We are the biggest budget in the Council and everybody knows the situation with national funding of adult social care, which is a continuing pressure, and it is very important that

every pound we spend is spent wisely but the full focus is going to be on achieving the right levels of care for residents. What will happen basically when the framework starts is that people will have the option of staying on the existing contract or moving into the framework and they can choose to stay on the existing contract if they wish to. That is very much the aim of what we are doing here. Better quality, more security basically and a better deal for residents and a better relationship with our suppliers going forward.

49.8 Chris Bowring asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

Relating to Agenda Item 49 "Support and Care Procurement" – How does the proposed framework for Support and Care procurement tie into your wider plan for Adult Social Care in Wokingham Borough?

Answer

I won't repeat things that I have just said to David but to answer your question directly our ambition is for Wokingham Borough to be one of the best Boroughs in the country and the Care and Support Framework will help us achieve this ambition and work with our partners to enable us to prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal support and care and where possible to improve people's health and wellbeing, focusing mainly on prevention and self-help. The final specifications will require providers to deliver reablement and strength based commissioning where the individual will always be at the centre of any support.

Adult Social Care will work closely with all the adult social care providers to ensure a high quality choice of services are provided to support and safeguard vulnerable residents, enabling them to achieve our key priority which is to remain independent as long as possible in their own homes and communities. Through this Framework we will ensure that improvements are made in the training and development of the carer workforce.

The Framework will strengthen our commissioning practice, improving the strategic oversight of commissioned activity, market intelligence and engagement with our providers. This will create a much greater stability of placements for our most vulnerable and increase quality assurance resulting in improved outcomes.

So basically in terms of your question how will it support our wider plan? Our wider plan is to drive quality to make sure that every pound of taxpayers' money is spent wisely and also to deliver on budget. This Department is the biggest in the Council in terms of expenditure. It has been on budget for three years now in an environment where we are underfunded by central Government and there is increasing pressure on us. For me that is no mean achievement but we are not going to rest on our laurels. We are going to keep going and this is a key part in doing it.

Supplementary Question

You said to David that Adult Social Care is clearly the largest budget in the Council and you indicated how the framework will deliver longer term contracts with more control. Are there any other steps that you have taken that would ensure that we provide high quality services and keep expenditure under control?

Supplementary Answer

Two main things that I would talk about in answer to your question. Since I have been in post, and the current DASS, a key priority for us has been to improve our financial

forecasting and keep better budget controls of where we are. We spent the first probably three to four months that I was in this position just working on strengthening our forecasting so that we always knew our expenditure and our current financial position by streamlining the IT, employing a better accountant and working hard in that area.

I mean the other thing I would say, which is something that is going to launch fairly shortly, is we have spent the last 12 months working on a programme to improve the way we manage demand. This service, probably 90% of the expenditure, is on commissioned services rather than staff and the whole point of this demand management approach is that you cannot get better in this service by reducing staff or increasing staff it is about how you spend the money, how you recognise the need and identify what people need earlier. Trying to enable them to live at home if they need support from the voluntary sector and trying to direct them to that. We are going to be adopting an approach which has been successful in several other councils and the aim is simply we will improve quality to people that way and if Adult Social Care does nothing different every year our costs, due to the ageing population and their increasing need, will rise by 4% a year. The aim of this programme as well is that it will slow our increase in costs by roughly 50% so we will be doing more with taxpayers' money and improving quality.

50. FEES AND CHARGES

The Executive considered a report setting out the proposed fees and charges for Council services, including those for the Wokingham element of the Public Protection Partnership.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing introduced the report, the purpose of which was to ensure that appropriate fees and charges were levied for each service, and highlighted that most of the charges would be enacted from 1 December 2020. However sports, cemeteries, housing, training course and youth and community charges would take effect from 1 January 2021 (sports) and 1 April 2021 respectively.

In response to a question about the new artificial cricket pitch and nets at Cantley Park the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure confirmed that private cricket clubs, schools and the public would be able to use these facilities and several enquiries had already been received.

Following a query by Councillor Kaiser, about why some of the sports and leisure charges had increased by a higher percentage than other charges, Councillor Batth explained that these charges had not been increased for some time and due to the current financial pressures caused by Covid it was felt that they should be brought into line with many other local authorities. Councillor Batth confirmed that benchmarking had taken place to ensure that these charges remained competitive and despite the increase they were still the cheapest when compared with the benchmarked authorities.

In order to support the community and businesses after the devastating impact on the livelihoods of those and the people who worked for them Councillor Kaiser proposed that an additional recommendation be added which would agree an ongoing policy of free Saturday car parking in the Council's car parks during the run up to Christmas in December. This year being Saturday 5th, 12th and 19th December which would be supported by a supplementary estimate of up to £20k. This would help both residents and business owners alike at this very difficult time. This additional recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved to be effective from the dates listed on the schedule;
- 2) Wokingham's discretionary fees and charges for the Public Protection Partnership be approved and the statutory charges be noted, as set out in Appendix B, effective from 1 April 2021;
- 3) an ongoing policy of free Saturday car parking in Council car parks during the run up to Christmas in December, this year being Saturday the 5th, 12th and 19th December supported by a supplementary estimate of up to £20k be approved.

51. SUPPORT AND CARE PROCUREMENT

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed Support and Care Procurement Framework. This procurement exercise would enable Adult Social Care to commission high quality, cost effective care for vulnerable adults in need of supported living or home care.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services advised that the Framework would formalise the process for letting contracts which would lead to competition being generated, better quality of services, forecasting and relationships with suppliers and the provision of longer contracts.

The intention was that the Framework, which sets up a spend of £74m over five years, most of which will be on statutory care commissioned services, would be in place in the Summer 2021. It was confirmed that the Framework would be set up to ensure that if a supplier was not performing there would be an opportunity to stop using that particular supplier.

RESOLVED that full Council be recommended to approve:

- 1) Officers to proceed with the Support and Care procurement, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 2) Officers to create a compliant framework, from which to call off support and care packages;
- 3) The Director of Adult Social Services to have delegated authority to approve business cases to enter into call off agreements with successful organisations for individual or block contracts where price and quality benefits are achieved.

52. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE 20/21 – MONITORING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposal to fund the implementation of a user-friendly multi-channel tool to measure customer satisfaction and gather feedback from customers in real time which could then be used to inform service improvement and increase satisfaction.

The Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions went through the report and advised that the request was to fund access to the GovMetrics insight tool which was already used by 70 local authorities around the country to gather

resident feedback, compare key measures and to educate service redesign. Investing in this software would help the Council improve its customer service to residents and better target where service improvements were required and why, which would then deliver future cost savings. In addition the information provided would enable target switching of services to self-service and the promotion of existing self-service options; thereby lowering costs and enabling staff to focus their time and efforts on residents who needed more detailed help and support. It would also help the Council to respond to repeat issues faster and better understand the frustrations and challenges that residents have when trying to access Council services.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) a Supplementary Estimate for £20,000 be approved;
- 2) the ongoing annual costs of £12,500 per annum for a further 2 years be noted.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.50 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser, Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Pauline Jorgensen and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Andy Croy
Richard Dolinski
Pauline Helliard-Symons
Graham Howe
Abdul Loyes
Barrie Patman
Alison Swaddle

53. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro and Gregor Murray.

Councillor Richard Dolinski, Deputy Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Margetts. In accordance with legislation Councillor Dolinski could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

54. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

55. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

This is possibly the last time we will meet as an Executive this year. I want to briefly take the opportunity to set out a clear commitment to everybody that we, Wokingham Borough Council, will not allow any of our residents go hungry or cold during this Covid-blighted winter.

The two initiatives that will be discussed tonight are important in this: they will make sure we target support to children, families, individuals and businesses most in need. We are, however, prepared to go further, indeed, as far as is necessary, to make good on that commitment. Therefore, I can also state tonight that, should it be necessary, we will find more funding, via a properly accounted supplementary estimate, to support those most in need.

We are not starting this from scratch, but the impact of Covid-19 has made this an even more important issue for us. In the interests of brevity, I will not repeat all the ways in which we are tackling poverty and the impact of poverty in the Borough. Some examples will suffice:

- Our various green energy and insulation schemes have brought direct savings of up to 25% on fuel bills and helped alleviate fuel poverty for more the 500 households;
- Our local welfare provision scheme provides emergency help to people in financial crisis;

- Our Council Tax Reduction Scheme helps people on low incomes. I am delighted to say, following a recent consultation, we are working on plans to extend this following due decision-making progress.

Together with the initiatives to be discussed tonight, we will be launching a Kick-Start programme, which will help young people move from Universal Credit to secure jobs, and a digital inclusion project to collect unused IT equipment and recycle it for those people currently unable to access digital technology.

I would briefly update on our ongoing progress on another important issue for us which is equalities.

In recent months we have signed the Race at Work Charter as a commitment to advance equality and tackle racism in the workplace. We have also identified an external facilitator to work with us and the Borough's BME Forum, in order to help us and the Forum resolve issues to find a consensus for the Borough's future. We are using the findings from the Tackling Racism Matter survey to draft clear objectives that will go back to the public and stakeholders for discussion before they are agreed.

We will be bringing in the New Year to the Executive and Council the next steps in bringing forward a Poverty Strategy and a revised Equalities Policy.

In all of these vital efforts, we are working with the voluntary sector organisations in a genuine and strengthening partnership that brings mutual benefit to all. We gain from the expertise and community connections the voluntary sector brings and they gain from the financial and other support a local authority can provide. We are also working in close partnership with the health institutions, the CCG, the NHS and GPs and with the blue light institutions, the police, the fire service and the ambulance service. It is a win-win arrangement that is bringing tangible benefits to residents, which we will continue to develop.

Just a last point on a topical note, there are no Arcadia or Debenhams shops in Wokingham Borough; I am sure you will be pleased to hear.

56. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

56.1 Daniel Hinton had asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question but as he was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided:

Question

With the end of lockdown will these grants being offered help to get businesses going again?

Answer

There are a number of grants and schemes available nationally and regionally to support business and at Wokingham we are currently administering two grant schemes aimed at supporting businesses hit by the recent four week lockdown restrictions.

The first is a mandatory grant aimed at companies who have been forced to close and who are registered for business rates. In the past two weeks we have paid out more than £529,000 of grants to local businesses.

The scheme I am seeking Executive approval for tonight is to offer grants to those businesses who have been impacted by the last four week's restrictions but who risked falling through the net because they didn't fit the criteria for other schemes. In particular we hope to be able to help support any of our market traders who have been unable to trade as well as those small businesses whose income relies on trade with businesses who themselves have had to close.

By offering grants of £1,500 per business we hope to go some way towards covering any loss of income ahead of, what we all hope, is a busy trading period for them from now through to Christmas.

However this is just one part of a longer term support package we hope to be able to put in place using the £3.4m we have allocated through the Additional Restrictions Grant fund. The money needs to cover all our business support activity through to the end of March 2022 and over the next few months I look forward to bringing a range of new grant and support packages back for approval.

I can assure you that any future scheme or initiative will be developed in partnership with our business community to make sure the money has the biggest possible impact on our hardworking local companies and individuals.

56.2 Philip Cunnington asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

There have been concerns about mental health during the Covid emergency, will these Government Winter Payments help residents in this respect?

Answer

The Department for Work and Pensions has specified that the Covid Winter Grant Scheme funds should be used to provide ring-fenced support with the costs of food, energy and related items. It is not a grant intended to directly address mental and emotional health concerns resulting from the Covid emergency, although the support is designed to relieve financial pressures and associated stress and hardship experienced by families and individuals.

I am delighted to announce that we have concluded an arrangement with Oxfordshire Mind who will provide for our residents a new service in the near future for mental health.

56.3 Annette Medhurst asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Wokingham Foodbank provides support for households across the Borough that are unable to afford to buy food and other essentials, and where appropriate heating and lighting. So far this year the Foodbank has received just over 250 referrals from departments at Wokingham Borough Council including Children's Services, community engagement and local welfare provision. The Covid Winter Grant Scheme Report states that approximately £100,000 will be distributed to families and individuals in need to provide support with food, water and utilities. How will WBC ensure that this scheme is

fully understood and accessible to its front line staff working with vulnerable households across the Borough such that they refer into this scheme rather than the Foodbank?

Answer

We want to be sure Annette, and I thank you for your question, that we reach the families and individuals most in need during this difficult time.

The Borough will ensure that a comprehensive communication campaign is rolled out across the Borough and internally within the Council to ensure that families, individuals and their representatives understand the purpose of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme, who might benefit from support from the scheme, and how to apply for support through the scheme.

It is proposed that any individual or family will be eligible to apply for support, or a representative, who may be a front-line worker at the Council, a charitable or voluntary organisation, a partner organisation, or a member of the public can apply on their behalf.

We are very keen to work with our partners from the charity and voluntary sector to identify families who are in need and signpost them to the scheme for support or assist them in their applications.

Supplementary Question

From the point where a struggling family for example talk to their social worker how long will it take for the household to actually receive support from this scheme?

Supplementary Answer

I think that is a very difficult question because it depends on the complexity of their need. We, as you know, have adopted a One Front Door Scheme so the need would be referenced through there and then fed out to the various departments. We are very, very, keen to ensure that we meet every need in terms of both home, heat and food.

56.4 Claire Revie sked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

At Share Wokingham we distribute food to households that have been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. While most people come to us at Norreys Church we occasionally need to deliver food to support self-isolating households. How will the Local Authority help families eligible for support from the Covid Winter Grant Scheme but unable to physically get out to the shops to buy food with the vouchers that have been issued?

Answer

For those families who are unable to physically get out to the shops to use food and grocery vouchers provided, there will be an option for families to email or provide the vouchers to a representative who can use the vouchers on their behalf and deliver food and groceries safely to their door.

56.5 Emma Cantrell had asked the Leader of the Council the following question but as she was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided:

Question

First Days is a local charity that works to reduce the impact of poverty on families in the Wokingham area and beyond. Many of the families we support are very anxious and struggling with additional costs at this time of year, particularly fuel to heat their homes. There are a high number of domestic energy suppliers in the UK and how support is offered to families might vary according to the company that supplies their gas or electricity as well as whether they have a pre-payment meter or pay by direct debit. How will this scheme be rolled out and how will we, as a local anti-poverty charity, refer our families into it for support?

Answer

It is proposed that there is provision through this scheme for any individual or family to apply for support, or for a representative, who may be a front-line worker at the Council, a charitable or voluntary organisation, a partner organisation, or a member of the public, to apply on their behalf. This will be via a referral into the Citizens' Advice Wokingham Covid One Front Door who will act as triage for the application, providing a recommendation to the Council for support. The Council will then arrange distribution of funds.

Funds can be distributed in a variety of ways to best meet the needs of the beneficiary. This will include vouchers, payment cards credited with a specific amount, payments into bank accounts, or in exceptional circumstances, cash. Each applicant will be assessed according to their need and funds provided in a way designed to address their specific circumstances.

57. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

57.1 Alison Swaddle asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Councillor Halsall, can we have confidence that the Winter Grant payments will be distributed before Christmas?

Answer

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme provides £208,703 to Wokingham Borough Council to support families and individuals who are struggling to meet the cost of food and energy bills between 1st December 2020 and 31st March 2021.

It is proposed that the grant will be distributed in three ways:

1. food vouchers to be provided to the families of the 2,166 children and young people in Wokingham in receipt of a means-tested Free School Meals to cover the Christmas holidays 2020 and February half term 2021 (£15 per child per holiday week). The total cost of this will be approximately £100,000.

We are working closely with schools to ensure that the vouchers covering the Christmas holidays are distributed before the end of this term. We have a plan in place to achieve this and we have systems and support in place which will be ready for schools to use shortly after the Executive Meeting tonight. Schools have been fully briefed about our plan.

The remainder of the vouchers will be distributed shortly before the beginning of the February half term holiday.

2. Support to be provided to up to 100 Care Leavers with the costs of food and/or energy and the total cost of that will be around £5,000.

We are working closely with our leaving care team to ensure that support is provided at a time over the winter months which best meets the needs of Care Leavers. We are ready to provide support as advised by our specialist teams.

3. Support to be provided to families and individuals in need who do not fall into the above two categories. Front-line services who are already in contact with the families and individuals in need will be able to refer them for support via the existing Covid Community Response One Front Door operated by Wokingham Citizens' Advice Bureau. The Citizens' Advice Bureau will assess families and individuals for this and other support and forward details of families in need to the Council who will provide support from the grant funds. We will monitor carefully the demand from families and individuals for support, and should need exceed the funds available, a further paper detailing need and proposed response will be considered by the Executive.

Supplementary Question

It is about Edenred, who I understand are the proposed supplier for the distribution of the free school meal vouchers. They were commissioned by the Government to deliver the scheme earlier on in the pandemic and at that time, as I think we are all fully aware, there were very well-publicised problems and delays. Are you confident that this isn't going to be repeated?

Supplementary Answer

We are assured that all the issues experienced early in the roll out of the scheme have now been addressed. We are now also setting up a helpline for school staff, who will be processing the distribution of vouchers via the Edenred portal, so that emerging problems can be dealt with quickly. No schools have expressed concerns about using Edenred this time round.

57.2 Abdul Loyes asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Will the Covid Winter Grant Scheme ensure that no child in the Borough will go hungry this winter?

Answer

We are committed to ensuring that no child goes hungry over the winter months. The Covid Winter Grant Scheme as I said provides £208,703 to Wokingham Borough Council to support families and individuals who are struggling to meet the cost of food and energy bills between 1st December 2020 and 31st March 2021.

It is proposed that the grant is distributed in three ways:

1. Food vouchers to be provided to the families of the 2,166 children and young people in Wokingham in receipt of means-tested Free School Meals to cover the

Christmas holidays 2020 and February half term 2021 (that is £15 per child per holiday week). The total cost of this will be approximately £100,000.

2. Support to be provided to up to 100 Care Leavers with the costs of food and/or energy bills. Total cost of about £5,000.
3. Support to be provided to families and individuals in need who do not fall into the above two categories. Front-line services who are already in contact with families and individuals in need will be able to refer them for support via the existing Covid Community Response One Front Door operated by Wokingham Citizens' Advice Bureau. The Citizens' Advice Bureau will assess the families and individuals for this and other support and forward details of families in need to the Council who will provide support from the grant funds. We will monitor carefully the demand from families and individuals for support, and should need exceed the funds available a further paper detailing need and proposed response will be considered by an emergency Executive.

Supplementary Question

A family or individual may experience several periods of need throughout the winter months. How can we ensure that families and individuals receive help when they need it?

Supplementary Answer

A family or individual will be able to apply for support, or have an application submitted on their behalf, as many times as is necessary over the period of the grant.

57.3 Barrie Patman asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

What are the arrangements for Phase 2 of the Additional Restrictions Grant – Discretionary Grants Scheme?

Answer

Our current focus is obviously on supporting businesses who have been impacted by the last four weeks of the lockdown restrictions. We have already paid out over half a million pounds of mandatory business grants and are already encouraging businesses to submit applications for Phase 1 of our Discretionary Grants Scheme that I hope the Executive will approve tonight.

In the meantime we will continue to work with the local businesses to offer support and advice where appropriate including signposting to other potential sources of financial support available through central Government and other agencies.

Wokingham Borough has been awarded £3.4m of Additional Restrictions Grant to support companies over the next 16 months and we want to make sure we listen to businesses so that we target the money where and when it is needed most. We have growing relationships with the business community on an individual basis as well as through business organisations and our own Covid Business Taskforce; all of whom are feeding into the economic response and recovery plans.

With Wokingham moving into Tier 2, after the lockdown, we are already looking at extending the current Discretionary Scheme to cover businesses who will continue to be impacted as a result of the additional restrictions that the higher tier means.

With Councillor Munro I have already asked Officers to develop options for additional grant or other support schemes to be launched in the new year aiming to support businesses through what is always a challenging time even without the additional impact of Covid.

57.4 Graham Howe asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

Whilst the grants in the report are designated for businesses, many are run by families who have a great dependency on these distributions to survive. Can you assure us that those that are vulnerable, as a consequence of shortfalls in business or indeed any other families, will not suffer homelessness within the Borough of Wokingham?

Answer

I think everybody knows that I take homelessness very seriously and I can confirm that at Wokingham Borough we have a strong record of working with households and landlords to sustain tenancies and avoid homelessness. All households who approach the Council will receive individual advice and assistance and where required a homeless application will be taken and we will support them in line with our statutory duties.

Unfortunately, there will almost certainly be cases of homelessness as a result of the economic impact of Covid but I can assure you the team will continue to do everything in their power to try and prevent these incidences and where they are unable to do so we will support the affected households.

I can also advise that Wokingham Borough Council has been successful in bidding for £1.1m of homelessness funding in the financial year, along with a Homelessness Grant of £448k. These funds will help some of the most vulnerable in the Borough. £160k over 3 years for Housing First delivery. There is immediate support of £204k, Next Steps Capital funding which is £675k, and rough sleepers the initial payment which is £91k on top of the Homelessness Grant which is £448k.

Wokingham Borough Council has been successful implementing the “all in policy” for rough sleepers since March, when we were requested by Government to accommodate all rough sleepers and we will continue to do so through the winter months and beyond.

Since the start of March Wokingham Borough Council has placed 64 households into temporary accommodation in response to the pandemic, 21 (34%) have been moved into settled accommodation.

We have been successful in our bid to fund the roll out of Housing First in the Borough. With a capital contribution of £675k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government we will be purchasing five homes via our local housing company for the vulnerable rough sleepers. We also have received £150k in revenue funding from the Government to provide intensive in-reach support for our Housing First cohort over the next 3 years.

57.5 Pauline Helliar-Symons asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Can you ensure that all families in need will be catered for by the support provided by the Covid Winter Grant Scheme?

Answer

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme provides £208,703 to Wokingham Borough Council to support families and individuals who are struggling to meet the cost of food and energy bills between 1st December 2020 and 31st March 2021.

It is proposed that the grant is used in three ways as I have already commented:

1. Food vouchers to be provided to the families of the 2,166 children and young people in Wokingham in receipt of means-tested Free School Meals to cover the Christmas holidays 2020 and February half term 2021 (£15 per child per holiday week). The total cost of this will be approximately £100,000.
2. Support to be provided to up to 100 Care Leavers with the costs of food and energy bills. Total cost £5,000.
3. Support to be provided to families and individuals in need who do not fall into the above two categories. Front-line services who are already in contact with families and individuals in need will be able to refer them for support via the existing Covid Community Response One Front Door operated by Wokingham Citizens' Advice Bureau. The Citizens' Advice Bureau will assess families and individuals for this and other support and forward details of families in need to the Council who will provide support from the grant funds. We will monitor carefully the demand from families and individuals for support, and should need exceed the funds available, a further paper detailing need and proposed response will be considered by the Executive.

All of that I have already said. In answer to your specific question we do have our ways of determining the families who are in need with the information we have currently got. However, if we should have missed any then Councillors or well-meaning people should refer them to the Citizens' Advice Bureau and at the end of the day should that fail refer them to me or another Councillor or Executive Member who will then ensure that nobody falls through the cracks. I think that is very important for us to summon everybody, which we can, to make sure that nobody falls through the cracks.

Supplementary Question

It is known that fraudsters have been targeting Covid-19 support funds. How will the risk of fraud be mitigated so that the funds are received by those that genuinely need them?

Supplementary Answer

Checks are being put in place to verify the identity of those eligible for the scheme. Cash will only be used in exceptional circumstances to avoid use of the funds for items or services outside the scope and intent of the grant. If fraud is suspected, the Department for Work and Pensions will be notified so that any emerging threats can be identified and shared with other authorities.

We are very conscious of the possibilities and we are doing everything we can to ensure that we are validating applications whilst not using that as an excuse for letting people down.

57.6 Andy Croy asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

The Executive plans to give grocery and clothing vouchers to families in receipt of free school meals over the school holidays. The option to give families cash has been barely considered, but it was an option that was allowed by Government.

A moral judgement has been made on the ability of the parents to manage their cash.

How many of the parents were expected to spend cash on tobacco and alcohol?

Answer

I really do not think that is a question for us. For clarity, the vouchers to be distributed to the parents/carers of children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals can be spent on food and groceries, not clothing.

The choice of food and grocery vouchers over cash is based on the following considerations:

- A successful scheme for distribution of vouchers through schools is already in place and has been used already during the Covid pandemic, which means that we can put these arrangements in place quickly to ensure that families benefit from support without delay.
- We want to support families who may be struggling with debt to be able to ring-fence these funds for essential food and grocery items so that no child goes hungry over the Christmas and February half term breaks.
- Families have a wide choice of supermarkets and food outlets in which they can use the vouchers. 10 supermarkets and other outlets are involved in the scheme, 9 of which have a physical presence in Wokingham.
- The means of distribution of vouchers is designed to be non-stigmatising. Parents and carers exchange voucher eCodes for store eGift vouchers of their choice.

We trust that families will want support from us which can be used to benefit their children over the Christmas and half term breaks. Use of vouchers provides ring-fenced choice and protects families from feeling pressured into using cash towards settlement of debt or other liabilities.

I would add that we are operating a scheme which is consistent with our neighbours: West Berkshire, Bracknell, and the Royal Borough. But I guess importantly for you it is the scheme which is being used by Reading Borough Council.

Supplementary Question

I think it is a question for the Executive because it is the Executive which has decided to give vouchers not cash. The local geography is interesting but I am not concerned about

what goes on in other Boroughs John and I do not think you should be either. You should be concerned about what is going on in Wokingham.

You have mentioned several times the ring fencing of cash and debt but you are unable to tell me what proportion of parents cannot be trusted. Do you not think that this is simply a lack of trust and that there is a moral judgement that people are impoverished because in some way they lack moral virtue and that this decision is as a result of that?

Supplementary Answer

It is not for me as Leader of the Council to judge people's morals. I am neither a priest nor a philosopher and I would not do so. We are faced with a task in trying to ameliorate hunger, poverty and destitution during a period which is a period of a pandemic. So, our administrative arrangements are purely administrative in order to reach as many people as we possibly can but I would point out to you that one of the concerns in using money is if somebody has an overdraft and we put money into their bank it is not entirely clear that they will be able to use the money we put in their bank. So, I am not sure that your judgement is correct when other Boroughs similar to ours have made a judgement very similar to ours independently. But anyway, thank you for raising it.

58. COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME REPORT

The Executive considered a report relating to proposals for the distribution of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced the report and advised that the Department for Work and Pensions had provided a grant across all local authorities of £70m from which Wokingham Borough Council had been allocated £280,703. The first tranche (50%) had already been received to cover the period 1st December 2020 to 31st March 2021. The purpose of the grant was to help struggling families and individuals with the cost of food, utility bills and other associated items. At least 80% of the grant was ringfenced to benefit families with children and up to 20% for the benefit of individuals.

Councillor Dolinski queried whether, if there was any problem with the administration of the system, the vouchers would be backdated. In response Councillor Clark confirmed that all children in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals would automatically receive vouchers distributed by Edinred and these would be sent to the relevant school. If need appeared later, once the schools were closed, the individual could go to the Citizens' Advice Bureau or any charity for support. The Leader of Council confirmed that if there was a problem with the administration of the grant then the Council would ensure that any problems were solved.

In response to a query about how the Council was going to ensure that anyone receiving the vouchers would not feel stigmatised Councillor Clark confirmed that the vouchers would contain an Ecode with which families could purchase gift cards which would be the same as those purchased by anyone.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the distribution of food vouchers to a total value of £100,000 to cover the Christmas 2020 and February 2021 half-term breaks to families with children in receipt of means-tested free school meals be approved;

- 2) the distribution of up to £5,000 in total to Care Leavers to ensure that they have sufficient access to food and utilities over the winter months be approved;
- 3) the distribution of the remainder of the grant through referral of families and individuals in need by voluntary sector partners (including under the umbrella of INVOLVE), other partners, and internal front-line staff into the Community Response Front Door facilitated by the Citizen's Advice Bureau be approved;
- 4) that authority be delegated to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services, to make decisions about the process for determination of level of support provided and means of delivery of support under 2 and 3 above, in line with guidance provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

59. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT (ARG) – DISCRETIONARY GRANTS SCHEME PHASE 1

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed policy for Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) – Discretionary Grants Scheme Phase 1.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Finance and Housing highlighted that Additional Restrictions Grant funding in the sum of £3.4m had been awarded to the Council, which would be administered via a phased approach until March 2022 with £400k being made available immediately to fund Phase 1 of the Discretionary Grant Scheme. This would cover businesses which had been impacted by the national lockdown restrictions which had been in force from 5 November-2 December 2020.

Councillor Kaiser advised that the remaining £3m would be used to support businesses through to March 2022, predominantly in the form of future discretionary grant schemes or phases. This discretionary scheme would supplement the mandatory scheme of £1.4m of which over £500k had already been paid out to those businesses which had been mandated to close under the national lockdown restrictions.

In response to a query from Councillor Batth, about where there was any contingency built in if more funds were required, Councillor Kaiser confirmed that unfortunately the Government had made it clear that the £3.4m was expected to last until March 2022 even if more lockdowns were imposed.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Wokingham Borough Council's Additional Restrictions Grant - Discretionary Grants Scheme Phase 1 policy, relating to the Covid 19 pandemic as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
- 2) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member of Finance and Housing, to make minor amendments to the Policy as required for future phases.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.45 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser, Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro and Gregor Murray

Other Councillors Present

Laura Blumenthal
Lindsay Ferris
Pauline Helliard-Symons
Abdul Loyes
Barrie Patman

60. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Wayne Smith.

61. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

62. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

This is the last Executive Meeting of 2020. It has been without doubt a tumultuous year. I would like to start this meeting recalling all those who have sadly passed away this year including:

- The 189 residents who have died with Covid;
- The horrific Forbury murders of James Furlong and his friends; and
- James Box's sudden and unexpected death.

Please could you join me in just a moment's silence.

As we prepare for a Christmas that will, due to Covid, be like no other any of us can recall, I want to take a brief moment to look forward with some hope to 2021.

This has been a terrible year and I do not wish to downplay the suffering people have gone through. Whether you have lost a loved one, struggled with illness, stress or anxiety or have been financially hit by this pandemic. My thoughts are with you and the Council is here to help.

We also have a rising number of cases in the Borough and so must be vigilant and sensible. Keep to the Covid-19 rules and limit the number of people we meet. We were moved into Tier 3 today with the additional restrictions that brings.

As a result of significant data analysis, we have identified and will identify six Wards; the hot spots. Today they are Winnersh, Shinfield, Bulmershe and Whitegates, Loddon, Emmbrook and Sonning where the incidence of Coronavirus at the moment is the highest and will be concentrating our efforts and messaging there. Councillors and residents are asked to work with us to change behaviour. This list of hotspots will change from week to week.

It is vital, therefore, that we remember and keep to the Covid rules and, in particular at this time of year, remember that the more social interaction we have, the more we risk spreading infection.

However, there are reasons to be optimistic in Wokingham Borough thanks to our fantastic voluntary organisations, health and care workers and diligent Council Officers we are coping with Covid-19 collectively, compassionately and with much innovation.

Today we launched one of the first lateral flow testing services in the country, I believe it to be the first, that will help people visit residents in care homes at Christmas. The tests are being offered at Shute End to those with loved ones in those homes that have signed up to the scheme. In this way, we are adding peace of mind to people who want to visit the homes but who, understandably, want to minimise risk of taking infection with them.

We will be assisting schools to introduce lateral flow testing in the New Year. Our support for the NHS's local tracing service is proving effective, with 90% contact tracing success in the Borough. This is in part thanks to our introduction of text message tracing and door-knocking to follow-up on contacts.

We are also helping the NHS with its vaccination programme, with care workers in the Borough among the first to get the jab. As 2020 has been the year of Covid-19, it must be hoped that 2021 is the year of the vaccine. As I have mentioned, our cases are rising, and the vaccination programme will take time to roll out and so it is no panacea: but it is a cause for optimism and that is an important commodity right now.

I am delighted to announce that Wokingham Borough Council is launching an 18-month pilot scheme to help people with mental health issues in the Borough funded by a generous donation from a resident. The scheme will be run on the Council's behalf by mental health charity Oxfordshire MIND, giving our GPs very valuable help. Among the areas it will focus on are recognising mental health issues early and intervening to prevent conditions deteriorating, ensuring timely referrals to specialists, coordinating the support available for those with mental health issues and promoting awareness of the issues in the community.

The pilot service will be inclusive, ethically and able to meet the wellbeing and mental needs of a diverse range of residents of the Borough. It will develop a way to support those with mild to moderate mental health needs, for instance including non-medical interventions such as social prescribing, self-management, peer support, signposting, and activities. It is estimated that it will support about a thousand people each year.

Apart from Covid, we have other reasons for optimism in the Borough.

Despite the pandemic and resulting economic problems, our regenerated Wokingham town centre is attracting new businesses that are prepared to invest at this difficult time because we have been prepared to invest in the Town. The new homes in the town centre, built as part of the regeneration, are selling fast and the retail and business units are being snapped up. Earley, Woodley and Twyford are also vibrant. This, along with our other prudent investments are providing a sound financial base to underpin our services and improve our schools, leisure centres, roads and other community facilities.

As a sign of confidence in our Borough I am delighted to announce plans to develop the "largest purpose-built film studio" in the UK have been put forward in Wokingham. US company Blackhall Studios and the University of Reading want to build the new £150m studios at Thames Valley Science Park in Wokingham. Blackhall said the move would "bring major Hollywood film productions to the UK" and create up to 3,000 jobs.

Notwithstanding a very challenging year, our finances are strong and our Finance Team second to none. Whilst there is some incomprehensible and, may I say, uninformed concentration on our gross borrowings, our net borrowings are extremely low and interest rates are pegged for up to 50 years. We will be presenting a balanced budget which continues to be ambitious in our aim to:

- Enrich lives;
- Safe, strong communities;
- The right homes in the right places;
- A clean and green Borough;
- Keeping the Borough moving;
- Changing the way we work for you, to be the best that we can in serving our residents.

The issue of housing numbers has been overshadowed by Covid but it is vitally important to our future. You will recall that, during the summer, the Government proposed a new methodology for allocating housing that would have buried our Borough under an avalanche of concrete, with developers able to build at will. At the time, I felt that I was a lone voice. We campaigned hard against this and we have been successful. Our housing numbers at 759 (30 below the standard method of 789) are still too high but considerably more achievable than the 1,635 the white paper proposed. This is as a direct result of all those who lobbied for a different approach among whom we were a major voice and I would like to thank all the Councillors, our very hard dedicated MPs and residents, for their support.

Therefore, despite the ongoing pandemic, I believe we can look forward to 2021 with some cautious optimism. Covid-19 has not gone away and we must remain careful, in particular over Christmas, but the foundations are in place for the Borough to recover strongly from this awful year.

Please observe the rules rigorously especially during the Christmas period. Help us to slow down the increase and to reverse it.

May I thank all the Directors and Officers who have been throughout the year flexible, innovative and dedicated. Thank you for your considerable commitment to the wellbeing of our residents.

May I thank my Executive team for their hard work and all the Councillors for their support.

Lastly may I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

63. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

64. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

64.1 Barrie Patman asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

What is the sequencing for inoculation?

Answer

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has recommended that the aim of the first phase of the vaccination programme has got to be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from Covid-19 increases with age, the prioritisation is primarily based on age.

In answer to your question directly the priority list is:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. All those over 75 years old
4. All those 70 years old and older and extremely clinically vulnerable individuals
5. All those 65 years of age and over
6. All individuals 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. All those 60 years of age and over
8. All those 55 years of age and over
9. All those 50 years of age and over

It is estimated that taken together these groups will cover 99% of preventable mortality from Covid-19.

The next phase of the vaccination programme after this will seek to reduce further hospitalisation and provide targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure or those delivering public services. The planning of this second phase is ongoing with more detail expected in Spring 2021.

Supplementary Question

Do you think that us moving to Tier 3 is going to have any impact on the process of this at all?

Supplementary Answer

It is difficult to know because it only happened today. What I would hope to see, and we will be lobbying hard for, is further support from Central Government in terms of getting hold of as many vaccinations as possible and any support they can offer us increasing testing for the Borough so we can drive down case rates and get ourselves into a better position.

64.2 Pauline Helliard-Symons asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

How will we be asked when we are due for a vaccination?

Answer

The NHS is offering, and priority is being given with the Covid-19 vaccine, to the people who are most at risk from coronavirus.

The vaccine is being offered in some hospitals across England and, from this week, hundreds of local vaccination centres run by GPs. You are probably aware that it is being issued from the practice in Wargrave and it started this week in Finchampstead and other parts of the Borough will follow next week.

The order in which people will be offered the vaccine is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

The NHS recommends that all eligible residents should wait to be contacted for a Covid vaccination. Do not turn up speculatively at your local surgery because it will not be there and obviously those who need it need to be prioritised. Residents will be contacted by their local GP practice when the vaccine is available.

Practices will select the communication channel which they normally use to contact patients. This may include, but is not limited to, phone calls, text messages, Emails or printed letters. Again, I would repeat, we need the vaccination teams to be focussed on doing their job and all residents are advised not to phone GP practices or other NHS services with general queries. The NHS will get to everybody as quickly and as efficiently as it can, in the order I set out in answer to the last question.

At present it is difficult for us to know how soon they will get through all of the first few lists but we will be keeping as much pressure on to get it done as soon as possible.

Supplementary Question

You might not know the answer to this Charles but do you happen to know whether those of us whose surgeries are in different boroughs will have all of that same applied?

Supplementary Answer

You are talking about if you have got a surgery for example in Bracknell Forest? I would imagine so but I do not know the answer is the truthful response. I would imagine that they will be following the same principles, which I read out earlier, because they are nationwide and Bracknell Forest is obviously in Berkshire East. I was present at the Health and Wellbeing Board last week when Berkshire West was discussed, which includes obviously West Berkshire and Reading, and the same principles have been put in place there so I see no reason to believe that Berkshire East would be any different.

64.3 Lindsay Ferris asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**Question**

There will be a considerable amount of work required by Wokingham Borough Council to ensure that there is a coordinated and speedy route to enable our local Health Services to administer the long awaited Covid-19 Vaccines to our residents in the Borough. This action is likely to require additional financial resource as well as the need for additional staff to provide these functions. The Liberal Democrat Group on WBC support such action. It is

also important that WBC continue to provide as many of our local services during this period as possible.

We recommend that WBC find someone with experience in logistics/programme management or project management to ensure these capabilities are provided in a cost effective and efficient manner. This work will be complex and it is essential that these actions are implemented in an expedite manner.

As time has been short, the information within the Executive paper will by definition be limited. Can the Leader of the Council provide additional information on this project at the Executive meeting and will he continue to provide updates on a regular basis, so that all parties can be made aware of what has been achieved and what still needs to be completed?

Answer

The Council has successfully managed its Covid-19 response since March by standing up and using its emergency planning governance to oversee planning and delivery. This is chaired by the Chief Executive and includes all the directors. The 'Gold' meeting, as it is called, meets as often as needed and was meeting daily at the height of the pandemic. As part of this function the Council draws on all of its resource and expertise as needed from around the Council, included in this is access to qualified and experienced programme management.

This meeting tonight is to finalise plans to release additional funding that will support several initiatives across the Council's Covid-19 response. This includes the delivery of rapid tests to enable care home visits before Christmas, building upon its local contact tracing service and supporting the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme across the Borough.

Subject to approval tonight, £500,000 has been requested to support these initiatives and ensure they can run effectively. Significant work is already being undertaken, with Council employees working tirelessly on the planning and preparation of a local pilot that will support care homes with their rapid testing of visitors.

This is an important step and will mean that care home residents in the Borough could have face-to-face contact with loved ones before Christmas. To help local care home providers navigate rapid testing for visitors the Council has made the decision to manage the process and conduct these tests at its Shute End Offices. There will be a range of measures in place to ensure that the site is as safe as it can be possible.

Throughout the pandemic, our aim has always been to support our communities as much as possible, particularly our most vulnerable residents in local care homes. There are a lot of administrative and technical logistics involved with rapid testing, which could put an additional pressure on care homes that are already under a lot of strain. This is why we have decided to create a central test point at our Shute End Offices.

We will be one of the first Boroughs in the UK, actually I think we are the first, to undertake a pilot of this kind and a tremendous amount of effort has gone into its organisation. To be able to facilitate a rapid testing programme and enable residents to visit care homes before, during, and after the festive period is extremely rewarding. That said, we will continue to take extra precautions and for safety visitors will need to keep their distance and still wear full PPE when visiting loved ones.

In terms of other programmes identified, the Council has already been running a successful contact tracing scheme to support NHS Test and Trace, with the contact tracing success rate currently sitting at 90% across the Borough. It is proposed that additional funding will support the continuation of this service and develop a further element of self-isolation for those who need it.

In addition to this, Wokingham Borough has been allocated a limited number of vaccinations for care home residents and staff. While the roll-out of the vaccination programme is being led by the NHS, it is supported by local authorities, and in particular us, and it is expected that the Council will need to provide additional support to its partners as the programme expands. This will require additional resource to manage and coordinate the programme locally.

We are continuing to dedicate a huge amount of resource to our Covid-19 response and we are proud of those efforts. However, we must remember that it will be some time before we can see the impact of certain initiatives, such as the vaccine programme, on our case rates. Therefore, it is extremely important that we adhere to the rules and follow social distancing guidance to prevent a rise in community transmission rates during the rollout of these programmes.

I will always, as you know, endeavour to be open and transparent in how we support our residents and will happily commit to giving you regular updates as I have in the past.

Supplementary Question

As you know if there is something that I am prepared to support the Council with I will stand up and say so. This is one of those issues and I think is absolutely vital and fully support the actions. Have any grants or anything come from Government to support this or is this funded from within?

Supplementary Answer

It is a very difficult question because what the Government has done is given grants and said this is your lot until March 2022. So, the current presumption is that we are not going to get any more money but I suspect that will change because the new requirement for lateral flow testing for schools, which is not really completely developed, is going to require a huge amount of resource, particularly from us, to do it properly. So at the moment the answer is no but I suspect the future answer will be yes.

64.4 Gary Cowan had asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question but as he was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided:

Question

As Coronavirus infection rates across Berkshire continue to fluctuate but some neighbourhoods have seen a huge increase in cases, according to government statistics. Across Berkshire, cases have continued to surge in many areas, like Wokingham and College Town. Within Wokingham Borough, numbers continue to rise as a fairly high percentage. Wokingham West and South saw the highest percentage increase, and the greatest number of new cases overall throughout the Borough. The area now has the highest rolling infection rate, which has grown significantly in the last month. Arborfield and Garrison also have a high infection rate.

Is it possible to regularly reproduce the data from Berkshire Live on the Council's website?

Answer

As has been identified within the question, the best, most accessible, source of information for residents to find out the latest Covid-19 cases data for Wokingham Borough is the Public Health for Berkshire Covid Dashboard.

This website contains the most up to date Covid-19 data. It also includes data from each of the local authorities across Berkshire. There is also a more detailed data presentation prepared each week which is found in the information centre on the website. As this data is updated in 'real-time' it has been agreed that the most appropriate way for Wokingham residents to access the most up to date data is by visiting the website directly or by accessing through the links on the Wokingham Borough Council Website. This prevents there from being multiple versions of data which are updated at different times which risks causing confusion.

The website can be easily accessed at the web address www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk or if you google "Berkshire Public Health" it is the first result that comes up. In addition the website is linked through the Wokingham Borough Council Website, from the home page/front page of the WBC website you need to click on the orange banner marked "find out the latest about coronavirus" this will lead you to a page of the latest Covid-19 updates from where you can click on the link "Covid 19 Dashboard" which will take you to the Berkshire Public Health website.

64.5 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

What is the best source of information for residents to find out the latest Covid-19 case data for Wokingham Borough?

Answer

Good information on something like this is very important and the best, most accessible and most accurate, source of information to find out the latest Covid data for Wokingham Borough, and indeed all of West Berkshire, is the Public Health for Berkshire Covid Dashboard. This website has live updates from Government data sources so contains the most up to date information. It clearly shows the number of new cases on any given day, the weekly rate for an area, as well as mortality data. It also includes data from all of the local authorities in Berkshire. There is more detailed information prepared every week, which is found in the information centre on the website. This includes detailed local information about each ward and what is going on there. The web address is www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk or just simply google "Berkshire Public Health" and it is the first result that comes up.

For those who want more data and more detail about the national picture the Government website www.coronavirus.data.gov.uk covers all the local authorities in the UK. If anybody wants to know what is going on I would firmly recommend going to that site. Do not accept what you see in the papers as gospel.

There is also the Zoe app, that is widely touted, and this has merits, but it tracks symptoms it does not track cases. So, if you want to know what is going on with cases that is the place to go.

64.6 Abdul Loyes asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

Can you set out for me how the Council's finances will be impacted by the welcome spending of up to £500,000 to support the Council's Covid-19 response?

Answer

Obviously, this is a significant sum, and it is a credit to how well the Council has run and continues to run its finances under the careful stewardship of Graham Ebers and his finance team that we are able to meet this level of spending to support the response to the pandemic. The latest Revenue Monitoring I will be presenting at the Executive in January will show we have managed to turnaround the projected overspend due to Covid-19, and whilst there is more to do, there is every prospect of a final outturn on or around budget, even with the impact of the pandemic. That said, whilst the Council will be able to set a prudent, sustainable, and balanced budget next year, there remains uncertainties around future Government settlements which still represents a challenge.

Further to this the recent Mid-Year Treasury Management Report, presented to the Audit Committee and following on to the Executive next month, has highlighted the benefits to the local taxpayer of sound investments, including our commercial and regeneration portfolio, whilst maintaining sustainable debt that delivers Council priorities and the setting of prudent reserve balances. Allied to this is the recent 'myth-busting' release around the Council's financial position.

It is this careful and innovative financial approach that means we can afford to do this whilst still remaining at safe balances, unlike a lot of the Councils in the country.

As I keep on saying to everyone a council which is broke is no use to anybody.

65. ADULTS SOCIAL CARE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Executive considered a report requesting a supplementary estimate of up to £500,000 to support the Council's response to Covid-19.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services introduced the report and advised the meeting that the supplementary estimate would support a number of initiatives including:

- lateral flow testing for care home visitors which would support aged and vulnerable residents and enable them to have visits from their family including physical contact i.e. hold hands etc;
- the provision of additional contract tracing capacity and;
- support to assist the CCG deliver the Covid-19 vaccination programme which started last week in the Borough and which was expected to increase significantly early in the new year.

In response to a query about what the implications were for moving to Tier 3 Councillor Margetts acknowledged that there would be financial implications for people in the hospitality industry, who were having to close for the third time in less than a year, and also the difficulties faced by businesses. Councillor Margetts appealed to everyone to adhere to all Government guidance, including those relating to social distancing and the

wearing of masks, and also if anyone had any symptoms they should arrange a test and if asked to socially isolate do so in accordance with the rules.

With regard to a query in relation to when inoculations would be available across the Borough, Councillor Margetts advised that the CCG had split Wokingham Borough up into five PCN areas and inoculations would be offered in each of these areas by the end of December. Due to the specialised nature of the equipment that was required to administer the vaccine it was not be possible for all surgeries to undertake inoculations.

Members thanked the Director Adult Social Care, Matt Pope, and all the Officers involved in the Council's response to the pandemic for all their hard work which was much appreciated. In response Councillor Margetts stated that he was privileged to work with a very dedicated department who were solely focussed on doing everything they could to assist residents to get through this pandemic.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) a supplementary estimate, in support of the Council's response to Covid-19, of up to £500,000 be agreed;
- 2) it be noted that work has already started in preparation and funding for this has been released by the Deputy Chief Executive (CFO) under emergency powers.

TITLE	Chief Finance Officer's Report
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive and CFO) to report to Members, when setting the level of Council Tax, on the robustness of the budget presented and adequacy of reserves. The CFO report highlights the strong financial management the Council. It also outlines the major financial issues facing the Council in the medium term period, which without the Council taking a commercial approach could increase the reliance on council tax income as well as impact on the future delivery of Council services.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) note the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) report and the issues contained within, including the local government finance settlement and the sections on key risks, and that they consider these when setting the council tax for 2021/22 and agreeing the Council's medium term financial plan (MTFP);
- 2) support the Council's response to the local government finance settlement as set out in Appendix two to the report.
- 3) support the Council's ongoing representations for fairer funding for the residents of Wokingham Borough Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Financial Officer (Deputy Chief Executive) to report to Members as part of the budget setting process. A major influence on the budget is the local government finance settlement. It is important to note that the current finance settlement is for **one year only**. Wokingham still face major uncertainty on future funding levels and await the outcome from the delayed Government's comprehensive spending review now due in 2021/22.

Other points to note;

- a) This is a one-year settlement for 2021/22 following last year's one-year settlement in 2020/21 which was preceded by a four-year settlement from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

- b) The funding settlement imposes a triple taxation effect on Wokingham's council tax payers; firstly they have been required to pay the largest contribution to local services as a result of previous poor settlements, then their significant contribution is used as a basis on which to calculate their penalty (grant reduction) and lastly, the local taxation levy is assumed (inflationary council tax increases plus an Adult Social Care precept). Although this punitive approach has been applied to all Local Authorities, it has a significantly disproportional effect on Wokingham's council tax payers who have, through previous poor settlements, been required to make the highest percentage contribution to their local services.
- c) The Council's main grant, revenue support grant (RSG) has reduced from £6.1m in 2016/17 to £0.2m in 2017/18 and £0 since 2018/19. For 2021/22, the finance settlement announced that no additional tariff on business rates (aka negative RSG) was required to be paid. This announcement was only for one year, with Wokingham still unclear on the future arrangements with from the funding review. An allowance was made in the planned budget for this and it is now available on a one-off basis. It is proposed that this will be used for projects to reduce expenditure in future years and contributions to earmarked reserves. Wokingham have no certainty that this payment and more would not be required for 22/23 onwards. Revenue support grant for 2021/22 is therefore £0.00 per resident per year.
- d) Wokingham again has one of the lowest settlement funding assessment per head of all unitary authorities in the country.

The report identifies some of the most significant financial risks faced by the Council. These include increases in clients' care costs, increasing demand in children services, forward funding of the Council's investment ambitions (particularly the Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), and Town Centre Regeneration (investment in property assets for regeneration) and supporting the economic recovery from Covid-19.

Impact of Covid -19

The financial impact of Covid-19 has been felt significantly in 2020/21 but its effects will undoubtedly flow into future years. All areas of the Council's finances (Revenue, Capital, DSG, HRA) are impacted by the pandemic, some to a greater extent than others. The Council's Revenue Account has been most significantly impacted but, with careful budget management and Government support the Revenue Monitoring indicates that the Council will close down with only a small net expenditure variance to budget. Although there is provision for the financial effects of Covid-19 in 2021/22, a close monitoring of the position will continue in the same way as 2020/21.

BACKGROUND

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive and CFO) to report to Members, when setting the level of Council Tax, on the robustness of the budget presented and adequacy of reserves. The report outlines the major financial issues facing the Council.

The Chief Financial Officer's report contains issues, risks and strategic considerations in respect of revenue and capital. Key issues are also highlighted in the report.

The provisional local government finance settlement was released on 17th December 2020, outlining Wokingham's funding levels for 2021/22. A response to the consultation on the settlement has been prepared and is attached as appendix two. The final settlement will be ratified by Parliament in February.

Corporate Implications

The Medium Term Financial Plan covers both the revenue and capital budgets required to deliver the priorities of the Council over the next three years. The proposed net revenue budget for 2021/22 is approximately £147m (including depreciation) (£143m in 2020/21). The Council needs to set a balanced budget in the context of this. The budget requirements for 2022/23 and 2023/24 are also shown in the plan as indicative figures only.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See MTFP	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See MTFP	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See MTFP	Yes	Revenue and Capital

Other Financial Information

Included in MTFP

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

The budget setting process starts early in the previous financial year with a focus on areas which require budget growth to meet growing demands and areas which can deliver savings through efficiencies and additional income generation. A budget submission process is undertaken to ensure budget bids can be challenged in the context of the Council's aims and objectives. To enhance transparency and budget setting engagement this year's process (similar to last year) has included consultation with the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CCOSC). Information provided at CCOSC is also available to the Public.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Public Sector Equality Duty was considered throughout the budget bid process.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
The MTFP sets out the Councils planned investment to support Climate Change

List of Background Papers
CFO Section for Medium Term Financial Plan Appendix Two – WBC Consultation response letter to draft settlement

Contact Mark Thompson	Service Business Services
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CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S STATUTORY REPORT

1. Introduction

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) to report to Members, when setting the level of council tax, on the robustness of the budget presented and adequacy of reserves. The report is intended to discharge this responsibility and provides a strategic overview of the Council's financial position as a context before making specific considerations on the 2021/22 budget.

The budget setting process starts early in the previous financial year with a focus on areas which require budget growth to meet growing demands and areas which can deliver savings through efficiencies and additional income generation. A budget submission process is undertaken to ensure budget bids can be challenged in the context of the Council's aims and objectives. To enhance transparency and budget setting engagement, this year's process has again included consultation with the Community & Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee (CCOSC). Information provided at CCOSC is also available to the Public.

A robust budget must be a balanced budget whereby total expenditure and total income match. Any change in the annual budget in relation to spend pressures must be balanced by service efficiencies and where appropriate council tax increases.

2. The financial standing of the Council

Heading into the 2021/22 financial year, the financial standing of the Council remains robust. Achieved through good financial management, the Council has built up financial resilience and sustainability, despite years of austerity from Central Government funding.

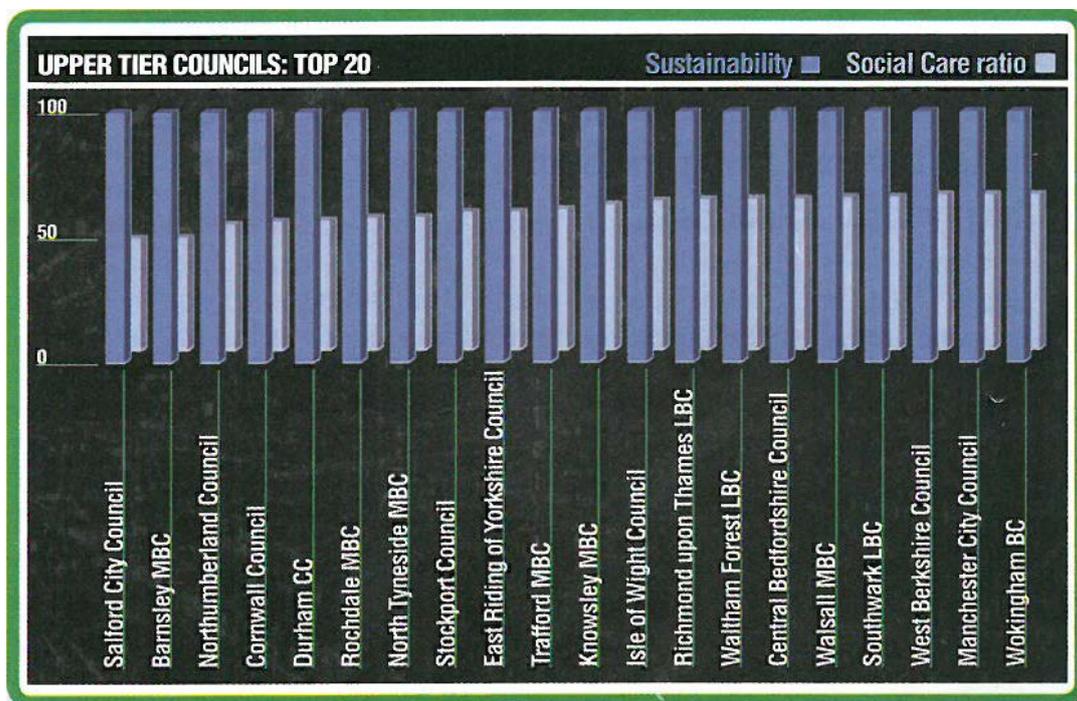
Following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council have reacted quickly to enhance financial management during the crisis. The Council's finance staff are working closely with Directors to challenge and update forecasts based on a continually changing rationale.

This includes;

- Ensure there is clarity with regards to genuine expenditure decisions with regard to Covid 19 related spend (as opposed to the necessity to discharge our statutory responsibilities).
- Seek to maximise opportunities to deliver on MTFP savings plans, recognising that staff remain significantly diverted to the Response phase.
- Explore reduced expenditure opportunities arising as a result of Covid-19 or otherwise, including a review of Special Items.
- Maintain a weekly financial review of the Covid-19 impact including collection rates and Direct Debit failure rates on major income streams.
- Initiate an early MTFP review process tailored to identify areas of relative financial certainty and high-risk areas of greater ambiguity.
- Review non-General Fund balances to assess risks and potential options to transfer balances to the General Fund reserve (if the General Fund position becomes perilously low).
- Continue to make representations for additional funding through Government Returns, Regional Conference calls and MPs.

CIPFA Resilience Index

In December 2019, CIPFA published their financial resilience tool which highlighted key financial indicators such as reserves sustainability, external debt and social care ratios based on the 2018/2019 financial year. The index shows a council's position on a range of measures associated with financial risk. The selection of indicators has been informed by the extensive financial resilience work undertaken by CIPFA over the past four years, public consultation and technical stakeholder engagement. Wokingham have been rated in the top 20 of upper tier councils for financial sustainability (source: 9th Jan – The Management Journal). Although Wokingham have been rated highly for financial sustainability (measured by ability to maintain reserve balances), the Council still face significant challenges and risks in the future which are outlined in this report and throughout the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Also included in the graph is the social care ratio which shows how much of the annual spend is linked to social care which is seen by CIPFA as an area of financial risk for all local authorities.



Source – The MJ – 9th January 2020

3. How Council services are funded?

Council services can be broken down across 4 key financial areas known as;

- Revenue (also known as General Fund) – expenditure in providing day to day services.
- Capital – expenditure in assets that generate economic benefits greater than one year.
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – ringfenced expenditure across the local authority housing stock.
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – ringfenced expenditure across maintained schools, early years and high needs services.

Revenue (General Fund)

Expenditure in relation to providing the day to day services of the Council is referred to as revenue spend. Further information on where this money is spent is highlighted throughout the Medium Term Financial Plan. Funding of this revenue expenditure is determined through the local government finance settlement and consists of;

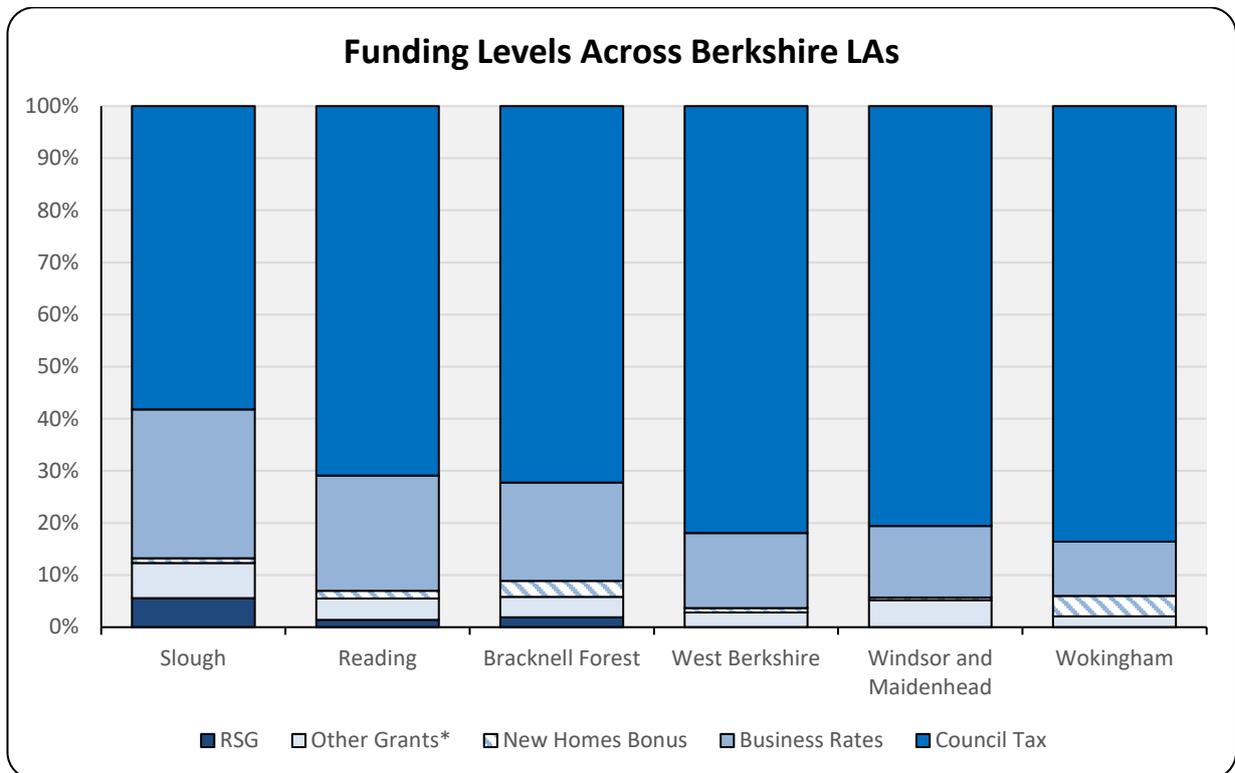
- Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA);
 - Revenue Support Grant (RSG)
 - Retained Business Rates
- Council Tax
- New Homes Bonus

Local authorities up and down the country have continued to push for a fairer funding review and long-term finance settlements to provide sustainable long term funding. Due to Covid -19, this funding review has been delayed by a further year to 2022/23, meaning the local government finance settlement 2021/22 is for one year only as opposed to a four-year funding settlement. This means that there is still much uncertainty around future settlements in terms of duration and the actual amount of funding Wokingham will receive. Consequently, it has been difficult to make definite determinations about budgets in 2022/23 and 2023/24, but with government money being allocated to ring-fenced departments (e.g. DoHSC, DfE and MoD) it is likely that local government will once again experience a reduced real-terms settlement going forward, and therefore must budget accordingly. This context means it is extremely important the Council takes a prudent approach in its budget setting proposals for the 2021-2024 medium term financial plan.

As a result of numerous years of local government funding driven by a formula that is skewed toward deprivation factors (as opposed to recognising the basic cost of providing services) and reductions in centrally funded grants based on percentage reductions to previous years, Wokingham Borough Council has been for many years the lowest funded unitary authority (per head of population) in the country. A consequence of this is that Wokingham Borough Council's local services are deemed in the finance settlement to have the majority funded by its council taxpayers. Whilst the average unitary authorities receive revenue support grant and retained business rates to fund around 32% of their service costs, Wokingham receive only 10%.

The graph below highlights the imbalance of funding requirements across the 6 Berkshire authorities. Based on the core spending assumptions from central government in the finance

settlement, Wokingham has the majority of funding expected to come from council tax as opposed to Slough for example, who receive more revenue support grant and can retain more business rates funding.

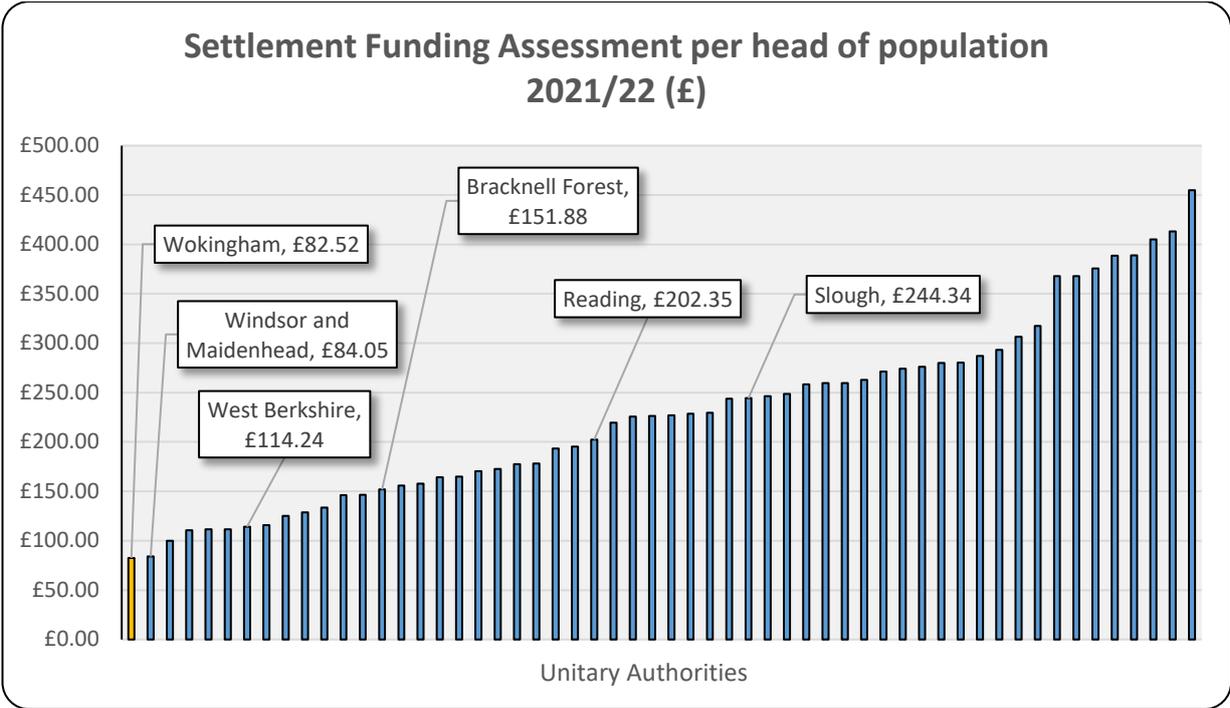


Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)

The SFA is a calculation consisting of the sum of baseline funding level (BFL) and the revenue support grant (RSG). The BFL represents Wokingham’s share of business rates retained income (£14.1m) and the RSG represents a grant from government to help fund services within Wokingham (£Nil).

Wokingham’s total SFA will remain at £14.1m in 2021/22, compared to £19.1m in 2016/17, a reduction of 26.2%, or £5.0m. Wokingham’s SFA has remained close to £14.1m since 2017/18 after the reduction in 2016/17. This means our baseline funding level and therefore retained business rates have not seen any inflationary increases.

The graph below shows the position for 2021/22 in terms of SFA funding per head of population and confirms that Wokingham is the lowest funded unitary authorities, well below the unitary average, and less than 19% of the highest funded unitary authority:



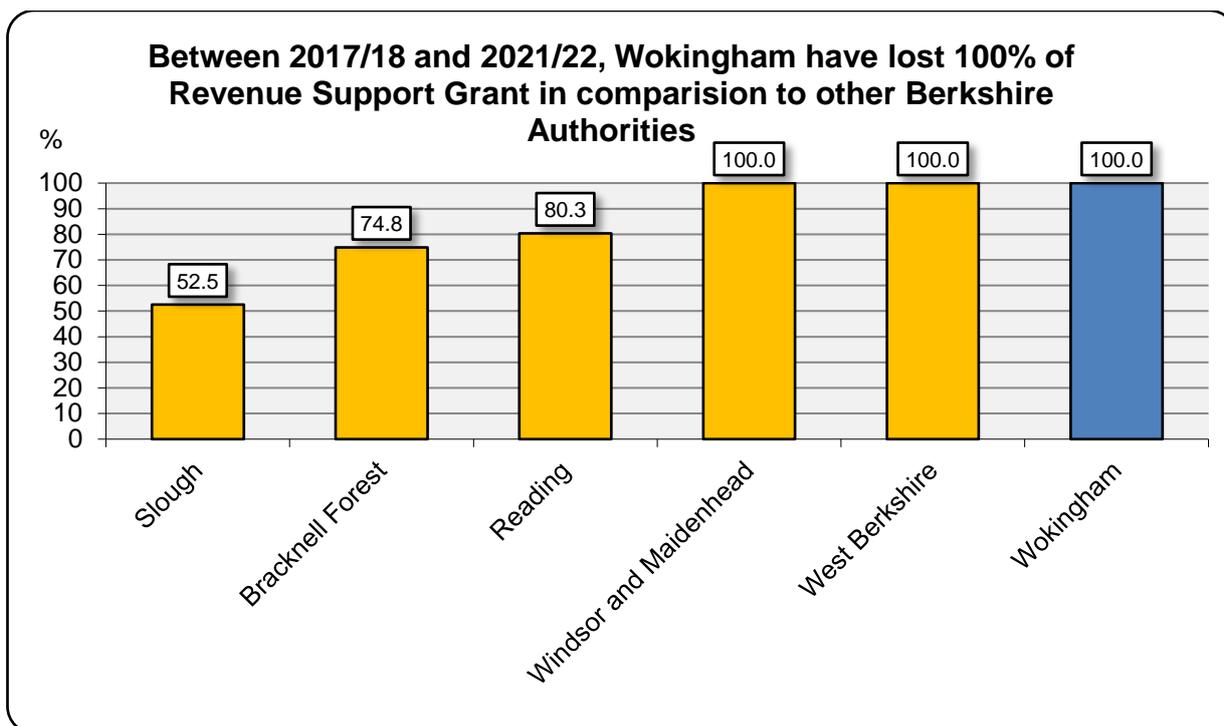
Wokingham will receive the SFA per head of £82.52, which is significantly lower than the unitary authorities' average. It is also less than half the funding of two of the Berkshire authorities.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

RSG was previously the significant unringfenced grant that supported the Council's ongoing revenue expenditure. From 2013/14 it has been incorporated within the settlement funding assessment (SFA) with Wokingham faces reductions in grant yearly and the complete removal of this grant since 2018/19.

The percentage changes in Government Funding since 2012/13 are shown below. Following the December 2010 Local Government Finance Settlement, Wokingham suffered a reduction in RSG for the first time in 2011/12, that is followed by reductions cumulatively as shown in the graph below. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 RSG had reduced to zero. It was expected that by 2019/20 the grant would be cut still further with some authorities required to pay a 'negative RSG'. However, following consistent representations made by this authority, we have been informed again through the finance settlement that negative RSG will not be enacted in 2021/22 (similar to 2020/21). The funding position is unclear from 2022/23 onwards and Wokingham will need to continue to make representations regarding the new methodology for financing local authorities to ensure we secure a fair and viable ongoing funding settlement from the Government.

The graph below compares the RSG reductions by 2021/22 across Berkshire Councils.



A growing number of councils now no longer receive RSG. Wokingham was one of the first to lose all its RSG funding.

Retained Business Rates

As mentioned above, the other element of the SFA is business rates. The SFA sets a baseline funding level for retained business rates (£14.1m for 2021/22). For 2021/22, similar to 2020/21, Wokingham will be able to retain 74% of business rates with the Government receiving 25% and Berkshire Fire Authority 1%. Due to the government's assessment of what funding the Council needs to deliver services, a tariff payment is then applied against the 74% business rate income we receive thus bringing retained business rates to approx. 20% of what we collect. Due to the continued delays from Central Government, the future arrangements of business rates funding beyond 21/22 create a degree of uncertainty and risk, making longer term financial planning more difficult.

Council Tax

Funding is fixed by the Government and therefore increases in service funding affects the level of council tax that must be levied. This is a major area of tension in every budget setting year, the increase in council tax versus the quality and level of service delivery. This is a particularly difficult tension in the context of public affordability (e.g. those on a fixed income) and because a high proportion of the Council's services are statutory with escalating costs driven by increasing client needs and numbers.

In recent years, the government has capped council tax increases to under 2% (excluding the adult social care precept) and any increase above this would require a local referendum funded by the local taxpayer. For 2018/19 and 2019/20 an exception was given where the referendum cap was increased to under 3%. Since 2020/21, this additional flexibility has been removed with increases reducing back to the 2% cap before a local referendum is required.

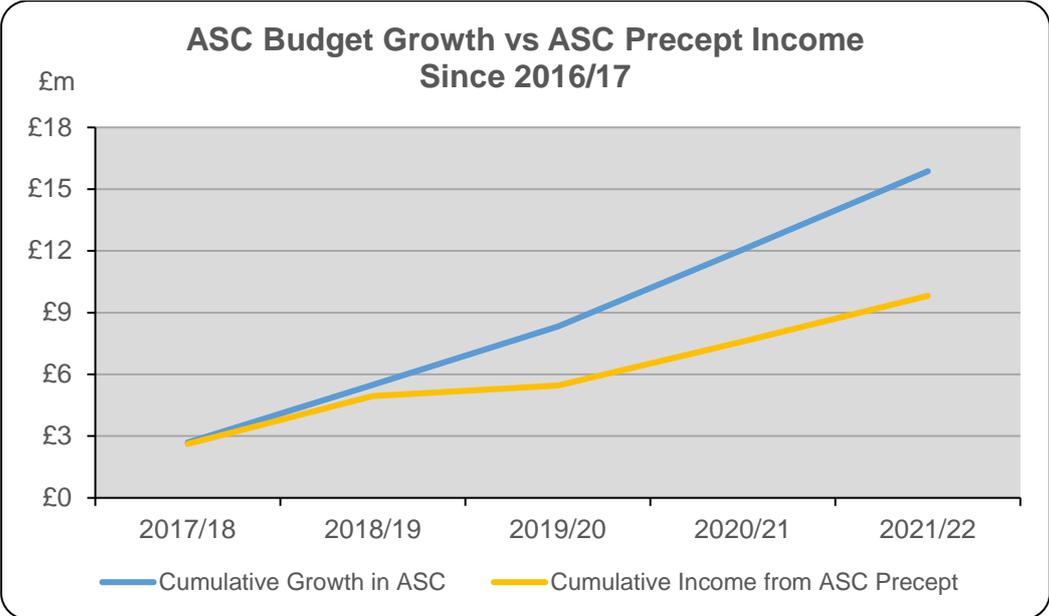
The expenditure pressures for council tax increases above inflation are similar each year: client increases (particularly in social care); increase in statutory requirements (e.g. recycling, standards of care); unavoidable expenditure increases above inflation (e.g. maintenance contracts, social care contracts, etc.) and pressures to improve services from both the public and the Government. Since 2016/17 the increases have exceeded the inflation level, but this is due to the government’s calculations which assume both inflationary increases to council tax and an additional adult social care increase to council tax.

Adult Social Care (ASC) Council Tax Precept

The Government’s continued aim is health and social care will be integrated across England, with joined up services between social care providers and hospitals, and that it should feel like a single service for patients. The long-promised Green Paper on Social Care continues to be delayed.

In recognition of the continually increasing statutory care costs faced by local authorities an ASC council tax precept of up to 3% has been introduced to cover a two-year period for 2021/22 and 2022/23 replacing the previous scheme that permitted a 2% increase in 20/21 and prior to this a 6% increase over a 3-year period. It is unknown what will be in place beyond 21/22 but this will no doubt be a key consideration in any future sustainable Local Government funding system.

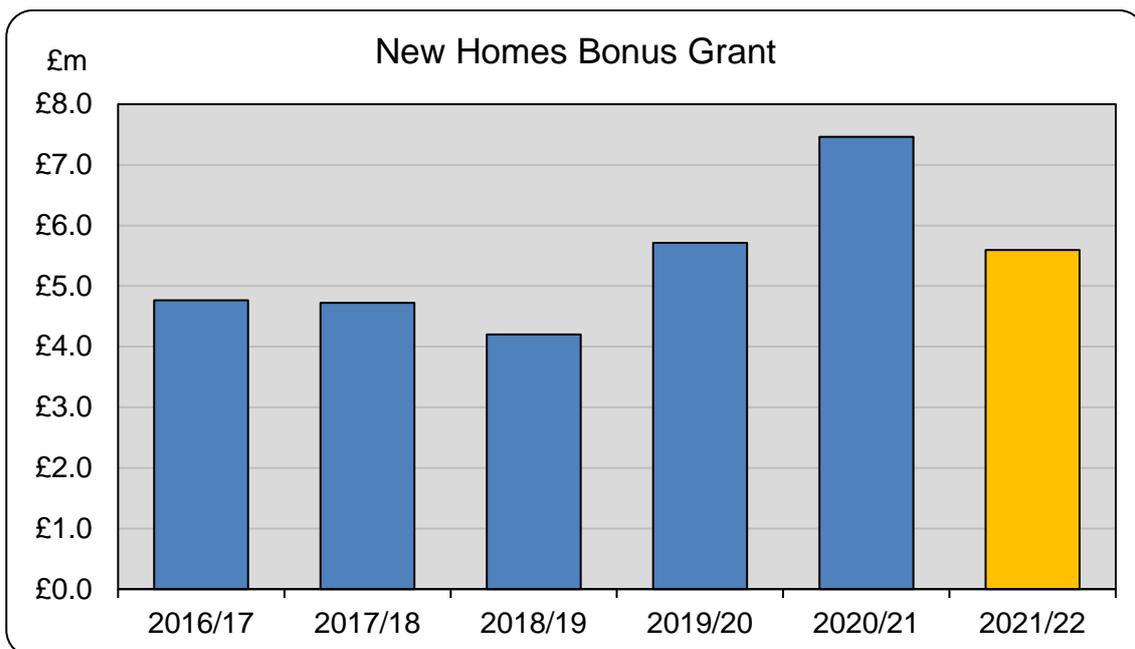
The graph below compares the annual budget growth and inflation demands in adult social care services and the additional funding that is raised through the adult social care council tax precept. Adult social care growth continues to increase above inflation due to an increasing ageing population, more complex care requirements and unit cost increases driven by national living wage increases for example. The difference is funded through service efficiencies and general council tax increases.



New Homes Bonus (NHB)

New homes bonus (NHB) is a unringfenced grant awarded to local authorities based on how many new homes have been delivered. The intention of the grant was to encourage housing growth across the country. The calculation mechanism has changed over the years since it was introduced with much less reward for additional house building now. The Autumn Statement 2015 proposed changes to the NHB which made the scheme less attractive for Wokingham by reducing the length of payments from six years to four. From 2021/22, Wokingham will be rewarded for 1 year only with legacy payments also being honoured, compared to six years in 2016/17, as well as not rewarding authorities for the first portion of growth they enable. Furthermore the NHB has been included in the Council's core spending power calculation. These developments appear to fundamentally undermine the initial intention behind the NHB scheme: to incentivise housing growth and reinvest in regeneration. Although the Council's previous approach has been to use NHB to fund special items, most notably for regeneration, the sustainability of such an approach has been brought into question due to its impact on the funding of essential Council services. The graph below shows the new homes bonus grant over the years including the impact of the changes to the methodology.

The Council is now set to receive £5.6m in NHB in 2021/22, down from £7.5m NHB in 2020/21. The graph below shows the amount of new homes bonus received.

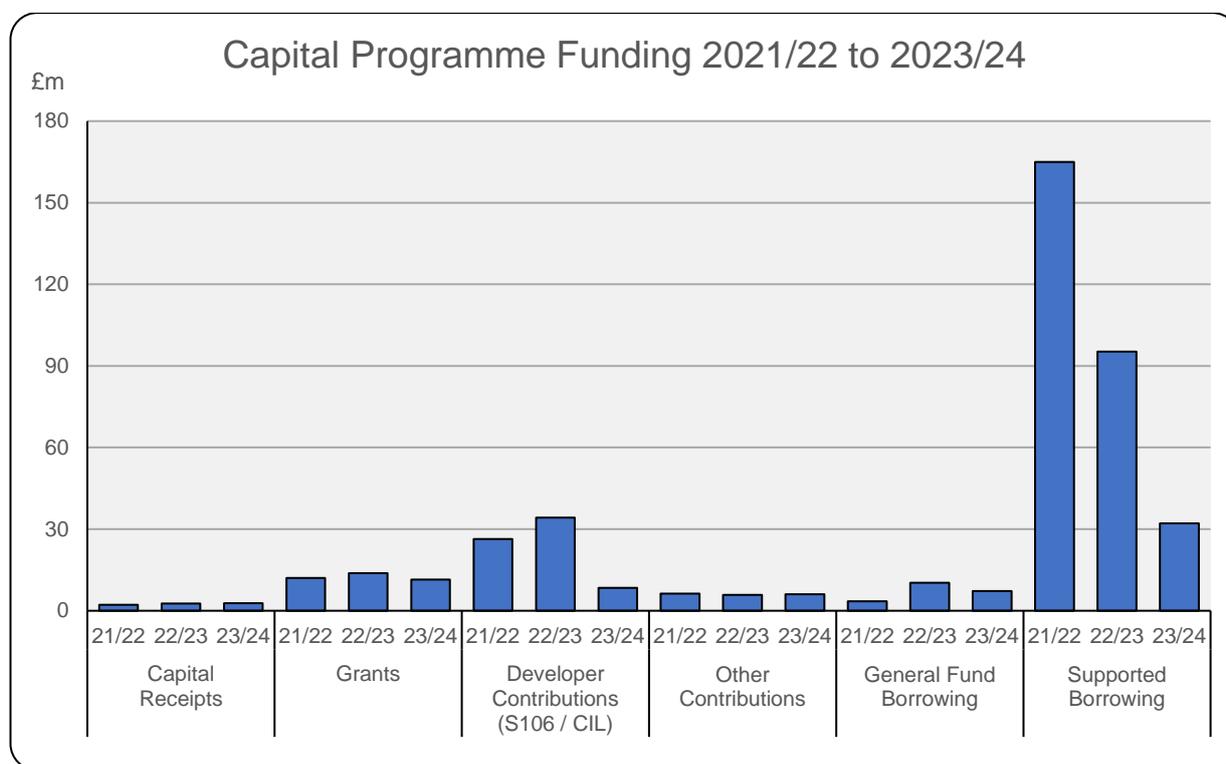


Capital

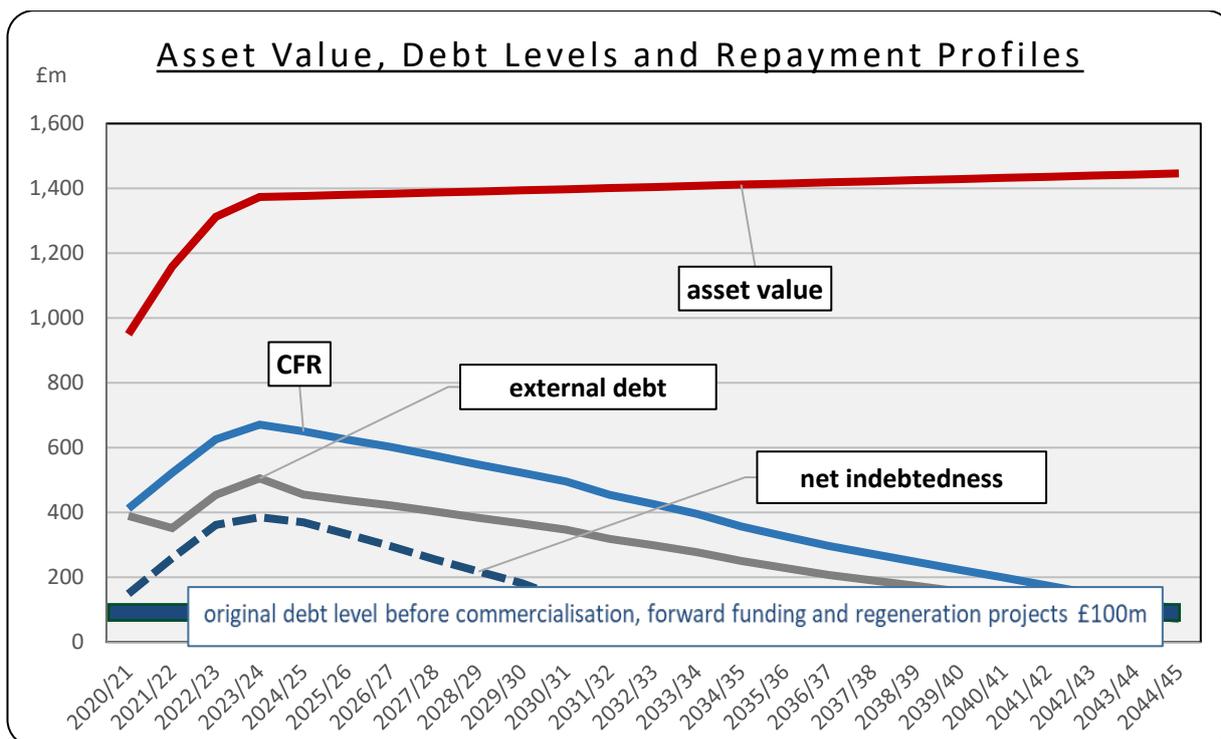
To finance the capital strategy, an approach to funding has been taken that: optimises assets; seeks flexible use of future section 106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); and attracts new funding sources where available (particularly through the bidding for Government grants).

Under the prudential code, all authorities can borrow as much as they require to fund their capital programme provided it is affordable, prudent, and sustainable. A large proportion of Council borrowing is deemed as “supported” borrowing which means there is a direct repayment method identified meaning the cost of borrowing does not impact on the council taxpayer. These include investment to generate future cost reductions / income generation and forward funded investment to be recovered from developer contributions.

The graph below shows how the capital programme will be funded over the next 3 years. The major funding source will be supported borrowing which relates to borrowing upfront where a direct repayment source has been identified whereas general fund borrowing is funded through existing revenue base budget.



As the Council continue to borrow, over the short to medium term period debt levels will increase. The level of debt is considered affordable and sustainable as required by the CIPFA prudential code. All capital projects are supported by detailed business cases which include where appropriate how supported borrowing will be repaid. The following graph shows the estimated general fund debt levels (excludes Housing Revenue Account due to ringfenced nature) for the Council over the medium to long period. The initial increase in debt is driven by the Council's capital programme but then debt is repaid over the next 20 to 25 years to bring debt levels back to a funded baseline level of approx. £100m (pre 2011/12 debt levels).



It is important to note that the CFR balance does not reflect the level of debt the Council holds. Where the Council hold surplus balances such as reserves, unspent grants and working capital, this avoids the need to borrow externally saving on interest costs. This is known as internal borrowing. Furthermore, it is important to take into account any treasury investment balances when looking at external debt to understand a more accurate debt figure.

The table below sets out the annual cost of serving this borrowing and the income generated through the assets which have been borrowed for. Over the next three years, the income generated from these assets will give an increasing net benefit to the taxpayer.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Net Annual Benefit £m	£1.0m	£3.9m	£4.7m
Divide by Council Tax Base (no. of band D equivalent properties)	73,297.1	74,030.1	74,770.4
Benefit per band D property - £	£13.64	£52.68	£62.86

Further information on the funding of the capital programme is set out in the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Under the Localism Act the Council took control of its housing rental income thus enabling more effective planning for the long-term management of these key assets. In return Wokingham took on its share of the £28bn national housing debt as part of the self-financing settlement. Although the Council took on significant debt to do this, the scheme should be beneficial to the Council and its tenants in the longer term both regarding retaining income and generating capacity to invest in the housing stock.

In line with the Government's 2016 budget, housing rents must be reduced by 1% each year on a cumulative basis for the four years from 2016/17 to 2019/20. From 2020/21, rent increases will be in line with CPI + 1%. The real terms reduction in the HRA forecast rental income over the past 4 years will be greater than 1% annually as HRA rents were based on increasing them as part of the convergence policy whenever new tenancies were commenced; the Government policy no longer permits a convergence policy of increasing rents when tenancies are re-let.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Annual rent change (%)	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	2.7%	1.5%

The main funding sources for the HRA revenue is rental income and is expected to be in the region of £15m is for 2021/22.

For capital spend, this is funded from the major repairs reserve, right to buy receipts and borrowing. Under accounting rules, an amount equal to the depreciation charge is transferred from the HRA revenue reserve into the major repairs reserve to contribute towards capital expenditure.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

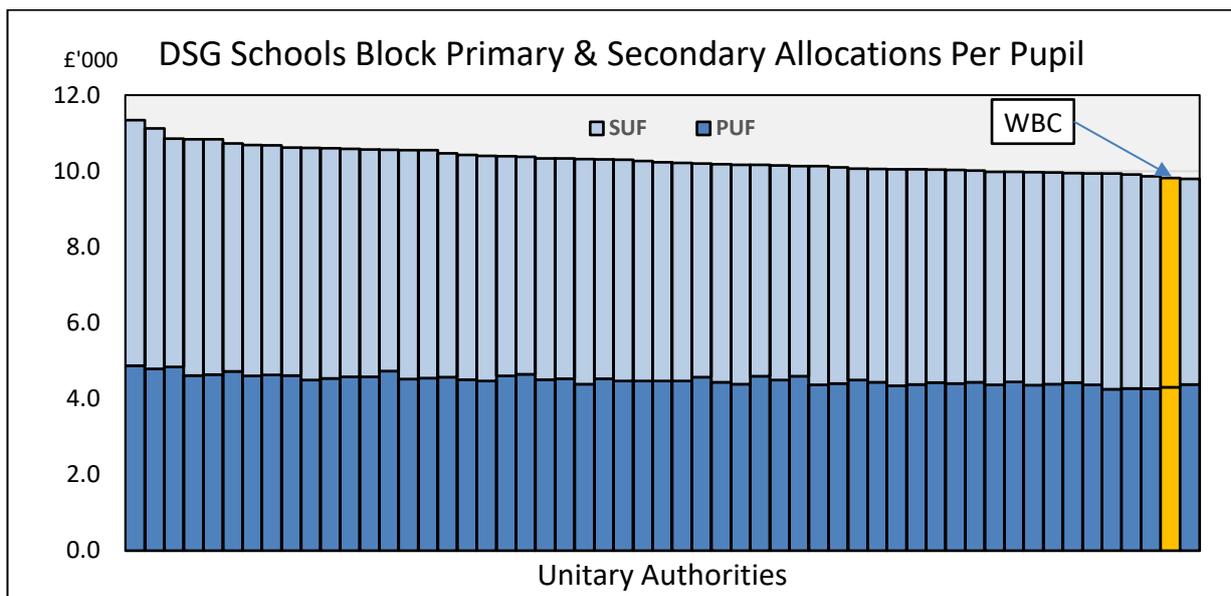
The Council receives DSG annually from the DfE and it must be used in support of the schools' budget as defined in the Early Years and Schools Finance (England) Regulations 2018. The purpose of the schools' budget is defined in legislation as the provision of primary and secondary education.

The amount for 2021/22 was notified to the authority by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2020. However, a proportion of this amount is in respect of free schools and must be paid to them. The actual DSG allocation available to the Council for 2021/22 is £158.13m, compared to £143.12m in 2020/21. The increase to 2021/22 is accounted for by increased funding on both two-unit costs, one for primary unit cost (PUF) and one for secondary unit cost (SUF). The DfE has now created a centrally retained schools block for the Council to carry out its statutory duties which includes an element of the old education support grant.

Across the four blocks in the DSG, funding has increased for 2021/22. This much need funding increase is welcomed by the Council and all of our schools and will help contribute to the day-to-day funding of services.

Block	2020/21 £,000	2021/22 £,000	Change £,000	Change %
Schools Block	110,496	123,079	12,583	+11.4%
High Needs Block	20,522	22,802	2,280	+11.1%
Early Years Block	11,169	11,302	133	+1.2%
Central School Services Block	937	945	8	+0.9%

The actual 2021/22 PUF is £4,306 and SUF is £5,512 estimated per pupil compared to £3,954 (PUF) and £5,093 (SUF) in 2020/21. Wokingham continues to receive one of the lowest funding amounts of all unitary authorities.



DSG and the national funding formula

The Government's long-term intention has been to move school funding to a national funding formula. The over-arching objective is to have a simpler, transparent, and more equitable approach to funding pupils irrespective of where they live in the country.

The implications for Wokingham schools are that a number of them may lose out as there is less ability for the Council to target funding to any school. This will have the effect of compounding the financial challenge already being faced by schools across the borough resulting in an increased need for effective school financial management in order to help them manage their finances.

In summary, the DSG changes mean that schools' block money is much more aligned to pupil numbers but there is no growth mechanism in the High Needs Block (HNB) and schools have less ability to incorporate fixed budget allocations. Schools with falling pupil numbers will therefore be more affected than others. Furthermore there are growing SEND pressures on the overall budget which may reduce the money available for allocation. For the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years, schools will continue to be funded through the local authority funding formula. From 2022/23, the Government proposes to introduce the National Fair Funding formula and the DfE have confirmed they will consult on national funding formula during 2021.

4. Council Expenditure

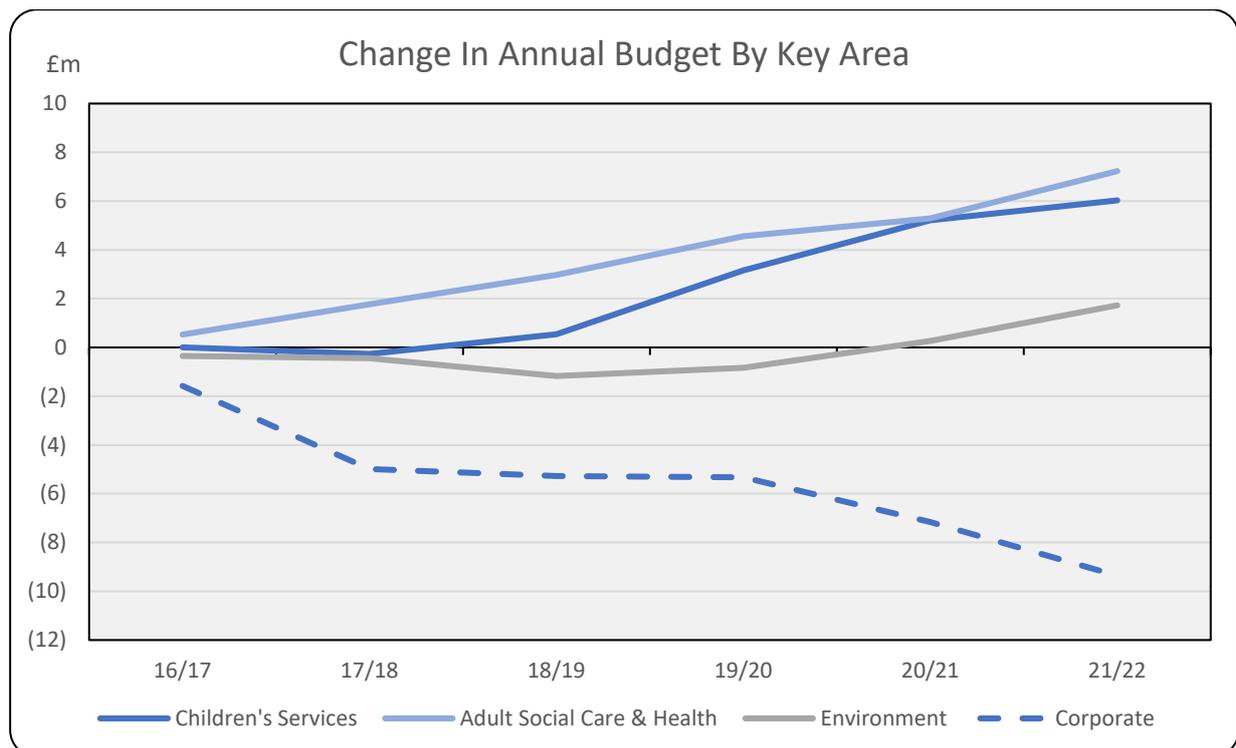
For 21/22, the Council are planning to spend in the region of £600 million across revenue, capital, housing revenue account and dedicated school grants services.

Revenue

Revenue expenditure covers the day to day running of services across the Council. For 21/22, the Council will spend approximately £200m across these services. This is known as gross expenditure. Service specific grants and income will reduce this spend to a net expenditure in the region of £132m.

Across the many varied and complex services, the Council provide, there will be pressures and risks aswell as efficiencies and opportunities. The budget process aims to capture these to ensure the budget set is prudent and robust.

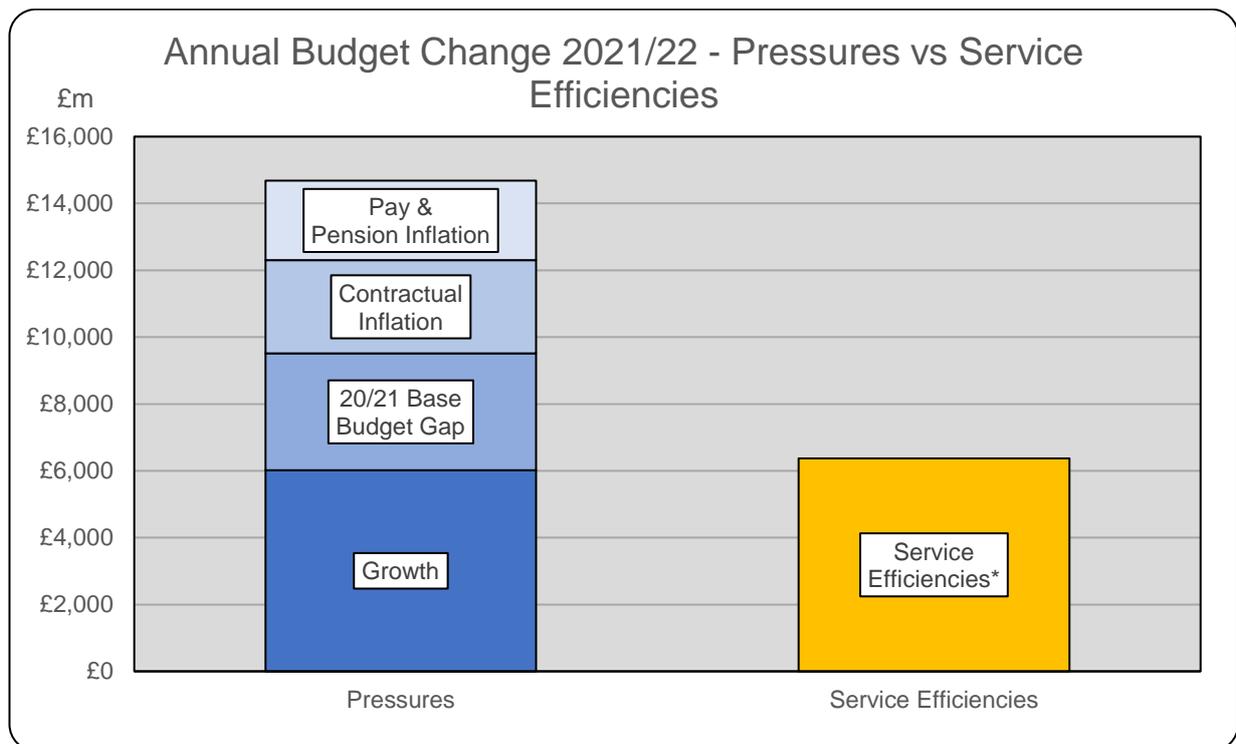
The graph below shows the cumulative change in annual budget across four key areas of Children's Services, Adult Social Care & Health, Environment (known as place & growth directorate) and Corporate services (known as resources & assets directorate). Whilst the graph shows cost pressures across the social care areas, the Council have managed to offset many of these through efficiencies and income generation within Corporate services.



Note – graph excludes Communities, insight and change (CIC) directorate as newly formed in 20/21.

A robust budget must be a balanced budget whereby total expenditure and total income match. Any change in the annual budget in relation to spend pressures must be balanced by service efficiencies and where appropriate council tax increases.

The annual change in budget is shown below. For 2021/22, the total pressures outweigh the service efficiencies. The difference will be required to be funded via council tax rises. The detail budget changes have formed part of the information provided to CCOSC throughout the budget process.

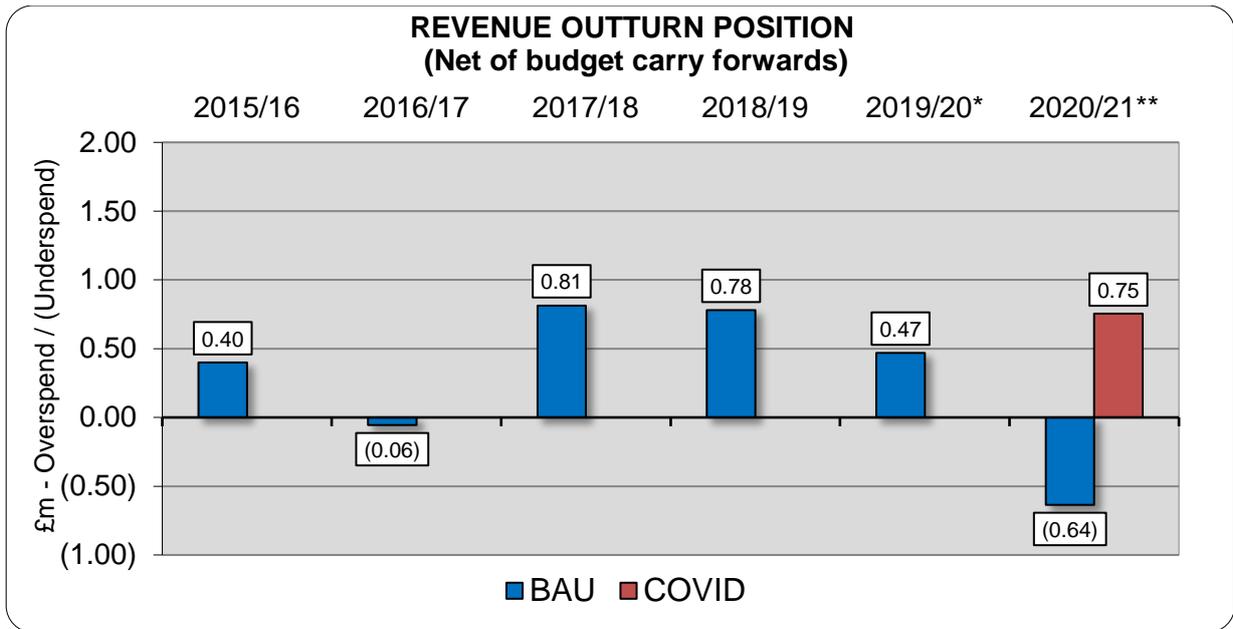


* Service Efficiencies are designed to reduce costs whilst maintaining services to the public.

Revenue monitoring position

Over the past number of financial years, the Council have faced a number of demand led pressures in year. These underlying pressures are considered as part of the budget process. The forecast budget variance in 2021/22 currently shows a combined overspend of £0.12m from business as usual (BAU) budgets (£0.64m savings) and impact of Covid-19 (£0.75m pressure) compared to the budget approved in February 2020, based on December 2020 monitoring.

The graph below shows an improving trend in reducing the demand led pressures through in year management action plans aswell as addressing pressures when setting the following year budget. This strong financial management has allowed the Council to meet demands whilst maintain prudent reserve balances. 2020/21 has been a unique year in which Covid-19 has brought upon extra pressure not expected. The Council continue to lobby for additional funding to cover the financial impact from Covid-19.

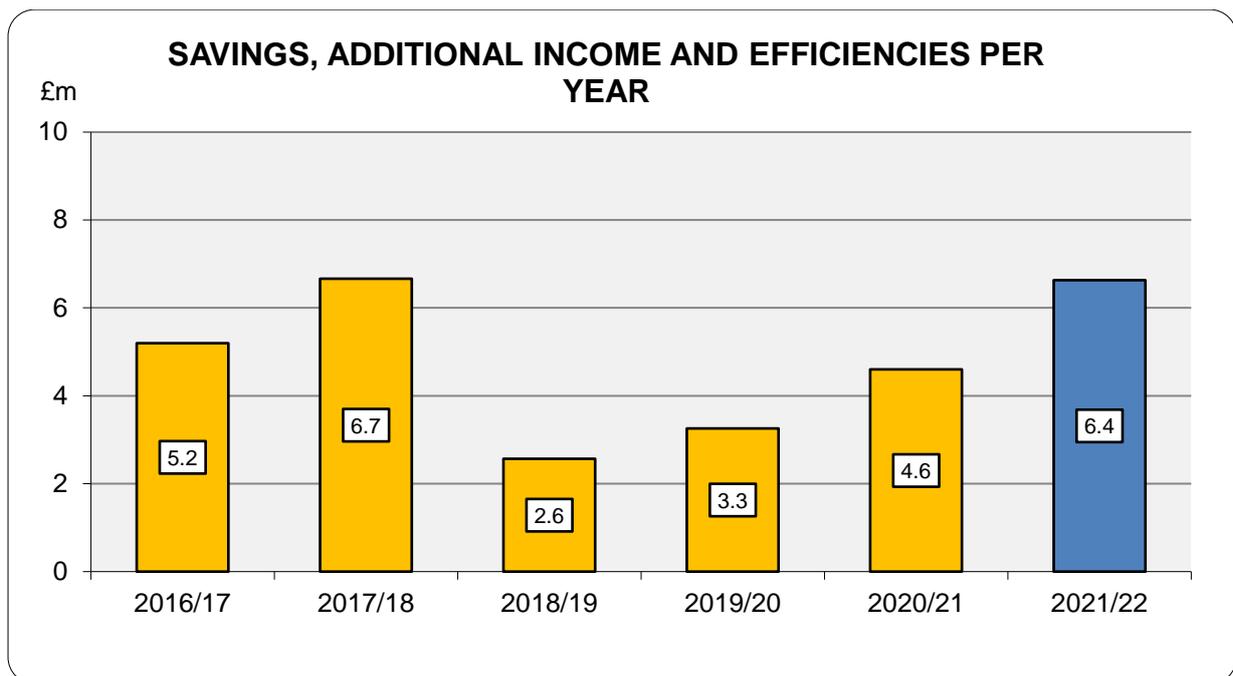


Further information is available in the quarterly revenue monitoring reports reported to Executive and available on the Councils website.

Service Efficiencies

As highlighted in the graph in the introduction of this report, efficiencies and income generation are required to meet the changing pressures in growth, inflation, and demand for services.

The total savings, efficiencies and income generation that have been identified in setting the council tax in previous years are shown below. It equates to over £28.8m over the six years. Efficiencies are used to fund growth, inflation and reductions in Government grants whilst allowing the Council to maintain frontline services.



The savings shown above reflect the budgeted savings made for each financial year (or planned savings in the case of 2021/22).

Net Expenditure over time

The reductions in Government grants highlighted above have had a major impact on the Council's finances and budgets since 2010/11. The Council's net expenditure budget has been reduced each year since 2010/11 as shown in the table below, which indicates that the net expenditure budget has been reduced by £34.9m (33%) between 2010/11 and 2021/22 meaning the Council are delivering services more cost effectively.

	£m
WBC 2021/22 net expenditure budget	131.5
Less reduction in grants for services now part of formula grant	(12.5)
Less discount re inflation since 2010/11 (based on CPI)	(31.6)
Less discount re growth in council tax base since 2010/11	(17.0)
Net expenditure budget 2021/22 discounted to 2010/11 Prices (a)	70.3
WBC 2010/11 net expenditure budget (b)	105.2
Reduction in expenditure since 2010/11 (b – a)	£34.9m (33%)

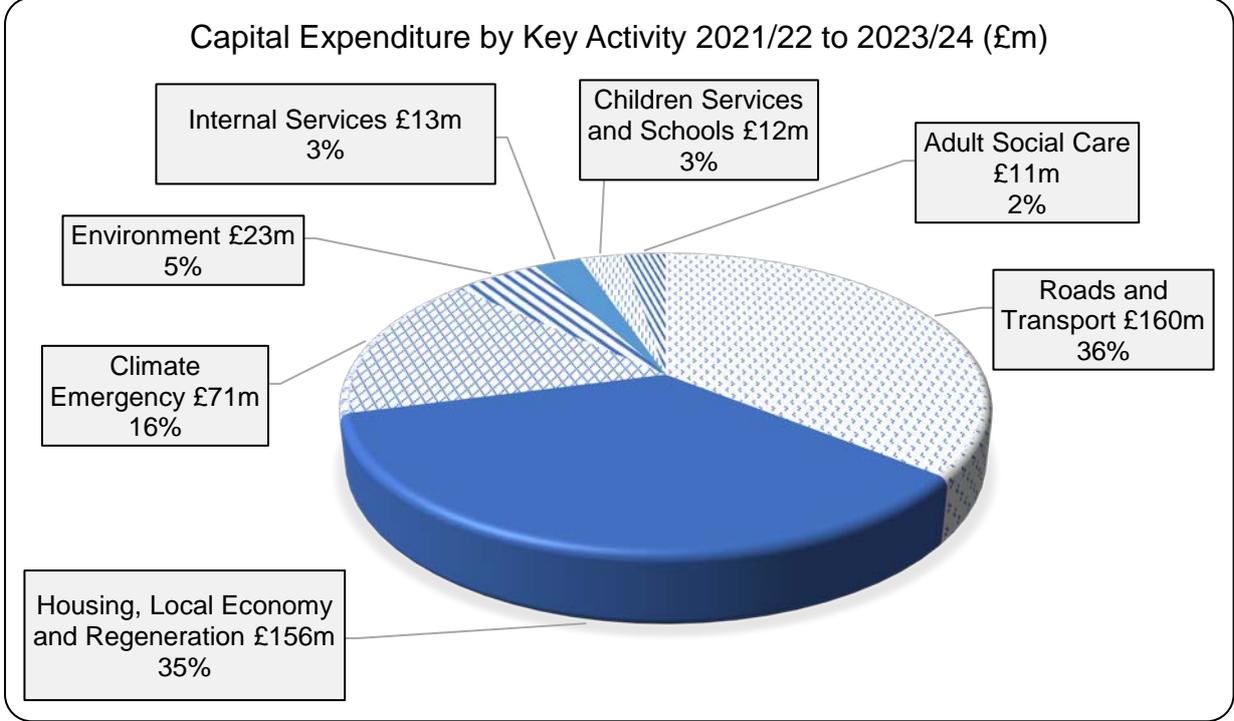
Capital

A five-year capital strategy has been developed with the aims of realising the Council's vision, raising the quality of life of residents and improving medium to long term planning.

The first three years of the capital vision is effectively the capital programme. This has been developed following an assessment against key Council priorities, including a value for money and risk analysis.

The capital programme over the next three years will include existing asset investment (predominantly school buildings and infrastructure assets) and schemes that seek to deliver the Council's vision.

The graph below shows the capital expenditure planned for the next 3 years by key activity area. In total the Council plan to invest £446m over the next 3 years.



As highlighted above, significant investment is planned across roads and transport, housing, local economy, and regeneration.

The capital programme is funded from a variety of sources: capital receipts, borrowing, grants and other contributions. The relative reliance on each funding source is set out below and shows a greater dependency on borrowing and developer contributions as the Council embarks on its ambition to develop its four strategic development locations, regenerate the borough, and reduce our impact on the climate.

Housing Revenue Account

The HRA is a ring-fenced account and as such has no impact on the level of council tax. The money spent maintaining the Council's housing stock (valued at approximately £223m) and providing a service to Council tenants is mainly funded by housing rents paid by Council tenants. Gross revenue expenditure on the HRA is in the region of £16m per year and is predominately in the areas of;

- capital financing - £5.2m
- investment in capital works - £3.8m
- housing and general management - £3.4m
- repairs and maintenance - £3.3m

Capital expenditure for 2021/22 on the HRA is focused on the following areas;

- housing purchases & new builds - £2.1m
- planned & cyclical works - £2.0m
- improvements & projects include decent homes - £1.1m
- managing void properties - £0.8m
- adaptations for the disabled - £0.5m

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

As outlined in the previous section, the DSG funding is based on 4 blocks and therefore expenditure mirrors these 4 blocks and includes;

- Schools Block – expenditure on day to day running of schools.
- High Needs Block – expenditure on high needs including independent special schools. This area has seen significant financial pressures due to growing demand and complexity in cases.
- Early Years Block – expenditure in relation to providing to early year settings including funding for free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 years old.
- Central Schools Services Block – expenditure in relation to statutory services such as school admissions and education support services.

The High Needs Block is separate block of funding to support those young people with SEND requirements. This has been underfunded by central government for the past few years and, when combined with the increased demand and out-of-borough placements this has meant that the account has operated in a deficit position since 2017/18. Whilst this is permitted under regulation in the short term, it is not an ideal scenario nor sustainable in the medium to long term; the Council is now taking significant steps to reduce this deficit going forward, although this will take some capital investment to reduce the future revenue pressures.

5. Reserves

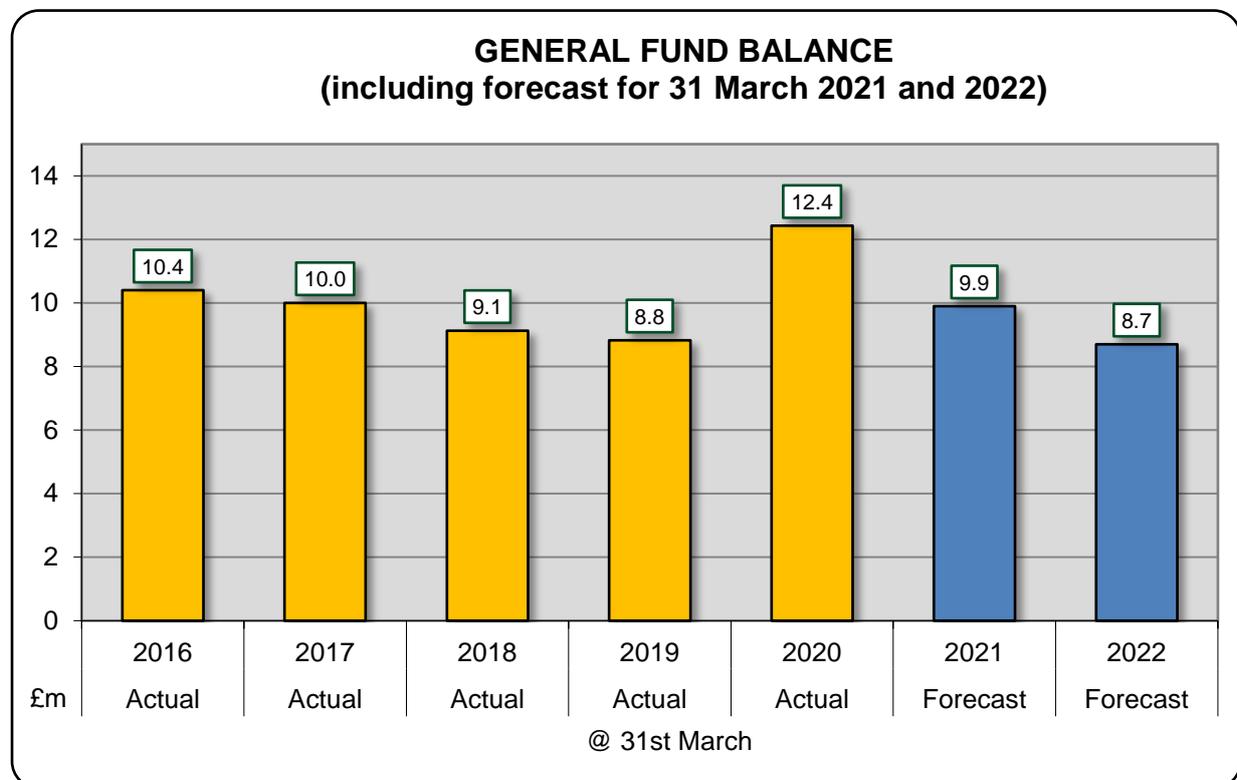
Reserves are required as a contingency to meet unforeseen spending requirements and to provide stability in medium term financial planning (e.g. by using balances to contain growth in future years).

- General Fund Balance (Revenue)
- Capital
- HRA
- DSG

General Fund Balance

The level of general fund balances is informed by a budget risk analysis. This approach was introduced in 2003/04 when the Council agreed the policy on reserves and balances. The budget risk analysis is included annually in the medium-term financial plan. The graph below shows actual GFBs at 31 March 2020 and a forecast for 31 March 2021 and 31 March 2022. The expected reduction for 31 March 2021 is as a result of in year supplementary estimates, and carry forwards across directorates.

The risks facing the Council's finances have increased significantly, they include the implication of future years of austerity; further grant reductions; additional service pressures; substantial regeneration programmes requiring forward funding; dependency on future commercial income and capital contributions; risks around business rate receipts, and the level of retained business rates.



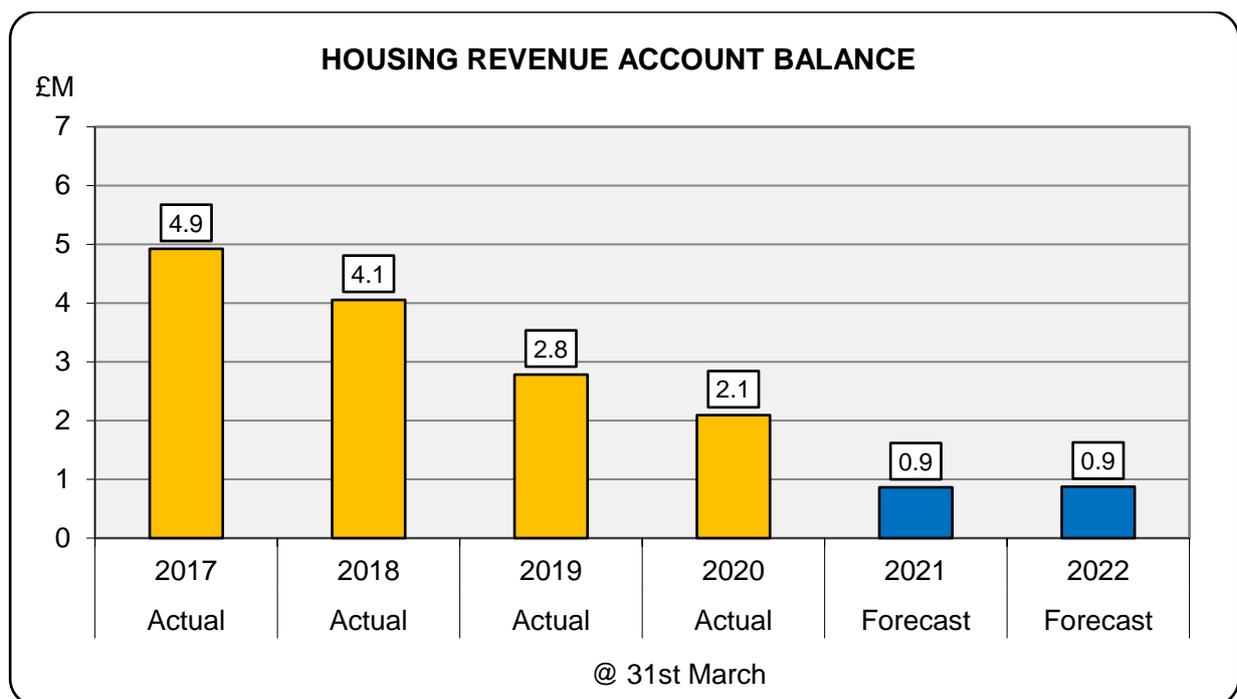
Capital

The Council hold various reserves for capital spend in the form of capital grants and contributions. Due to the nature of capital spend and multi-year projects, some reserves will be held but will be allocated to funding future year capital projects. The Council continuously review all capital funding each financial year to ensure grants are used where possible ahead of borrowing to reduce the capital financing costs (e.g. principle repayment + interest).

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Similar to the general fund balance, the level of HRA balance is informed by a budget risk analysis. Due to nature of the HRA being a ringfenced account where the main source of income is tenant's rental income, holding prudent reserves remain important to act as a contingency to meet unforeseen spending requirements or income reductions and to provide stability in medium term financial planning.

HRA balances are forecast to remain at prudent levels. The reducing balances seen below since 2017 have been driven by the impact of reducing rent levels and additional investment in the capital programme. Reserves are expected to increase to £1.1m in 2023/24.



Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

As highlighted earlier, the Council have faced significant pressures over the past 4 years in relation to the High Needs Block, combined with under funding from the government the Council are now holding a deficit reserve of £6.12m in this area. We are currently working with the DfE to form a recovery plan for this. Recent guidance from CIPFA confirmed that this deficit reserve should be held as an unusable reserve and therefore not the responsibility of the council taxpayer to fund.

The Council also hold approximately £3m in school reserves which are held to act as a contingency to offset future pressures and or put towards capital investment within schools.

Other Balances

The Council holds other earmarked balances in addition to the general fund balance. These should be reviewed as part of the budget submission and in the context of their benefit and opportunity cost.

Many of the earmarked reserves are held for specific purposes such as developer funding for future maintenance of assets, grants received in advance and equalisation funds to smooth annual changes on demand led areas such as waste and recycling. Other reserves include interest equalisation and forward funding which are linked to the capital programme where infrastructure is delivered ahead of receipt of developer funding.

Further information is available in section 2 of the medium-term financial plan under reserves and balances.

6. Major financial considerations (risks and opportunities)

The financial future remains very challenging and the Council will experience pressure on its resources in a way it has not had to endure previously. Under the Council's budget management protocol Members are required to agree budgets based on the best estimate for the agreed level of service.

A budget risk analysis has been undertaken for 2021/22 and is detailed in the MTFP. This identifies budgets where there remains a risk of overspending. The budget risk analysis is used as a guide to determine the level of general fund balance required.

Given the growing unavoidable expenditure pressures to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities, coupled with significant reductions in overall Government Grants, the budget will inevitably contain a degree of risk. A reasonable measure of caution is included to mitigate some of the risks. However, there are considerable unknowns at this stage and the Council will need to keep a close watching brief on developments.

The major areas that may impact on future revenue resources are:

Covid-19 Pandemic

The financial impact of Covid-19 has been felt significantly in 2020/21 but its effects will undoubtedly flow into future years. All areas of the Council's finances (Revenue, Capital, DSG, HRA) are impacted by the pandemic, some to a greater extent than others. The Council's Revenue Account has been most significantly impacted but, with careful budget management and Government support the Revenue Monitoring indicates that the Council will close down with only a small net expenditure variance to budget. Although there is provision for the financial effects of Covid-19 in 2021/22, a close monitoring of the position will continue in the same way as 2020/21.

Future local government finance settlement

With the announcement of a one-year finance settlement rather than a four year settlement for 2021/22, the future funding levels remains unclear. This context means it is extremely important the Council takes a prudent approach in its budget setting proposals for the 2021-2024 medium term financial plan.

Key risks of future funding settlement;

- Revenue support grant becomes negative (already proposed but not enacted in previous 2 years)
- New homes bonus funding is removed
- Allocation formula based on resources / needs rather than cost of providing services (e.g. higher cost of living in South East)

In line with last year, the December 2020 finance settlement proposed that the government would forgo the additional tariff (colloquially known as negative RSG) in 2021/22 (originally forecast at £7.14m in the four-year settlement and with inflation would equal £7.8m). This is a considerable risk for the Council as the government produces its new methodology for the 'fairer-funding' of local government. Furthermore, the two key considerations within the proposed new methodology are "needs" and "resources" and Wokingham are likely to rank lowest on both in terms of government support.

As previously mentioned, the new homes bonus is also likely to be removed and this would cost the Council up to approximately £6m per annum.

It is clear from this substantial risk that the Council must remain extremely cautious with regard to its ongoing base-line funding; the outcome of this review will not be known until late in 2021.

Town centre regeneration

The Council has invested significantly in the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre. The objective of this scheme is to regenerate the town, with the socioeconomic benefits this, and generate a source of income to fund Council services across the borough. There is of course risk associated with the scale of this investment and risks have been mitigated through a process of pre-lets and establishing a risk reserve over numerous years. The scheme has now moved to a positive financial position, in that committed income from rents now exceeds the cost of borrowing. This reduces its financial risk profile and may enable funds to be released back from the risk reserve but such a transfer will be kept under review for now whilst the impact of Covid-19 is fully understood.

Commercialisation

The Council's budgets have shown an increasingly commercialised approach over the years. This in effect means that innovative, 'business like' Value for Money initiatives are encouraged across all Council services. This is as much about generating new income streams through the establishment of Companies or through asset acquisitions, as it is about early intervention, prevention, and demand management. It is essential that the Council is able to continue such financial endeavours, particularly in the context of its position as the lowest funded Unitary Authority per head in the country. Commercial activities will of course recognise and adhere to new laws and regulations, including those recently introduced in accessing PWLB loans.

Companies

The Council have a joint ownership of Optalis (55% Holding), which is a company that provides Adult Social Care. Financial benefits arise predominantly through a reduced commissioning cost arising from efficiencies in the company. The company runs at more or less a 'break even' position each year and sets its charging to its 2 owners accordingly.

In addition to Optalis, the Council own a group of Housing Companies (100% Holding). Unlike Optalis there was considerably more financial risk in establishing these, as considerable initial investment was required before returns could be realised. The risk profile regarding the Council's finances have reduced considerably over recent years through the successful delivery of a sizeable affordable housing stock and through the streamlining of the companies and associated costs. The combined group now trades at a healthy surplus.

Statutory Costs of Care

The Council continue to face increasing care costs with regards to both Adults and Children, which is common across the country. Some care costs are likely to be compounded by the impact of Covid-19, such as Mental Health and Domestic Abuse. Although the 3-year budget submission includes considerable investment in the Council's care services, it also contains notable cost reductions arising through demand management interventions. Both the level of escalating demand and the ability to contain it are not always in the Council's control and therefore difficult to predict, furthermore the costs associated with individual cases can be significant (up to £400k p.a.). Although this will be an area where expenditure continues to be closely monitored, it will also be important to assess and replicate where possible effective demand management activities.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

The Council is facing extreme cost pressures around its SEND provision, due to increased demand and a requirement for out-of-borough placements which are traditionally more expensive than provision within the Wokingham area. These also attract higher home-to-school transportation expenses as well giving a double charge to the already stretched budgets. The Council is focusing much of its effort in preventing the requirement to place young people outside the borough wherever possible, and in ensuring the resources available are aligned with strategic priorities. This also impacts on Adult Social Care budgets as these young people transition into adulthood.

The Council has submitted a plan to the DfE in response to the current overspend on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. Considerable challenges still exist in this area and the Council will be working with the DfE to find ways to improve financial stability. At the same time the Council have joined forces with other Local Authorities to make the case for a more appropriate way of financing this area of escalating need.

Strategic Development Locations (SDLs)

The Council embarked on a Core Strategy a number of years ago which necessitated the delivery of 4 SDLs. The success of these developments is dependent on the Council funding infrastructure 'up front' to 'unlock' house building. The overall approach enables the Council to; deliver against its statutory housing targets (thereby minimising uncontrolled development approvals), provide much needed affordable housing, and ensures the Council receives a meaningful financial contribution from developers. The financial risk associated with the delay between Council 'up front' funding and the receipt of developer contributions has been mitigated to some extent through the close management of scheme delivery and the establishment of a risk reserve over numerous years. The impact of Covid-19 on this programme could be sizable and will be kept under close review.

A significant funding stream assumed for the Council from the SDLs is developer funding known as Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The impact of the current national and local economy on housing is difficult to predict and the timing of this income may be affected. This therefore remains a considerable risk.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Graham Ebers', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Graham Ebers
Deputy Chief Executive
(and Chief Financial Officer)

7. Glossary

Abbreviation	Description
ASC	Adult social care
CCOSC	Community & Corporate Overview & Scrutiny
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy
CFO	Chief Finance Officer
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
DFE	Department for Education
DoHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
ESG	Education services grant
GFB	General fund balances
HND	High Needs Block
HRA	Housing revenue account
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MTFP	Medium term financial plan
NDR	Non-domestic (business) rates
NHB	New homes bonus
PUF	Primary unit cost
RPI	Retail Price Index
RSG	Revenue support grant
SDL	Strategic development locations
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SFA	Settlement funding assessment
SoBM	Summary of budget movements
SUF	Secondary unit cost
TCR	Town centre regeneration
WHL	Wokingham Housing Limited

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**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Tel: 0118 974 6557 (Direct Line)
Email: graham.ebers@wokingham.gov.uk

Date: 15 January 2021

Our ref: CorpFin/02/21-22/CFO Report

Local Government Finance Settlement Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
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2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Corporate Services

PO Box 150

Shute End, Wokingham

Berkshire, RG40 1WN

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www.wokingham.gov.uk

Dear Sir,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2021/22 – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Wokingham Borough Council once again welcomes the Government's decision not to enact the potential transfer of our council taxpayers' money to other councils through the imposition of Negative Revenue Support Grant. We hope that this baseline funding for 2021/22, without the imposition of Negative Revenue Support Grant, will be honoured in any new long term settlement beyond this year. In the interest of sound financial planning, it is also important that any future settlement is for at least a four year period, in the same way as previously announced for the period 2016/20.

Whilst acknowledging the reasons for a single year settlement following the spending review, it is hoped that any future settlement is of a longer duration and that new local government funding model based on needs and resources. We very much hope that the disproportionate amount of income we are already required to levy from our council taxpayers, as a result of our extremely low historical government funding, is not taken into account in a way that penalises them further. We also very much hope that there is a greater weighting given towards recognising the basic cost of delivering services, when determining need, as opposed to steering funding elsewhere as a result of recognising specific factors such as deprivation. In 2021/22, Wokingham will once again receive the lowest percentage of Settlement Funding Assessment Grant as a share of its total income, of any unitary authority. Wokingham will receive 10%, compared to some unitary councils for which government grants will fund over 40%, and on average 28%. As a result, the percentage of expenditure met by Wokingham council tax payers is already the highest of any unitary authority.

There are a number of one-off funding items included in the 2021/22 settlement and although additional funding is always welcome, it makes longer term financial planning difficult and therefore ongoing funding commitments in future settlements are strongly encouraged, particularly where they are required to address long term terms challenges within our statutory care services.

We believe that the continuation of the New Homes Bonus is important if local authorities are to remain financially incentivised for their work in "fixing our broken housing market", and therefore support its inclusion

in the 2021/22 proposed settlement and hopefully its continued inclusion in one form or another beyond this year; the decision to restrict NHB to a single payment for next year is regretted and it is further hoped that any fairer funding model continues to recognise the long term planning of authorities attempting to address the national housing shortage. We would however urge the Government to introduce measures to prevent housing developers sitting on significant Local Authority granted planning permissions and thereby frustrating housing delivery. Again certainty over future year settlements would be appreciated to allow longer-term budget planning and investment in local services, whilst recognising and rewarding the important part that local authorities play in the delivery of additional housing in support of key national objective.

The Council also welcomes the additional flexibility to increase its Council Tax and believes that local discretion to levy taxes and generate additional income should be provided to councils in any new funding settlement, particularly in the context of the escalating costs of statutory demand led care services.

This Council, as with all others, has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic and the response from the Government has been recognised and all funding assistance has been gratefully received and fully utilised for the current financial year. Whilst pressures for next year (2021/22) have been partially offset by the settlement funding for Covid-19, it is considered that the longer term effects from the pandemic (long term unemployment and recession, the impact on families and consequent increase in demand for long term care for vulnerable young people) will mean that there will be pressures on local authority budgets for years to come, and it is hoped any future settlements will take full account of this.

On a final point, this Council like many other councils, face spiralling special education needs costs that cannot be accommodated within existing budgets and are extremely difficult to contain. Whilst the right noises are being made by DfE, the funding for this nature of expenditure is still both significantly constrained by regulation and wholly inadequate. Ideally we would like this addressed through the 2021/22 settlement, but if this is not possible it should be incorporated in the fundamental funding review for 2022 onwards.

I hope the above response clearly conveys this Council's key concerns in respect of the proposed Local Government Finance Settlement and informs future funding considerations. If you would like to discuss any of the points raised then please do not hesitate to contact me.

John Kaiser
Executive Member for Finance and Housing

Graham Ebers
Deputy Chief Executive (& Chief Finance Officer)

TITLE	Revenue Budget Monitoring Report FY 2020/21 - Quarter 3
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To deliver the Council Priorities for the Community, ensuring the efficient effective and safe use of resources. The Council agrees and sets its budget in the February preceding the current financial year and this report seeks to update Executive on the budget position throughout the year and provide an estimate of the outturn position and impact on balances at year-end (31 March 2021).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) note the significant financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis as illustrated in the Executive Summary.
- 2) note the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report;
- 3) note the potential General Fund carry forward requests of £2.113m as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- 4) approve an in year supplementary estimate for £1.2m for Priority Covid-19 related issues, to be allocated by the Deputy Chief Executive (CFO) in consultation with the Lead Member of Finance & Housing.
- 5) approve an in year supplementary estimate for £16,000 for a review and refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to allow the Executive to note the current expenditure to date (as at 31 December 2020) for the third quarter of the current financial year and to inform the Executive of the forecast outturn positions for 2020/21 for the Council's net revenue expenditure, its General Fund Balance (GFB), the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the Schools' Block funding.

Recommendation 1 – Financial Impact of Covid-19

Like all councils across the country, Wokingham have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This unprecedented event has had immediate financial implications (for example spend on PPE to support the local community, loss of income from closed services.) and has longer lasting financial implications (health of national / local economy). Central Government have been pro-active in supporting Local Authorities with emergency funding and upfront grant payments to ease cashflow. All additional funding and support is needed and greatly appreciated. However, the Council are still estimating a significant financial impact as highlighted in the 'High Level Financial Impact' table below.

It is not yet possible to determine the full financial impact of COVID-19 so the position will be kept under close review for this year and for the impact on future years.

The Council continues to report the financial impact of COVID-19 on a regular basis to MHCLG. In addition we are working with partners (e.g. CCG, Leisure operator) and other local authorities to further understand the impact. The Council has submitted a bid of £330k under the national leisure recovery fund however this is only a relatively small part of the annual cost of supporting our leisure provider estimated at £2m in 2020/21. Furthermore, the Council has no guarantee it will be successful with the bid it has made. Representations will continue to be made in this area for a more realistic reimbursement of our costs.

High Level Financial Impact

The table below shows the current estimate of the financial impact from Covid-19. It is important to note with the situation changing almost on a daily basis, the short term and long term financial effect from Covid-19 is difficult to predict. Assumptions have been made using actual costs incurred to date and estimates for the costs during recovery phases over the financial year

	£,000
Additional Expenditure	£17,017
Lost Income	£5,287
Delayed Saving Plans	£830
3rd Party Income (CCG, grants)	(£13,039)
Impact from Covid-19	£10,110
Less: Emergency Government Funding	(£9,356)
Net Impact from Covid-19	£754

The £0.754m net impact from Covid-19 has improved from the £2.629m (£5.732m – Q1) reported to Executive in October 2020. This improvement has been driven mainly from additional emergency government funding and some cost pressures not materialising as much as expected in quarter 2.

The above figures do not take into account the impact of the leisure bid (£330k) and may be subject to change when the impact of Lockdown 3 is more fully understood.

Recommendation 2 – Current Position

The Executive has agreed to consider Revenue Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis. In February 2020, the Council agreed and set its net General Fund (Revenue) budget at £146.269 million; following year end, this was further adjusted to account for agreed carry forward of budget and movements between directorates. This gives a working budget for each of the Council’s Directorates. The working budgets, spend to date and forecast outturn are shown in the table below.

Directorate	2020/21 – net budget position - as at 31 December 2020				
	Approved (Working) Budget*	BAU** Forecast (Excl. Covid Impact)	Excl. Covid Net over / (under) spend	Covid Forecast	Incl. Covid Net over / (under) spend
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
	a	b	c = b - a	d	e = c + d
Adult Social Care & Health	53,312	52,207	(1,105)	1,472	367
Chief Executive	9,213	9,213	0	0	0
Children's Services	35,947	35,867	(80)	1,361	1,281
Communities, Insight & Change	8,827	8,827	0	626	626
Place and Growth	38,292	38,842	550	1,846	2,396
Resources and Assets	679	679	0	3,809	3,809
Other (Direct covid spend + Impact on Ctax base)	0	0	0	996	996
Emergency Covid grant funding from Government	0	0	0	(9,356)	(9,356)
Revenue Expenditure Total	146,269	145,635	(635)	754	119

* Approved Working Budget is based on budget agreed at Council in February '20 plus any restructures, and approved carry forwards.

** BAU = Business as usual.

Further details of the outturn forecast position and variances are also shown at Appendix A. The main items of BAU variance identified to date are:

Adult Social Care & Health – underspend of £1,105k. As a result of the expert determination there is a reduction in the central management costs to the Council from Optalis of c£300k in 20/21. This efficiency has been achieved earlier than anticipated as this is built into the savings assumptions for 21/22 and beyond. Negotiations surrounding any further changes to central management costs in Optalis is ongoing. The increase in underspend from £450k to £1,105k in relation to the BAU budgets relates to good work from the staff in Adult Social Care in achieving higher than previously forecast delivery against the services savings targets and a reduction in the number of people receiving care in older people’s services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Adult Social Care services. There continue to be many variables to understand as we work through potential impacts of phase 2 specifically relating to hospital discharges and supporting the vulnerable in our community.

Chief Executive – no BAU material variances identified.

Children's Services – A small BAU underspend for Children's Services is now forecast for the year of £80k. Pressures within Social Care Placements, the SEND service and Home to School Transport remain, however are being off-set by in-year managed underspends and non-recurring opportunities in other areas of the Directorate. Placement forecasts assume a prudent level of additional activity in the remaining 3 months of the financial year, and this will be kept under close review. The underspend demonstrates the ongoing significant good work across the Directorate, focussing on close control of spend aligned to strategic priorities, while delivering service improvements. The £1.3m covid pressure reflects the impact on the service in supporting and safeguarding vulnerable children and families during the ongoing pandemic. Figures have been revised down slightly from that reported previously and assume that schools remain open for the spring term and that staff levels are not impacted by further spread of covid.

Communities, Insight & Change – No BAU material variances identified. Covid pressures include costs of £626k relate to lost income of £214k across some facilities and land charges. Other cost pressures include support service costs such as IT, HR and benefit assessments.

Place and Growth – Pressures on the Revenue Drainage Budget £100k and £620k on the Highways Reactive Maintenance budget due to increase in schedule of rates prices in the new highways contract. Offset by savings (£170k) from winter maintenance reserve.

£1.8m Covid pressures include consists mainly of lost income across car parking, licensing, planning, street works and country park income which will be compensated for in part from income claims to government. The compensating income is shown within the line called "other" on the table above.

Resources and Assets – Pressures in relation to reduction of shared service income from RBWM in operational property service have been met through winning of work through Housing Companies. Some income pressures in relation to shared legal services currently offset from additional income from Solar investments.

£3.8m Covid pressures include costs pressures of c£2.4m relating to our Leisure Services, c£900k relating to our property portfolio including commercial, operational and regeneration. Other costs include c£200k on additional temporary accommodation provided during covid, a £113k contribution to a Berkshire wide temporary place of rest and smaller costs relating to additional cleaning, staff support, etc.

General Fund

Taking account of the net overspends above and the known effect of Covid-19 pressures (assuming no further government funding), and the approval of the supplementary estimates, the balance on the General Fund as at 31 March 2021 is

estimated to be £9.766m. This will obviously deteriorate if further pressures from a second wave of the pandemic materialise.

See Appendix C for further details.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

There are no material variances (favourable or non-favourable) forecast in the HRA on the business as usual for quarter one. Rent collection is on target against budget. The impact from Covid 19 on the HRA has been minimal to date with some small costs incurred in relation to setting up temporary accommodation. Uncertainty around longer term impacts on rental income remain a risk.

The balance on the HRA reserve is forecast to be £0.865m at 31st March 2021. See appendix D for further detail.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The DSG is currently forecasting an in-year deficit of £2.75m, with the budget pressure continuing to be within the High Needs Block. Taken with the previous deficit of £3.36m, a forecast cumulative deficit of £6.12m is now projected to 31st March 2021.

High Needs Block

The updated forecast position represents an adverse movement of £1.17m on that reported at Q1, with the main movements due to increased numbers and costs for the 2020/21 academic year across:

- Out of Borough Maintained
- Post-16
- Independent Special and Non-Maintained

While actions associated with the SEND Strategy continue to be driven forward, overall progress against the Deficit Management Plan has been impacted by both Covid and a significant rise in the number of children and young people with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). At the start of the 2020/21 academic year 1,211 EHCPs were in place against a figure of 1,002 at the same point the previous year, an increase of 21%.

In recent weeks the ESFA has issued guidance and a template to use as a planning tool, to develop evidence-based and strategic plans covering SEND provision. Use of the tool is being explored as part a review of planning assumptions given the ongoing increases in demand. Further information is available on the line below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-deficit-management-plan>

Individual school budgets

As we progress through the financial year, the impact of covid on individual school budgets is becoming clearer. Loss of income and increased staffing costs in managing 'bubbles' and sickness represent the areas of most significant financial challenge.

The Department for Education (DfE) launched a scheme to allow schools to claim for exceptional costs experienced during the summer term, however the scope of the

scheme was limited and excluded, for example, loss of income. Information gathered from maintained schools in Wokingham indicated lost income levels at the end of the summer term to be in excess of £595,000.

A small number of schools were already facing a very difficult financial position for the 2020/21 financial year, and it is therefore likely that a greater number will now face a budget deficit. Discussion is being led through Schools Forum on the impact on schools across the Borough, seeking opportunities to support and learn from colleagues, and to provide an overall view from both maintained schools and academies for strategic discussion with the DfE. DfE have confirmed that DSG deficits are not to be held against the General Fund.

See appendix E for further details.

Recommendation 3 – Carry Forwards

The Executive are asked to note the proposed carry forwards of £2.113m into 21/22 financial year. Approval will be requested in the Outturn report in May 2021. In most financial years there will always be an element of budget that is planned to be spent but for various reasons is delayed beyond the financial year the budget was approved for. During this year, COVID has had a significant impact on this which is reflected in the value of the proposed carry forwards. Many projects have been delayed due to resources / priorities being focussed on the Council's response to COVID.

See Appendix B for further details.

Recommendation 4 – Supplementary Estimate

The Executive are asked to approve an in year supplementary estimate for £1.2m for Priority Covid-19 related issues, to be allocated by the Deputy Chief Executive (CFO) in consultation with the Lead Member of Finance & Housing.

We are currently at a critical part of the Covid-19 response and it is essential we have sufficient resources in place to ensure that the Council is able to continue to play a key role, whether this be through direct provision or assisting other agencies. The vaccine roll out to our community is of vital importance and we need to ensure that in working with the Health Sector, the immunisation programme is enacted as effectively as possible. It is also of vital important that we are able to continue to support those in hardship (both businesses and individuals) and we require an additional resource both to enact our hardship schemes speedily and effectively and are able to supplement the national schemes where necessary. It should also be recognised that the pandemic has generated some unforeseen high profile service pressures, such as 'fly-tipping' and we therefore need additional budget to address issues like this within our community. A supplementary estimate of £1.2m is therefore requested to fund these high priority activities.

Recommendation 5 – Supplementary Estimate

The Executive are asked to approve an in year supplementary estimate for £16,000 for a review and refresh of the Councils Corporate Plan. In the light of the Covid-19 it is considered necessary to review the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities and given the general staffing pressures with regards to our response to the pandemic, an

additional specialist resource is needed to assist with this work. The timetable for any revision to the Corporate Plan is tight to make it impactful for next financial year and the intention is to ensure sufficient consultation takes place prior to its presentation to March Council.

2021/2022 Budget

The budget setting (Medium Term Financial Plan) for next financial year, 2021/22 is progressing well, ahead of February's Council budget meeting. The finance team are currently reviewing the outcome of the provisional local government finance settlement announced by MHCLG on 17th December '20.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Working budget of £146.270 million	No – forecast o/s of £tbc	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	to be agreed in MTFP		Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	to be agreed in MTFP		Revenue

Other Financial Information

Effective monitoring of budgets is an essential element of providing cost effective services and enables any corrective action to be undertaken, if required. Many of the budgets are activity driven and can be volatile in nature.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

Public Sector Equality Duty assessments are undertaken during individual business cases.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

None

List of Background Papers

Appendix A – Revenue Monitoring Summary
 Appendix B – 20/21 Carry Forward Forecast
 Appendix C – General Fund Balance
 Appendix D – Housing Revenue Monitoring Summary
 Appendix E – Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring Summary

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT December 2020

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

Directorate	End of Year Position					Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend) excluding impact from Covid 19
	Current Approved Budget	BAU Forecast (i.e. excluding Covid Impact)	Excl. Covid Net over / (under) spend	Covid Forecast	Incl. Covid Net over / (under) spend	
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	
Resources and Assets	679	679	0	3,809	3,809	Pressures in relation to reduction of shared service income from RBWM in operational property service have been met through winning of work through Housing Companies. Some income pressures in relation to shared legal services currently offset from additional income from Solar investments. £3.8m Covid pressures include costs pressures of c£2.4m relating to our Leisure Services, c£900k relating to our property portfolio including commercial, operational and regeneration. Other costs include c£200k on additional temporary accommodation provided during covid, a £113k contribution to a Berkshire wide temporary place of rest and smaller costs relating to additional cleaning, staff support, etc.
Chief Executive	9,213	9,213	0	0	0	No BAU material variances identified.
Children's Services 91	35,947	35,867	(80)	1,361	1,281	A small BAU underspend for Children's Services is now forecast for the year of £80k. Pressures within Social Care Placements, the SEND service and Home to School Transport remain, however are being off-set by in-year managed underspends and non-recurring opportunities in other areas of the Directorate. Placement forecasts assume a prudent level of additional activity in the remaining 3 months of the financial year, and this will be kept under close review. The underspend demonstrates the ongoing significant good work across the Directorate, focussing on close control of spend aligned to strategic priorities, while delivering service improvements. The £1.3m covid pressure reflects the impact on the service in supporting and safeguarding vulnerable children and families during the ongoing pandemic. Figures have been revised down slightly from that reported previously, and assume that schools remain open for the spring term and that staff levels are not impacted by further spread of covid.
Adult Social Care & Health	53,312	52,207	(1,105)	1,472	367	Underspend of £1.105m. As a result of the expert determination there is a reduction in the central management costs to the Council from Optalis of c£300k in 20/21. This efficiency has been achieved earlier than anticipated as this is built into the savings assumptions for 21/22 and beyond. Negotiations surrounding any further changes to central management costs in Optalis is ongoing. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Adult Social Care services. There continue to be many variables to understand as we work through potential impacts of phase 2 specifically relating to hospital discharges and supporting the vulnerable in our community. The increase in underspend from £450k of £805k in relation the BAU budgets relates to good work from the staff in Adult Social Care in achieving higher than previously forecast delivery against the services savings targets and a reduction in the number of people receiving care in older people's services.
Place and Growth	38,292	38,842	550	1,846	2,396	Pressures on the Revenue Drainage Budget £100k & £620k on the Highways Reactive Maintenance budget due to increase in schedule of rates prices in the new highways contract. Offset by savings (£170k) from Winter maintenance reserve. £1.8m Covid pressures consists mainly of lost income across car parking, licensing, planning, street works and country park income which will be compensated for in part from income claims to government showing in line called "Other".
Communities, Insight & Change	8,827	8,827	0	626	626	No BAU material variances identified. Covid pressures include costs of £626k relate to lost income of £214k across some facilities and land charges. Other cost pressures include support service costs such as IT, HR and benefit assessments.
Other (Direct covid spend + Impact on Ctax base)	0	0	0	996	996	Includes direct covid costs + impact of Council Tax base growth. Also includes income from compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges.
Emergency grant funding from Government	0	0	0	(9,356)	(9,356)	4 tranches of unringfenced grant funding confirmed.
Revenue Expenditure Total	146,269	145,635	(635)	754	119	

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT December 2020

GENERAL FUND - CARRY FORWARDS

	Carry Forwards £,000	Comments
Resources and Assets	0	No carry forwards identified at present.
Chief Executives	0	No carry forwards identified at present.
Children's Services	942	CIP / Special Item slippage due to Covid; reduced Special Item bids in 2021/22 MTFP
Adult Social Care & Health	0	No carry forwards identified at present.
Place and Growth	771	£220k Consultancy / Special Item slippage due to Covid; reduced Special Item bids in 2021/22 MTFP, £152k additional local plan engagements resulting to extension of delivery into next FY, £399k draft local plan completion highlight additional works needed
Communities, Insight & Change	400	CIP Delays in project implementation and hire due to Covid 19
Carry Forwards Total	2,113	

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Estimated General Fund Balance - 31st March '21

Note	£,000	£,000
1 General Fund Balance (as at 31/3/2020)		(£12,431)
Budgeted contributions to reserves (as per MTFP)	(£1,979)	
		(£1,979)
<u>Supplementary Estimates</u>		
Sep'20 - Covid test services (£120k approved in total)	£55	
Nov'20 - Customer satisfaction software	£20	
Dec'20 - Adults Social Care COVID-19 Response	£500	
Jan'21 - Priority Covid related issues	£1,200	
Jan'21 - Corporate Plan Refresh	£16	
		£1,791
<u>Carry Forwards from 2019/20</u>		
Adult Social Care & Health	£380	
Chief Executive	£0	
Children's Services	£0	
Communities, Insight & Change	£0	
Resources and Assets	£1,714	
Place and Growth	£640	
		£2,734
<u>Service Variance Excl. Covid-19 (including 20/21 carry forwards requests)</u>		
Adult Social Care & Health	(£1,105)	
Chief Executive	£0	
Children's Services	(£80)	
Communities, Insight & Change	£0	
Resources and Assets	£0	
Place and Growth	£550	
		(£635)
2 Estimated net impact from Covid - 19		£754
Estimated General Fund Balance 31/3/2021		(£9,766)

Notes

1. General balance as at 31/03/20 is taken from the unaudited statement of accounts and is subject to audit review.

2. Based on assumption that no further funding comes from central government. The Council will continue to lobby for additional funding to cover the impact from Covid-19.

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT December 2020
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Director: G Ebers

Lead Member, Housing Services: John Kaiser

Service	End of Year Position			
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Provisional Variance	
	£,000	£,000	£,000	
Rents	Expenditure	332	332	0
	Income	(14,981)	(14,981)	0
	Net	(14,649)	(14,649)	0
Fees & Charges / Capital Finance Charges	Expenditure	97	97	0
	Income	(125)	(125)	0
	Net	(28)	(28)	0
Housing Repairs	Expenditure	3,184	3,184	0
	Income	(30)	(30)	0
	Net	3,154	3,154	0
General Management	Expenditure	576	576	0
	Income	(21)	(21)	0
	Net	555	555	0
Sheltered Accommodation	Expenditure	293	293	0
	Income	(476)	(476)	0
	Net	(183)	(183)	0
Capital Finance	Expenditure	7,036	7,036	0
	Income	(59)	(59)	0
	Net	6,977	6,977	0
Subtotal Excluding Internal and Capital Charges		(4,174)	(4,174)	0
Internal and Capital Charges		4,174	4,174	0
Total		0	0	0

Housing Revenue Account Reserve

£,000

HRA Reserves as at 31st March 2020	(2,091)
2020/2021 Planned Spend	1,202
2020/2021 Forecast Variance - BAU	0
2020/2021 Forecast Variance - Covid-19	24
Estimated HRA balance as at 31st March 2021	(865)

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT December 2020
DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING REPORT

	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Provisional Variance	
	£000	£000	£000	
Schools Block including academies (excluding De-delegation)	108,390	108,478	88	Offset by De-delegation adjustment below.
Early years	10,783	10,783	0	No material variance identified.
High Needs Block	20,528	23,428	2,900	Spend above budget driven largely by continuing increases in the number of children and young people with EHCPs and demand for specialist placements. An extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum is being held on the 11th December to focus on SEND and the High Needs Block Strategic Plan.
Central Schools Services Block (includes Growth Fund)	1,737	1,737	0	No material variance identified.
De-delegation	1,306	1,217	(89)	Academy conversions impact; offset by adjustment in Academies recoupment above.
Other schools grant	8,001	8,001	0	No material variance identified.
Total Expenditure	150,744	153,643	2,899	
Dedicated School Grant (DSG)	(142,743)	(142,743)	0	No material variance identified.
Other school Grants	(8,001)	(8,001)	0	No material variance identified.
Total Income	(150,744)	(150,744)	0	
Total in-year (surplus) / deficit	0	2,899	2,899	In Year expenditure less income
Brought Forward (surplus) / deficit balance	0	3,363	3,363	Deficit brought forward from previous years
Total Year End (Surplus) / Deficit	0	6,262	6,262	

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TITLE	Capital Monitoring 2020/2021 - Quarter 3
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28th January 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

Effective use of our capital resources to meet the Council Plan investment priorities, and delivering value for money for residents.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) note that the Council's Capital Programme has been reviewed and will continue to be throughout the year in the context of the impact of COVID 19 on funding sources and service requirements, and that any changes will be presented to Executive for approval;
- 2) approve and note the proposed rephasing to the Capital Programme following the 'in-year' review including the impact of Covid 19, as set out in paragraph 3 and appendix B. There is no financial / service impact from the reprofiling of budgets into 2021/2022;
- 3) note the position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 3 (to 31 December 2020) as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A;
- 4) note Appendix C which highlights capital performance by key activities. This is part of the Council's enhanced financial management focusing on the key capital projects, monitoring performance against budget and impact on funding levels (including borrowing);
- 5) agree that £6.8m of ringfenced funded capital budget provisionally programmed for 2021/2022 is brought forward into the current year (2020/2021), for the acceleration of the delivery of the SCAPE – Road Infrastructure project;
- 6) approve and note the addition to the 2020/21 capital programme of the development project for flats for vulnerable adults at Ryeish Green (Hyde End Lane, Spencer's Wood), funded from a ring - fenced grant of £647,627 from the National Health Service;
- 7) approve and note additional capital budget of £2.756m for Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride into the 2020/21 capital programme, funded by ring fenced grant (from LEP), third- party contributions and S106 contributions.

- 8) approve and note the contractual commitment of 2021/22 capital programme budget for the Carnival Pool Redevelopment for the value of £4m.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report informs the Executive of the progress of the Council in delivering its capital programme for the financial year 2020/2021. The Executive have previously agreed to consider Capital Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis and this report highlights the capital monitoring as at the end of the third quarter of the financial year (31 December 2020).
2. The COVID 19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the Council's finances, in terms of both its revenue and capital resources. It is therefore essential that the capital programme is closely reviewed to assess the assuredness of funding sources and if there have been any changes in service requirements. The Council on the other hand must recognise that capital investment will play an important role in local and regional recovery from the impact of the crisis.
3. The Council's finance team working with services across the council have conducted a review of the programme to identify rephasing of projects to match expected delivery, taking account of the impact on the service delivery and project cost. This is carried out every year, but now with extra emphasis on the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on both the delivery of projects but more importantly any delays in the funding streams (for example developer contributions). The review originally has identified £113.6 million of rephasing as at end of quarter 2, in the third quarter of the year, this was adjusted to **£161.0 million** and this is summarised below; a full list of the adjusted projects is at 'Appendix B - List of proposed rephasing of projects in Quarter 3' and Executive is asked to approve the updated rephasing of these projects.

Projects rephased due to Covid 19	Other projects rephased
£36.7 million	£124.3 million

4. The programme will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the financial year and any further rephasing will be notified to Executive for approval. Review of capital projects has identified a £1.9m savings (further detail in note 5 and on Appendix A), which can be reinvested into future funding of capital schemes in the capital programme.

Capital Monitoring Forecast Outturn Position for 2020/2021 (as at 31 December 2020):-

	£'million
Capital Programme approved at Council (Feb 2020)	157.3
Budget rephased from prior years (existing projects)	156.8
New budget added to Capital Programme (in 2020/21)	7.0
Capital Approved Budget	321.1
Budget rephased to later years	(161.0)
Working capital programme	160.1
Forecast variances to the programme – savings	(1.9)
Forecast Capital Outturn	158.2

5. As at 31st December 2020, there are £(1.8)m savings variances to the capital programme identified. These are made up as follows:-

<u>Analysis of material budget savings identified as at 31st December 2020</u>	£'000
Adult Social Care and Health –	
Connected Care (IT equipment) - saving due to utilisation of budget brought forward from 2019/20	(302)
Day service provision for the physically disabled - condition of property has remained better than expected thus reducing cost of keeping property operational	(335)
Children Services:-	
Basic Needs Primary, Additional Places - projected one year expansion for Reception capacity in Woodley has been contained within existing school capacities	(945)
Resources and Assets:-	
Bulmershe Leisure centre - build costs savings achieved through securing space and functional efficiency by working with the build contractor	(200)
Tape Lane, Hurst - saving on redevelopment against agreed budget	(69)
Total	(1,851)

6. All projects that have been rephased have been made in consultation with the project / programme managers and they confirm there is a nil or negligible impact of the re-phased programme on service delivery and the rephasing does not increase the cost of the project or have a revenue impact on the service area.
7. As per recommendation 4), the Executive are asked to note Appendix C (to follow) which compares actual spend to date against budget across our key capital projects (totalling budgets of £133m). The table highlights that the majority of the key projects are on track to spend budget by year end. Where percentages are low this is due to planned project spend being weighted towards the second half of the year. This new report is part of the Council's enhanced financial management focusing on the key capital projects, monitoring performance against budget and impact on funding levels (including borrowing).

8. As per recommendation 5), the Executive are asked to agree that £6.8m of capital budget originally programmed for 2021/2022 is brought forward into the current year (2020/2021), for the acceleration of the delivery of the SCAPE – Road Infrastructure project (investing in future road building / enhancement across the boroughs network). This is reprofiling of ringfenced funded budget already provisionally approved by the Council.
9. As per recommendation 6), to approve and note the addition to the 2020/21 capital programme of the development project for flats for vulnerable adults at Ryeish Green (Hyde End Lane, Spencer’s Wood), funded from a ring - fenced grant of £647,627 from the National Health Service. The property is owned by Wokingham Borough Council and is currently vacant. The project will convert a council owned property in to five self-contained flats for vulnerable adults with complex learning difficulties. The grant has been approved and must be spend on this project, if it is not the grant will need to be returned.
10. As per recommendation 7), the Executive is asked to approve and note additional capital budget of £2.756m for Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride into the 2020/21 capital programme, funded by ring fenced grant (from LEP), third- party contributions and S106 contributions, to complete planned project.
11. As per recommendation 8), the Executive is asked to approve and note the contractual commitment of 2021/22 capital programme budget for the Carnival Pool Redevelopment for the value of £4m. The Capital Programme 2021/22 will be published in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£158.2m	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£161.0m	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	To be agreed in MTFP in Feb’21		

Other Financial Information
None

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
Stakeholders should be reassured of the effective management of the council’s resources.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Equality assessments are carried out as part of each capital project

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

The capital programme includes projects which help achieve our priorities in relation to climate change.

List of Background Papers

See attached:-

Appendix A: Capital Monitoring Summary Report to December 2020

Appendix B: List of proposed rephasing of projects in Quarter 3

Appendix C: The progress towards completion vs spend for major capital

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APPENDIX A - CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 TO QUARTER 3

Directorate	Current Approved Budget £,000	Current Approved Budget is split into:				Analysis of Current Year (Yr 1)		Comments
		Current Year (Yr 1) £,000	Next Year (Yr 2) £,000	Budget Rephased to Year 2 %	Impact on Service Delivery	Current Forecast £,000	(Under) / Overspend £,000	
<i>Notes</i>	1	2	2			3		
Adult Social Care & Health	10,304	3,939	6,365	62%	No material / financial service impact from reprofiling into Year 2	3,302	(637)	Material Variance (Under/Overspend): £(302)k saving in Connected Care (IT equipment) due to utilisation of budget brought forward from 2019/20. £(335)k saving in Day service provision for the physically disabled - condition of property has remained better than expected thus reducing cost of keeping property operational.
Children's Services	34,123	20,800	13,323	39%	No material / financial service impact from reprofiling into Year 2	19,855	(944)	Material Variance (Under/Overspend): £(945)k saving in Basic Needs Primary - Additional Places, Projected one year expansion for Reception capacity in Woodley has been contained within existing school capacities.
Communities, Insight & Change	7,727	3,841	3,887	50%	No material / financial service impact from reprofiling into Year 2	3,834	(7)	Material Variance (Under/Overspend): None
Place & Growth	129,859	69,671	60,187	46%	No material / financial service impact from reprofiling into Year 2	69,678	7	Material Variance (Under/Overspend): None
Resources & Assets	139,063	61,862	77,201	56%	No material / financial service impact from reprofiling into Year 2	61,593	(269)	Material Variance (Under/Overspend): £(200)k saving on Bulmershe Leisure centre build costs. £(69)k saving on Tape Lane, Hurst redevelopment against agreed budget.
Total	321,076	160,112	160,963	50%		158,262	(1,850)	

Notes

- 1) Current approved budget is made up of approved budget through the MTFP plus additional budget approved in year.
- 2) Current approved budget is split at the start of the year into budgeted spend in current year and spend in next year.
- 3) Current forecast is estimated spend for the year.

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Appendix B - Approval for Year 2 Profiling (for quarter 3 - to 31st December 2020)

Working closely with the services across the Council, the following table highlights the changes to the rephasing of the capital programme since quarter 2. There is no material impact on service delivery or project cost.

Directorate	Project	Additional Description / Explanation of movement	All Rephasing £	Of which, COVID Rephasing £
Previous Quarter 2 Total			113,624,438	24,607,802
Since Q2, the following projects have been identified to reprofiled to be spent in 21/22.				
Adult Social Care & Health	Learning Disability Accommodation Transformation / Demand Management	Options appraisal & design underway, however most expenditure is delayed due to impact of Covid (including redeployment)	1,760,000	1,470,000
Children's Services	Matthews Green School/Community Centre	Prefabricated units factory has capacity issues due to Covid-19 infections - project now 6 to 8 weeks behind programme	2,000,000	2,000,000
Children's Services	Care Leaver Supported Accommodation: Renovation costs of Seaford Court	Expecting to take possession of site in 2021/22, delays in developing scheme as staff involved redeployed as result of Covid crisis	835,000	417,500
Children's Services	Schools Led Enhancement schemes	Used to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings, grounds or ICT equipment in line with the asset management plan and priorities of the schools, can be accumulated for larger schemes. Some impact of Covid reported.	387,023	85,078
Communities, Insight & Change	IMT Infrastructure, Network Capability, Resilience, Security, Upgrade & Improvement	Projects re-prioritised	1,089,738	0
Communities, Insight & Change	Twyford Library Enhancement	At planning / tender documentation stage. Planning Committee in January 21, then out to tender but works delayed to next financial year, due to Covid.	645,275	483,956
Place & Growth	Gorse Ride Regeneration (Phase 1)	Gorse Ride ph1 (£2.2m) and Gorrick (£238k) expected to be paid at completion, originally expected by year end but delays as a result of Covid mean payment now expected June/July. Remainder rephased into next financial year	5,567,344	2,438,000
Place & Growth	Winnersh Triangle Parkway	Design delays but contract expected to be signed by end of 2020/21 with planned completion by Spring 2022	1,951,754	0
Place & Growth	Payment of commuted sum to WHL	Based on projected schemes due to complete this financial year - Southlake (£360k), Gorrick (£349k), MiddleFields (£464,820) & Finch Road (£499,323), remainder rephased into next financial year	1,890,767	0
Place & Growth	Coppid Beech Park & Ride	Design delays but contract due to be signed by end of 2020/21 with planned completion by end of 2021/22	1,690,449	0
Place & Growth	Self-Build Project	Following issue with access road to original site, alternative site identified. Detailed design and outline planning in current year but build not likely to begin until end 2021/22	350,000	0
Place & Growth	Managing Congestion	£1.6m commitment planned start Q4 but some profiled into 21/22 due to network limitations	345,045	0

Place & Growth	Nine Mile Ride Extension	Forecast amended based on estimate for Stage 1 design, capital recharge costs & survey testing	307,600	0
Place & Growth	Developing New Crematorium	Contribution to masterplan of Barkham site. But delay due to covid (needs assessment review) and slow confirmation of a site, now identified, only feasibility & initial design/site investigation this financial year,	265,000	132,500
Resources & Assets	WBC (Holdings) Ltd Loan	Delayed drawdown of loans as new Business model being created which will determine the future use and treatment of this budget	13,069,458	0
Resources & Assets	Strategic Property and Commercial Assets & Strategic residential portfolio	Although work is progressing well, the initial profiling has materialised to be overly optimistic.	11,101,000	2,775,250
Resources & Assets	Carnival Pool (Residential Build)	Tender period extended 3 weeks, profiling adjusted to reflect	2,335,008	0
Resources & Assets	Renewable Energy Infrastructure projects / Support Services Energy Reduction Schemes	Solar Farms, Site investigation delay due to Covid and network connection	1,585,120	1,188,840
Resources & Assets	Cantley Park Enhancement	Based on cashflow forecast to complete scheme early summer 2021	870,000	0
Resources & Assets	Marks & Spencer's Site - Construction	Tender acceptance subject to securing primary tenant lease but slowness linked to Covid	250,000	250,000
Projects where rephasing is below £250,000			3,321,142	1,243,500
Further reprofiling to spent in 21/22			51,616,724	12,484,624
<p>Since Q2, the following projects have been identified to be brought forward from 21/22 into 20/21. These schemes are part of the budget agreed for 20/21 in the MTFP, but at the start of the year were identified to be spent in 21/22 but now will be spent in this year.</p>				
Communities, Insight & Change	Shinfield SDL Community Centre	Majority of work will now be completed during 2020/21. Final designs confirmed, and the contractor has been appointed	(865,999)	0
Place & Growth	SCAPE - Road infrastructure (dist roads etc) initial costs	Reprofile of large schemes in the current year.	(808,028)	0
Place & Growth	Safety / Crash Barriers	Additional road space availability due to lockdown impact	(416,948)	(416,948)
Place & Growth	Land Acquisition for Major Road Schemes	Forecasts amended based on upcoming acquisition and works related to relocate Adult Services and two further tenants	(284,440)	0
Resources & Assets	Housing (Tenants Services)	Increased forecast - To extend two properties, one with significant medical needs (200k) and one (150k) to create a larger house for a 4 bed need family from Gorse Ride	(350,000)	0
Projects where rephasing is below £250,000			(1,552,598)	(10,133)
Project spend reprofiled back to 20/21			(4,278,013)	(427,081)
Total (as at 31st December 2020)			160,963,149	36,665,345

Appendix C - Capital project by key activity as at 31st December 2020

The following table highlights by key activities the actual spend year to date as a percentage of the total year 1 budget. Where percentages are low this is due to project spend being weighted towards the second half of the year. This new report is part of the Councils enhanced financial management focusing on the key capital projects, monitoring performance against budget.

Key Activities	Year 1 Budget £'000	Actuals YTD £,000	Actual as % of budget	Explanation of Material Variance (Figures rounded)
Strategic Development	44,469	34,197	77%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include SCAPE - Road infrastructure projects (£4m) by year end and Shinfield Eastern Relief Road (£6.7m) agreed passporting of developer funding.
Strategic Assets - Other	31,885	12,668	40%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include Strategic Property and Commercial Assets (Investment Fund) (£17m) and Strategic Property and Commercial Assets (£1.5m).
Town Centre Regeneration	16,712	5,031	30%	Budget planned to be spent in in final quarter of year include Carnival Pool Area Redevelopment, £6.8m (including construction of leisure centre, library and residential build) and Elms Field & Peach Place (£3.9m) completion works.
Basic Needs Primary - Additional Places	12,777	7,045	55%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include on-going new school construction projects at Arborfield Primary (£3.3m) and Matthews Green Primary (£0.4m).
Highways and Maintenance	6,484	2,808	43%	Highways Carriageways Maintenance (£3.6m) - Schemes originally accelerated due to Covid and availability of highways, but remainder to be delivered as per original plan from September onwards.
Housing Regeneration	4,761	196	4%	Budget planned to be spent in in final quarter of year include Gorse Ride Regeneration (£2.8m), including ongoing property acquisitions.
Integrated Transport	4,422	2,200	50%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include Winnersh Triangle Parkway (£0.5m) 1st phase contract awarded and Coppid Beech Park and Ride (£0.13m) where construction starts this year. Remainder to be spent on bus stop, cycle & pedestrian Improvements, traffic signal upgrades, network & junction improvements
Tenant Services Housing Repairs & Adoptions for Disabled	3,950	1,074	27%	£2.8m projected to be spent in year.
Special Education Needs	3,828	2,038	53%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include Addington School Expansion (£0.4m) and Foundry PRU (£0.35m), projects underway already.
Place	3,470	1,178	34%	Budget planned to be spent in final quarter of year include Dinton Activity Centre Project (£1.9m), project underway already

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TITLE	Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020-21
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

Effective borrowing and investments to optimise the resource position for the Council and provide strong financial standing.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) note Appendix A, the Treasury Management Mid-Year report which was agreed at Audit Committee on 23rd November 2020;
- 2) note all approved indicators set out in the treasury management strategy have been adhered to and that prudent and safe management has been maintained;
- 3) note the table below which shows the net benefit per council tax payer, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £7.20 which is 0.47% of the average band D council tax charge. This credit provides income to the Council to invest in its priority services;
- 4) note this report and recommend to Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the Treasury Management operations during the first six months of 2020/2021. It is presented for the purpose of monitoring and review, in accordance with Council's treasury management practices. The Council adhered to all agreed prudential indicators. This includes ensuring the necessary liquidity to deliver on the day-to-day operations of the Council. There are two aspects of treasury performance: debt management which relates to the Council's borrowing and cash investment which relates to the investment of cash balances.

Appendix A is the Treasury Management Mid-Year report which was agreed at Audit Committee on 23rd November 2020. Key highlights to note from this report are:

- **The annual cost of servicing this borrowing that falls to the local taxpayer is £7.52 per council tax band D property for 2020/21.**
- **Net indebtedness after cash balances is £83m at end of September.**
- **Realisable asset value of £496m at end of September, meaning an asset to net indebtedness ratio cover of 6:1.**

Cost of Financing Debt

The table below shows the gross financing costs of servicing the external borrowing. Gross financing costs reflect the annual interest costs payable and an amount for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). To understand the true cost of this, it is important to take into account the income from treasury investments, contributions from 'invest to save' schemes, income from investment / commercial properties which all contribute to reducing the annual cost of this financing.

Furthermore, for completeness and transparency, the table from Appendix A (shown below) has been extended to show the additional income the Council receives from our assets which contributes towards the funding of key services the Council provide. This is the income over and above the amount used to contribute towards the financing costs of the borrowing.

	£,000	£,000
	App A	
General Fund - Financing Cost (including MRP provision)	£7,784	£7,784
<u>Less</u> contributions towards financing costs from following areas:		
- Treasury investments	(£815)	
- Commercial investments	(£2,820)	
- Town centre regeneration	(£2,536)	
- Housing companies	(£568)	
- Invest to save schemes	(£503)	
	(£7,242)	
Net Annual Financing Cost	£542	
<u>Include</u> additional income over and above the contributions shown above:		
- Commercial investments as at 30 Sep 20	(£1,061)	
- Town centre regeneration*	(£0)	
		(£1,061)
Net Annual Benefit to the taxpayer		(£519)
Net Annual Benefit £,000		£519
Divide by Council Tax Base (no. of band D equivalent properties)		72,036.5
Benefit per band D property - £		£7.20

* Income from this investment goes to repay its costs. When the scheme is fully operational, the surplus income is expected to be c£2m per annum. Over the fulness of time when debt is fully repaid, the surplus will be in the region of £5m - £6m per year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See other financial information	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not applicable	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not applicable	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

- net benefit per council tax payer, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £7.20 which is 0.47% of the average band D council tax charge. This income is used by the Council to continue to provide priority services for the borough residents.
- total external general fund debt is £324m and the Councils net indebtedness after cash balances is £83 million.
- the Council's realisable asset value of £496m, of which its commercial assets is estimated at £192m.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

This is a report on the performance of the Treasury service of the Council and is not requesting any funding or service changes that would impact on any members of the community and thus has no equalities impact.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Not applicable

List of Background Papers

None

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TITLE	Treasury Management Mid - Year Report 2020-21
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Audit Committee on 23 November 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Effective borrowing and investments to optimise the resource position for the Council and provide strong financial standing.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Audit Committee to support this report and recommend it to Executive. (*Executive will then be asked to recommend the report to Council*).
- 2) To note all approved indicators set out in the treasury management strategy have been adhered to and that prudent and safe management has been maintained.
- 3) To note that the net cost per council tax payer for the financing of all borrowing to date equates to £7.52 which is 0.4% of the average Band D council tax charge.
- 4) To note that the total external general fund debt is £324m, which reduces to £83m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness).
- 5) To note the Council's realisable asset value of £496m, of which its commercial assets is estimated at £192m.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides a summary of the Treasury Management operations during the first six months of 2020/2021. It is presented for the purpose of monitoring and review, in accordance with Council's treasury management practices. The Council adhered to all agreed prudential indicators. This includes ensuring the necessary liquidity to deliver on the day-to-day operations of the Council. There are two aspects of treasury performance: debt management which relates to the Council's borrowing and cash investment which relates to the investment of cash balances.

Key highlights to note are:

- **The annual cost of servicing this borrowing that falls to the local taxpayer is £7.52 per council tax band D property for 2020/21.**
- **Net indebtedness after cash balances is £83m at end of September.**
- **Realisable asset value of £496m at end of September, meaning an asset to net indebtedness ratio cover of 6:1.**

A detailed breakdown of the Council's performance in these areas is summarised below.

Cost of Financing Debt

The table below shows the gross financing costs of servicing the external borrowing. Gross financing costs reflect the annual interest costs payable and an amount for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). To understand the true cost of this, it is important to take into account the income from treasury investments, contributions from 'invest to save' schemes, income from investment / commercial properties which all contribute to reducing the annual cost of this financing. **Taking these factors into account, for the general fund the net financing costs of servicing this debt that falls to the local taxpayer is £7.52 per council tax band D property as set out below.**

	£,000	£,000
General Fund - Financing Cost (including MRP provision)		£7,784
<u>Less</u> contributions towards financing costs from following areas:		
- Treasury investments	(£815)	
- Commercial investments	(£2,820)	
- Town centre regeneration	(£2,536)	
- Housing companies	(£568)	
- Invest to save schemes	(£503)	
		(£7,242)
Net Annual Cost		£542
Net Annual Cost £,000		£542k
Divide by Council Tax Base (no. of band D equivalent properties)		72,036.5
Cost per band D property - £		£7.52

Council's Net Indebtedness

Net indebtedness represents the underlying debt position the Council holds. The table below shows how this is calculated.

	31st Mar '20 £m	30th Sept '20 £m
General Fund - Capital Financing Requirement	£329	£449
<u>Less</u> Internal funded borrowing	(£125)	(£125)
External Debt Total	£204	£324
<u>Less</u> Cash investment balances	(£123)	(£241)
Net Indebtedness Total	£81	£83

As at 30th September 2020, total external borrowing for the general fund was £324m and treasury investments were £241m resulting in net indebtedness of £83m. The HRA

borrowing is excluded from this calculation as it is a ringfenced account with external borrowing funded from housing tenants.

The increase in both external debt and cash investments represents the differing nature of external debt and cash investments, external debt is long term and based on supporting the approved capital programme spend as expected. Short term investments which are based on cash balances at a point in time. Cash balances have improved during the first six months of the year due to government grants being paid upfront to help the impact from Covid-19. In addition, capital spend has been slower during the first 6 months of the year with spend expected to pick up over the remainder of the year. External borrowing has also been increased to take advantage of historically low interest rates and to ensure our internal borrowing remains at a prudent level. Internal borrowing is 28% of total capital financing requirement which is broadly in line with the range of 25%-30% suggested by our treasury management advisors. This figure was 38% at 31st March '20.

Despite historically low interest rates, the Council are expecting to have no material variances against budget for debt costs and investment income. The final position and performance against prudential indicators will be reported in the outturn report.

External borrowing is within the prudential limits set in the treasury management strategy. The Authorised Limit (maximum external borrowing allowed) was set at £533m, the forecast year end external borrowing (including HRA) position of £391m represents only 73% of this limit.

The council continues to manage its debt in the most financially effective way whilst adhering to statutory requirement including the CIPFA's Prudential Code.

Asset Value

Whilst it is important to understand the net borrowing for the Council, it is also essential to consider the asset value that this borrowing generates as part of the Council's capital programme. Using the value of assets from our annual accounts plus estimated asset spend this year to date, the asset value for the council is £974m at 30th September 2020. Realisable asset value is based on annual accounts valuation and any individual disposal would seek to maximise the receipt to the Council at the time of sale.

	£m	£m
Asset Value as per balance sheet*		£974
<u>Less:</u>		
Highways & Transport assets	(£176)	
Schools assets	(£285)	
Other non-realizable assets	(£17)	
		£478
Value of Realisable Assets		£496
Of which are;		
Operational Assets		£304
Commercial Assets		£192
- Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration	£76	

- Property Investment Group	£70	
- Housing Company	£47	

Asset Ratios

Taking the value of realisable assets and dividing by the external borrowing or net indebtedness gives a good indication of the debt cover our assets provide.

- Value of Realisable Assets ratio to External Borrowing – 1.53:1
- Value of Realisable Assets ratio to Net Indebtedness – 5.98:1

Investment of Cash Balances

Cash flow balances vary significantly throughout the year due to differences in timing of income (council tax, developer contributions, grants, etc.) and timing of expenditure (running costs - revenue, and investment in assets and services – capital). During times when the council holds cash balances, investments will be made based on security, liquidity, and yield (in this order). Due to the uncertainty around Covid-19, whilst the council have been fortunate with the cashflow support from central government (e.g. grants paid earlier than planned) we have kept more investments on a short term and secure basis across the first 6 months of year and will continue over the coming months. This has ensured the liquidity is available to meet Covid-19 pressures however has meant returns on investments are lower due to the duration of the investment and lower risk counterparties (e.g. lending to other local authorities).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See other financial information.	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not applicable	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not applicable	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

- the net cost per council tax payer for the financing of all borrowing to date equates £7.52 which is 0.4% of the average Band D council tax charge.
- total external general fund debt is £324m and the Councils net indebtedness after cash balances is £83 million.
- the Council's realisable asset value of £496m, of which its commercial assets is estimated at £192m.

Cross-Council Implications
None

Public Sector Equality Duty
This is a report on the performance of the Treasury service of the Council and is not requesting any funding or service changes that would impact on any members of the community and thus has no equalities impact.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
None

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TITLE	Wokingham Community Energy (WCE)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions - Gregor Murray

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The aim of the Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) scheme is to create investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough.

The WCE scheme is expected to primarily support achievement of 2 key objectives within the borough:

- to generate funding that can be invested in renewable energy installations through a community share offering
- Increase renewable energy generation on local buildings which will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions, contributing toward the Councils stated Climate Emergency aims.

The benefits of the scheme include

- Installation of renewable energy systems can take place where there is no investment required to the council and a reduction in carbon emissions by the generation of green energy.
- Participating in an existing project that is already running with systems and processes in place so we can be operational very quickly

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Wokingham Borough Council partner with the Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) scheme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines:

- The Council's proposed Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) scheme, to enable residents and the community to become investors in renewable energy installations. The WCE will facilitate access to external funding to cover the cost of renewable energy installations across the Borough.
- Details of the MoU between Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) with services provided by Energy4All (E4A); and Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) and the governance arrangements for the delivery of the scheme.

- The report outlines the approach to encouraging and promoting the Wokingham Community Energy scheme as an investment opportunity for residents and the community, and the related benefits to address the climate emergency.
- The process for identification of potential sites for the installation, the process for funding of the renewable energy installations to be fitted and the construction and operation arrangements.

BACKGROUND

The aim of the Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) scheme is to create investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes (such as solar and possibly other technologies) fitted on local buildings and other installations.

Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group, which would give benefits such as the opportunity to direct which sites are used for renewable energy installations, election of a board member to 'direct' board decisions, opportunity to direct where funding goes provision of insurance cover, and recruitment of other volunteers. The opportunity to work in partnership with RCES will allow WCE to benefit from their experience and accelerate the implementation of this scheme.

WCE will appoint one of its members to be part of the RCES community fund committee, to evaluate and approve community fund applications in general and to encourage community groups from its local area to apply for grants. Once WCE's ring-fenced community fund has sufficient funds to support its funding applications, a separate WCE community fund committee may be established, which should include at least one RCES Director to ensure funds are appropriately managed.

Description of authority and responsibilities

Energy4All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps RCES to develop projects to a professional standard. • Provide administration and management services to RCES through a Service Agreement. • Prepares and manage all future RCES share offers • Receive an agreed fee from the proceeds of these offers • Appoints a project manager who has overall authority to approve actions • Project manager is authorised to make decisions on behalf of RCES or to grant delegated authority.
Reading Community Energy Fund (RCEF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCES will fund the construction of solar pv at the Sites primarily by a community share offer (although it also has retained reserves and an ability to borrow as a temporary bridging loan until a share offer is realised). • The share offer will be made by RCES and shares issued in RCES. • The share offer will probably describe itself as being made by RCES in association with WCE and will use WCE branding for its publicity in its local area. • All legal documentation will be provided by RCES, with the inclusion of the WCE logo, and the words "RCES in association with WCE". • RCES will seek to deliver the solar pv on the sites on the commercial terms agreed by RCES provided that the pricing for

	<p>that site is based on RCES's financial model, and the outcomes meet RCES's financial criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCES director is authorised to make decisions on behalf of RCES or to grant delegated authority. •
<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporated as a Community Action Group for investment and management • WCE will work closely with RCES on the community share offer, aiming to publicise the share offer and encourage residents from within its local area to raise the sum required to construct solar pv at the Sites, using the broader E4A support to its funding as a fall back. • WCE will take responsibility to organise publicity, advertising, leaflets and public meetings or other promotion of the share offer in the Wokingham Borough area, including circulating to likely investors. • WCE will remain independent of RCES and may seek grants for its work (which RCES will support applications for if that helps) and will seek to continue to develop renewable energy in Wokingham Borough and its environs. • WCE will not be eligible to appoint an individual to become a Director of RCES, as such Directors are required to be members of RCES. However, WCE's own volunteers are eligible to invest in RCES when share offers are made whether or not they involve WCE installations. • WCE will continue as an independent organisation to seek to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation projects within its geographic area as it feels that local residents would find it easier to associate with a local organisation. • WCE will identify potential sites; • discuss a potential renewable energy installation with their owners/tenants; • obtain details of energy bills, and with RCES's agreement, obtain an installation quotation from RCES's preferred supplier(s); • complete a provisional pricing proposal (for RCES to agree); • and subsequent to the agreement on pricing, WCE will facilitate the legal agreement with the owners/tenants, with support or advice, if required from RCES.

Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) is a not for profit community based social enterprise founded in 2016, with a mission to establish and expand community-owned renewable energy facilities in the Reading area. It is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. RCES is supported by Energy for All, which supports 28 community benefit societies and co-operatives nationally.

WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people. These investors will be CEF' Members and are protected by limited liability status. WCE will function as an independent organisation and would require limited resource or support from the council.

WCE generates income by selling the electricity back to the building owners/users in a profitable way compared to existing supplier rates. Electricity can also be sold to the

National Grid. Any income made is fed into the fund for growth and invested in the local community through projects. A grant scheme offers funding between £100 – £5,000 to organisations to support a wide range of initiatives that deliver sustainability and renewable energy generation.

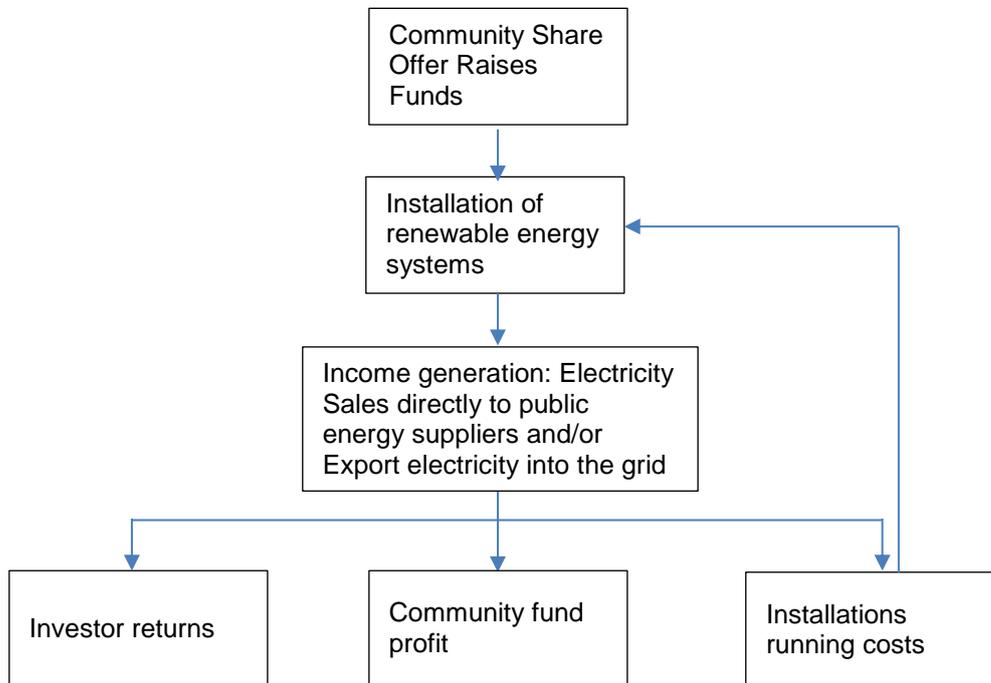


Figure 1. WCE financial flow – Investment, income generation

WCE would be able to sell the energy, set allowance for energy generated, strike a price, which states for the 20 year of the project duration.

WCE could also sell the energy through a power purchase agreement to the building user at an agreed price (with a defined level of inflation) for a 20-25 year contract duration. The building owner would have the option to buy out the solar PV system should circumstances change, though this would impact the community benefit of the scheme.

In the future, changing electricity market rules may enable any excess generation to be sold directly to local users. Currently, it would be sold back to the national grid.

Key Elements of Wokingham Community Energy

WCE aims to fund renewable energy installations through local shares from the community. WCE will have a Wokingham brand and will support Wokingham-based projects. This scheme will provide an opportunity to engage residents with the climate emergency agenda and let them be part of the solution. The key elements for the scheme are as follow:

Offering to investors

- WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors can contribute with a minimum £200 upwards, which is a tried and tested investment range.
- The maximum limit to an investor will be defined by RCES and WCE. This is typically £20,000, but may be up to £50,000. This is for the portfolio basis, and not for individual sites. This will reduce the risk of having only one person in the decision-making process.
- Shares have a fixed value of £1 per share.
- WCE financial projections assume all members' investment will be repaid over the 20-year life of its projects. Shares are only withdrawable at the discretion of the board. This means that they may be cancelled and subject to the society's financial standing and the provisions in its rules, the money paid for the shares is returned to the member(s) requesting the withdrawal. The reason for this rule is that a community benefit society has a duty to protect the interests of the society and its share capital. Funds raised via member investment are used to build community renewables projects which are long term, capital intensive projects. Unlike some other types of investment, WCE projects will not be easily dismantled or sold in order to yield cash which could then be made available to investors. The possibility to establish a 'break clause' every five years, will be considered, however, this will be at the board's discretion.
- Community shareholders will receive between 4% and 4.5% interest on their investment annually. The return on investment will be equivalent to the investment put forward.
- As a not for profit organisation, any surplus funds each year will contribute to a Community Fund to support local projects focussed on carbon reduction, energy efficiency and wider sustainability.
- Investors will have the opportunity to stand for election to be a member of the Board.
- Wokingham Borough Council will be able to invest following the scheme specifications but will share the return on investment with the other investors.
- New investments are decided by the Members of the Wokingham Community Energy.
- Exact terms (contract length, shareholder returns, investment limits) will be set for the individual share raises in discussion between WCE and RCES. RCES' Board will have the final decision.

Offering to buildings

- Building owners and users will benefit through WCE purchasing and installing renewable energy solutions at no cost to the building owner
- Purchasing electricity generated at a preferential price, fixed for at least 5 years, and index-linked at or below RPI for a further 15-20 years;
- Demonstrably supporting the uptake of low carbon technologies, and supporting local community initiatives through the Community Fund
- The installations will be monitored & maintained by WCE
- Optionally, invest in the scheme itself, to benefit from the projected shareholder returns
- Any assets that are included in the scheme will be fixed to the project for the lifetime of the PV system, usually 20 years.

Buildings that are particularly suitable for partnership with WCE include:

- Medium or large buildings, with suitable roof space of at least 50 m²
- Those that have a single occupier and a single electric meter
- Those using most of the electricity generated
- Unshaded roofs facing south-east to south-west in a good state of repair
- Suitable buildings include schools and colleges, offices, museums, medical centres and care homes as well as commercial buildings such as factories, technology centres and retail stores.

Analysis of Issues

Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019. The declaration set a commitment to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030. In order to achieve the Council's stated aims, it is necessary to support the uptake of renewable energy installations and to realise external funding opportunities wherever these are available.

The benefits of renewable energy have increasingly been recognised. A post-pandemic transition to a greener economy is gaining a lot of popularity among the government, corporates, and the public. Supporting renewable energy generation projects at Wokingham has both short-term and long-term benefits. The short-term benefits would lead to economic activation and job creation and, the long-term benefits would result in a more sustainable and environment-friendly energy source with lower or zero carbon footprint.

Community energy funds are emerging as a way to create extra funding to support the transition to cleaner energy options. For example, Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) has raised over £500,000 since 2016 when it was founded. This has allowed the installation of twenty-two solar photovoltaic (PV) systems in the area, generating a total of 529 kWp (approximately 2,000 individual panels), which is enough to generate enough electricity each year to power 157 homes. We believe that Wokingham residents would better identify themselves with a local organisation supported by the council.

Finance

The WCE scheme will not incur significant financial expenditure for the Council as it seeks to promote innovative financing solutions to help the transition from fossil fuels to renewable and greener solutions while demonstrating the council's support and commitment for delivering renewable energy locally.

The initial council's support for promoting the scheme might be needed. However, WCE will fund its marketing and commercialisation material.

Running WCE scheme will not incur capital costs. The Energy Team within Commercial Property will be assigned as the 'Representative Council Officer' (as a member of WCE board) and will undertake additional tasks related to the project as an extension of their substantive role.

Governance

The Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) will be formed by a combination of members from the local community, Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) with services provided by Energy4All (Figure 2). The scheme operates similar to a cooperative, with an obligation to members but specifically delivery benefit back to society.

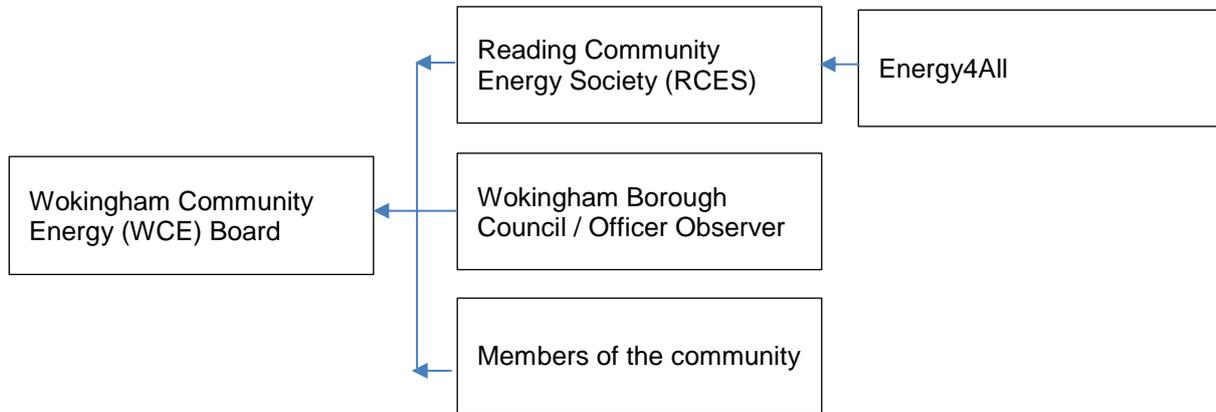


Figure 2. WCE governance structure

Energy4All is a non-profit distributing organisation dedicated to helping communities around the UK to own and operate renewable energy schemes. Energy4All itself is owned by the community co-operatives it creates and is unique in the UK. It was established in 2002 by Baywind Energy Co-op in Cumbria and has now set up (and administers) 28 additional co-ops. Its constitution is in the form of Rules approved by and registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Energy4All projects have raised over £77 million to build and operate community renewable energy generation all over the UK.

The Board of Directors are all investors in the scheme and typically live in the local area. They are all volunteers, with a range of relevant experience to offer, and share a common interest in increasing the uptake of renewable energy locally. The board will act as an independent body formed by community mindful individuals.

WCE will remain independent of RCES and may seek grants for its work (which RCES will support applications for if that helps) and will seek to continue to develop renewable energy in Wokingham Borough and its surroundings.

WCE will appoint one of its members to be part of the RCES community fund committee, to evaluate and approve community fund applications in general and to encourage community groups from its local area to apply for grants. Once WCE's ring-fenced community fund has sufficient funds to support its funding applications, a separate WCE community fund committee may be established, which should include at least one RCES Director to ensure funds are appropriately managed.

A member of the Energy Team within Commercial Property will be assigned as the 'Representative Council Officer' and will undertake additional tasks related to the project as an extension of their substantive role.

Next steps

Following Executive approval, the MoU document between Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) and Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) will be sent for signing by the Chief executive.

Setting up WCE.

WBC will assess potential buildings that could be considered for the scheme.

The Council will undertake advertisement of WCE scheme via the website, social media, and local publications to ensure that the scheme is publicised through the Borough.

The current timescales for WCE are that it will be launched in March 2021.

BUSINESS CASE

Wokingham Borough Council undertook to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. In order to achieve this, a rapid transition to the generation and uptake of renewable energy within the borough is required.

To tackle carbon emissions within the Borough the council will need to support and facilitate the uptake of renewable energy within Wokingham Borough, it is considered that the WCE scheme as outlined above is ideal due to the benefits it provides with limited additional costs.

There are approximately 2,014 installations of renewable energy in Wokingham, of this, 2,008 are photovoltaics¹. The current baseline for small-scale photovoltaics generation is 28,978 MWh/year². WCE scheme seeks to further increase the installation of small-scale PV systems to generate an additional 27 MWh/year of renewable energy. This will generate enough electricity each year to power 157 homes and save an estimated 6.90 tCO₂e of carbon savings annually and has the potential to save 60tCO₂ over the next 10 years. This is based in the best scenario, and it depends on investors, which we do not have control on.

The grant funding nature of the WCE scheme with funds provided from local investors (as outlined above) enables renewable energy installations to be undertaken at no cost to building owners or the council. There is subsequently a clear cost-benefit to the council in making use of WCE funding and advertising this opportunity to residents.

With the adoption of the WCE scheme, the expected outcomes will be an uptake of grant-funded installations in qualifying properties and council-owned assets with these resulting in an increase of renewable energy generation as well as reduction of carbon emissions for these properties.

This scheme represents a positive undertaking by the council that will benefit not only its assets but also qualifying installations within the borough, all of which advances the council's position in respect of its climate emergency declaration.

¹ Renewable electricity for Wokingham as 2018 (BEIS Sept 2019)

² This data is not based on any detailed technical feasibility; rather the national generation is scaled by number of households, land area, etc. SCATTER 2019.

Renewable energy offers local communities the opportunity to deliver their own sources of clean, green sustainable power through wind, water, biomass and solar resources, reduce carbon emissions and provide a new income source, particularly to remote rural areas. The council wants the local community to carry on seeing schemes happen in our neighbourhood, with more people able to access the benefits of community energy.

This scheme will help the community transition to a more equitable, cleaner, greener energy market with people at its core. The scheme will help reduce carbon emissions, address fuel poverty, and make renewable energy more commonplace in Wokingham.

Projects can be wholly owned by the community or the ownership shared with a developer or landowner. Individual membership starts at £200, so almost everyone can join the scheme. Members will receive a fair return on their investment from the sale of green electricity with some of the profits also granted to a community fund.

Investors can get great returns and do something good with their money, providing jobs and clean energy for the UK economy. The scheme is open to anyone over the age of 16, and co-operatives, community benefit societies, companies and other incorporated associations may also apply for shares.

Associated risks

There are very few notable risks to the council associated with uptake of WCE since the financial costs for this are placed on external grant funding.

The main risks associated with this scheme, therefore, through publicity associated with the works carried out. However, the council itself will not bear any responsibility for works to third party properties as these will be carried out by WCE which is an independent body. The council’s involvement for the scheme is to publicize the scheme.

The biggest notable risks for the WBC surround negative publicity in NOT support a local community energy scheme. Community energy funds are emerging as a way to create extra funding to support the transition to cleaner energy options. Many neighbouring local authorities already have similar schemes in place.

As an investor, the council will face potential loss of earnings, this might depend on the probability of the share offer not raising enough capital, the project performance may be lower than predicted, government change to FIT schemes, electricity price, value of future local electricity markets, installation and operational costs, and/or regulatory impact on potential income.

Other potential risks associated with investing in community energy schemes and the installation of renewable energy systems are listed in the table below:

Long term investment	These projects are all long term, and investors are informed of the 20-year timeframe. The money invested is usually log for at least three years and, with some, for as long as 20 years. Shares are withdrawable, subject to funds being available and at the discretion of the Members and Board
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Shares are transferable in exceptional circumstances	Shares in Wokingham Community Energy are transferable in the event of death or with prior agreement of the RCES / WCES at 'break clause' intervals.
Volatility of the energy market	Prices in the energy market could collapse or expected levels of energy production from a turbine or solar array might not materialise. Share interest will be paid on an annual basis and will vary from year to year dependent on the amount of energy produced by the installation. Energy4All estimates are based on best estimates informed by historical price fluctuations and market conditions. Industry experts are consulted for their opinions. Any shortfall in income arising from a lower than anticipated energy price may be reflected in changes to the agreement term.
Lost of investment	Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) with services provided by Energy4All (E4A) is registered with but not authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority and therefore the money pay by investors for their Shares is not safeguarded by any depositor protection scheme or dispute resolution scheme. If the scheme goes bust, investors could lose their money.
Fluctuation in value	The value of shares cannot go up and may go down so that investors may not get back the amount invested. Payment of interest on the shares is dependent on the financial stability of the WCE and Members' approval. Investment in smaller unquoted businesses is likely to involve a higher degree of risk than investment in larger companies and those traded on a stock exchange.
Ineligible for tax relieve	Shares are not eligible for EIS tax relief. They will normally be exempt from inheritance tax providing they are held for two years. Investors are advice to seek further advice from a financial advisor or accountant on tax matters as appropriate.
Inflation	WCE will benefit from inflation-linked income streams on agreement terms of up to 20 years. While every effort is made to match the heat load or electricity consumption and agreement term as accurately as possible, a financial model is carefully developed for each project, there are still underlying risks.
Feed-in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive	Changes in legislation, especially to the value or availability of the Feed-in tariff and the Renewable Heat Incentive may affect WCE income. In particular the FIT and the RHI may be subject to change at short notice. Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) will include the most recent tariff in the finance models for their projects. The government has been consistently reducing the Feed-in tariff subsidy, to the extent that it ceased for new projects on 1 April 2019. We expect that a similar reduction pattern will apply to the Renewable Heat Incentive payments.
Projects encounter delays	There is a risk that projects are not installed in time to meet subsidy deadlines, meaning they will not qualify for the RHI payments.

	Realistic timeline with installers is agreed at the beginning of the project such that the current heat projects should be installed ahead of the 31 March 2021 deadline. Sleeving arrangements / agreements will always be sought where any potential risk to income exists.
Weather conditions	Atypical short-term weather conditions and equipment loss or damage could affect expected levels of energy generation and therefore income, although overall patterns outside anticipated parameters are unlikely.
Technology failure	Although modern solar panel installations are extremely reliable, electrical or other failure can interrupt the generation of electricity or the distribution network and lead to unexpected costs and interruptions of generation. Manufacturer warranties and guarantees offer some protection. The performance of the systems will be monitored remotely to identify shortfalls in energy production as soon as possible to take action to rectify any problems.
Disrupted income stream	WCE income is dependent on the customers to whom it supplies electricity and heat to pay for energy in accordance with their agreement with the scheme.
Third-party risk	Equipment purchased by WCE is supported by guarantees from companies believed to be financially strong, however the risk remains that a third-party could fail to meet their obligations to WCE.
Selling of an asset	If an asset is sold there is an opportunity to sell the equipment. Any risks here are factored into the sale price.

A formal share offer will be published for each share raise, setting out the terms of offer, the key risks and potential rewards. Investors will make their own assessment of the risks involved, as well as the potential benefits of the scheme. RCES has a well-established track record of delivery, supported by Energy4All's 18 years' of experience in this field.

Key Performance Indicators

The performance of the WCE scheme will be measured in terms of the number of installations/measures undertaken.

The WCE scheme will initially aim to support six renewable energy systems to be installed in its first full year.

The data for renewable energy installations will be provided by Wokingham Community Energy in an annual report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	

Other Financial Information

The wider WCE scheme will involve the Housing department to facilitate use of WCE as well as the Communications team to assist in advertising.

Energy cost savings may be realised if installations are made on WBC buildings.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

No

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality Assessment completed and attached

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

The delivery of the WCE scheme will have a direct impact in carbon emissions across the Borough. By increasing the generation of renewable energy, carbon emissions will be directly reduced.

List of Background Papers

MoU between Reading Community Energy Society and Wokingham Community Energy

Contact Diana Tovar	Service Place Commissioning
Telephone	Email diana.tovar@wokingham.gov.uk

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Memorandum of Understanding between:

- i) Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) with services provided by Energy4All (E4A); and
- ii) Wokingham Community Energy (WCE)

Dated: 2020

Background

1. WCE has been set up to establish renewable energy installations within Wokingham Borough.
2. WCE considered incorporating as a community benefit society but following discussions with RCES decided its preferred approach was for WCE to form an association with RCES, as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group, which would give benefits such as provision of insurance cover, and recruitment of other volunteers.
3. RCES and WCE agree the priority is to identify and subsequently build solar pv on sites (Sites) to be identified by WCE, for which WCE would agree terms, having first agreed pricing with RCES.
4. RCES and WCE wish to develop a long-term mutual relationship in relation to the delivery of the solar pv on the Sites, its funding by community share offers, the subsequent management of that relationship with the Sites, and to develop further renewable energy installations.
5. WCE is keen to continue as an independent organisation to seek to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation projects within its geographic area as it feels that local residents would find it easier to associate with a local organisation.
6. RCES and E4A work very effectively with a mixture of volunteers, and E4A paid staff. WCE comprises initially of volunteers and, through climate emergency working group, councillors and Town Hall officers.
7. This document sets out the terms agreed in principle and in good faith but is not legally binding.

Management and decision making

1. A person appointed by E4A will be RCES's project manager and everyone should keep the project manager fully informed on what they are doing; the project manager has overall authority to approve actions and only the project manager and other directors of RCES are authorised to make decisions on behalf of RCES or to grant delegated authority.
2. WCE and RCES acknowledge that RCES has an administration contract in place with E4A and that whilst this is in place E4A will prepare and manage all future RCES share offers and receive an agreed fee from the proceeds of these offers.

Delivery of the Sites

1. WCE will:
 - i) identify potential sites;
 - ii) discuss a potential renewable energy installation with their owners/tenants;
 - iii) obtain details of energy bills, and with RCES's agreement, obtain an installation quotation from RCES's preferred supplier(s);
 - iv) complete a provisional pricing proposal (for RCES to agree);
 - v) and subsequent to the agreement on pricing, WCE will facilitate the legal agreement with the owners/tenants, with support or advice, if required from RCES.
2. All legal documentation will be provided by RCES, with the inclusion of the WCE logo, and the words "RCES in association with WCE".

3. RCES will seek to deliver the solar pv on the Sites on the commercial terms agreed by RCES provided that:
 - i) delivery of a particular Site involves the pricing for that site being based on RCES's financial model, and the outcomes meet RCES's financial criteria;
 - ii) WCE introduces licence agreements in the RCES standard form with the Sites rather than leases if it does not jeopardise delivery of the Site; and
 - iii) Implementation of the solar pv is in the wider interest of society and its members at the sole discretion of RCES Directors.
4. Where necessary in the event that funding schemes like the Feed-in Tariff are available, RCES/E4A will pre-register the Sites and meet the cost of the Energy Performance Certificates (if required) on those Sites in good faith relying on WCE to do its best to deliver those Sites.
5. The solar pv at the Sites will be owned and managed by RCES.
6. A member of WCE will take the lead in organising the EPCs and in seeking to deliver signed contracts for solar pv at the Sites. RCES will support this by providing documents, undertaking the legal/contractual work and attending meetings when needed.
7. RCES or the solar installer will make applications to the grid for consent to install solar pv at the Sites.
8. RCES and WCE will liaise to determine how any necessary planning consents and all other necessary permissions can be obtained. RCES will meet the costs of these if previously agreed but has discretion not to proceed if the costs are disproportionate for the financial viability of the Site.

Construction and Operation

1. Once Sites have been registered, grid, planning and other consents received and contracts with the Sites (or as many of them as are proceeding) have been obtained, RCES will commission structural surveys of the roof structures proposed on Sites to check they are suitable for the solar pv systems.
2. RCES will appoint contractors on standard commercial terms to install solar pv on the Sites, using its preferred contractors.
3. Once installed RCES will manage operation of Sites, including monitoring and organising any repairs, invoicing and other financial management, including accounts, VAT, etc.

Funding of the solar pv to be installed at the Sites

1. RCES will fund the construction of solar pv at the Sites primarily by a community share offer (although it also has retained reserves and an ability to borrow as a temporary bridging loan until a share offer is realised). WCE will work closely with RCES on the community share offer, aiming to publicise the share offer and encourage residents from within its local area to raise the sum required to construct solar pv at the Sites, using the broader E4A support to its funding as a fall back.
2. The share offer will be made by RCES and shares issued in RCES.
3. The share offer will probably describe itself as being made by RCES in association with WCE and will use WCE branding for its publicity in its local area.
4. WCE will take responsibility to organise publicity, advertising, leaflets and public meetings or other promotion of the share offer in the Wokingham borough area, including circulating to likely investors. Whilst the greater majority of this work will not require expenditure as it will be either voluntary or using Council facilities, if any significant expenditure is proposed, then RCES and WCE will discuss this jointly and consider whether or not RCES can contribute to that expenditure.

Payments

1. Provided the pricing for each site is based on RCES's financial model, and the outcomes meet RCES's financial criteria then RCES will use income from the WCE Sites to cover RCES's on-going costs for operational support, to cover financing costs (primarily share interest to members) and pay for support on the share offer as described above.
2. In respect of surplus available for the community fund, the WCE sites will be ring-fenced as an account and a ring-fenced WCE community fund generated. In the event that WCE is able to secure charitable donations for community energy efficiency programmes, then WCE will be able to allocate these donations into its ring-fenced fund.
3. If there are insufficient successful Sites, or the cost of the Sites is higher than anticipated or the returns are lower for other reasons, to allow all these payments to be made in full then RCES will determine the priorities for payment.

Transfer of Sites to WCE

If WCE wishes and where this is commercially viable, RCES will transfer the solar pv systems (or other renewable energy installations) at the Sites to WCE on payment by WCE to RCES of their depreciated cost (including funding and project management costs as in RCES's standard model) and the payments made to contractors and described in this MOU. RCES commences depreciation in the financial year following the year in which the solar pv is commissioned and then depreciates on a straight-line basis over a fixed period of time (which is set within the pricing model).

Ongoing partnership arrangements.

1. WCE will remain independent of RCES and may seek grants for its work (which RCES will support applications for if that helps) and will seek to continue to develop renewable energy in Wokingham Borough and its environs.
2. RCES is keen to work to develop a partnership arrangement with WCE whereby WCE is its local representative and liaises with the Sites and local members of RCES and can present itself as an active community energy organisation with live sites. In most cases it is unlikely that RCES will be able to pay for this work in addition to the sums above.
3. WCE will not be eligible to appoint an individual to become a Director of RCES, as such Directors are required to be members of RCES. However, WCE's own volunteers are eligible to invest in RCES when share offers are made whether or not they involve WCE installations. These individuals can then be nominated for appointment as Directors of RCES. In the event that a Director of RCES is also a member of WCE, then that individual would be required to act in accordance with the conflict of interest policy of RCES in discussions relating to WCE Sites.
4. WCE will appoint one of its members to be part of the RCES community fund committee, to evaluate and approve community fund applications in general and to encourage community groups from its own local area to apply for grants. Once WCE's ring-fenced community fund has sufficient funds to support its own funding applications, a separate WCE community fund committee may be established, which should include at least one RCES Director to ensure funds are appropriately managed.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	23/11/2020
Service:	Corporate Services
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Wokingham Energy Community
Completed by:	Diana Tovar
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	No
Signed off by:	
Sign off date:	

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1. Policy, Project or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:

The aim of the Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) scheme is to create investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough.

The WCE scheme is expected to primarily support achievement of 2 key objectives within the borough:

- to generate funding that can be invested in renewable energy installations through a community share offering
- to increase renewable energy generation on local buildings which will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions, contributing toward the Councils stated Climate Emergency aims.

The benefits of the scheme include

- Installation of renewable energy systems can take place where there is no investment required to the council and a reduction in carbon emissions by the generation of green energy.
- Participating in an existing project that is already running with systems and processes in place so we can be operational very quickly

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

The Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) will be formed by a combination of members from the local community, Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Community Energy Society (RCES) with services provided by Energy4All (E4A). The scheme operates similar to a cooperative, with an obligation to members but specifically delivery benefit back to society.

WCE will remain independent of RCES and may seek grants for its work (which RCES will support applications for if that helps) and will seek to continue to develop renewable energy in Wokingham Borough and its surroundings.

WCE will appoint one of its members to be part of the RCES community fund committee, to evaluate and approve community fund applications in general and to encourage community groups from its local area to apply for grants. Once WCE's ring-fenced community fund has sufficient funds to support its funding applications, a separate WCE community fund committee may be established, which should include at least one RCES Director to ensure funds are appropriately managed.

A member of the Energy Team within Commercial Property will be assigned as the 'Representative Council Officer' and will undertake additional tasks related to the project as an extension of their substantive role. This role will support the process for identification of potential sites for the installation, and oversight of the process for funding of the renewable energy installations to be fitted and the construction and operation arrangements.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

The main beneficiaries of the proposed scheme are

- Residents in Borough with an interest of investing in renewable energy projects locally.
- Building owners and users will benefit through WCE purchasing and installing renewable energy solutions at no cost to the building owner.

- The local community. As a not for profit organisation, any surplus funds each year will contribute to a Community Fund to support local projects focussed on carbon reduction, energy efficiency and wider sustainability.

This scheme will facilitate access to external funding to cover the cost of renewable energy installations across the Borough.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

This scheme broadly assists WBC in moving towards its stated aim of being carbon neutral by 2030 by way of increasing the installation of small renewable energy generation systems where there is no investment required to the council and a reduction in carbon emissions by the generation of green energy.

By working with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), Wokingham Community Energy will be able to participate in an existing scheme that is already running with systems and processes in place so we can be operational very quickly.

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Gender:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p>

		<p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Disabilities:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Age:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes</p>

		<p>fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Sexual orientation:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Religion/belief:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p>

		Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.
Gender re-assignment:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
Pregnancy and Maternity:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>

Marriage and civil partnership:	No/Neutral	<p>Wokingham Community Energy (WCE) aims to form an association with Reading Community Energy Society (RCES), as the incorporated body for investment and management. WCE is proposing to become a Community Action Group. This is a voluntary scheme and there are no eligibility criteria. WCE investors could be people exclusively locally to Wokingham, or a wider public in the Berkshire area. To be part of the scheme, investors need to contribute to a minimum cost of shares. WCE as an associated body of RCES, will be managed for the benefit of the community and owned by investors, who will be mainly local people.</p> <p>WCE scheme will enable investment opportunities through a community share offering to encourage and facilitate a widespread uptake of the renewable energy installations within the Borough. The scheme will enable individuals and local organisations to access the economic and social benefit associated with renewable energy schemes fitted on local buildings and other installations. The eligibility of buildings for renewable energy installations will depend on their size, location, suitable roof space, etc.</p> <p>Supporting WCE will generate positive environmental changes that will support Wokingham Borough towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>
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Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low of high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by....

Date: 23/11/2020

TITLE	The Healthy Child Programme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Children's Services - UllaKarin Clark

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

- 1) To propose the approval to proceed with the procurement of the Healthy Child Programme for Wokingham alongside West Berkshire and Reading Local Authorities.
- 2) To outline the internal governance and oversight of the procurement process and subsequent service monitoring.
- 3) To propose delegated authority, as described within the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to agree:

- 1) to the procurement of the healthy child programme in collaboration with West Berkshire and Reading Local Authorities;
- 2) that the authority to proceed with necessary governance and process decisions to enable the award of contract be delegated to the Director of Children's Services, the Chief Executive and the Head of Public Health, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the statutory duties of the Local Authorities for children is the commissioning of the Healthy Child Programme. We are requesting approval to proceed with the procurement of the Healthy Child Programme alongside West Berkshire and Reading Local Authorities. This will enable combined purchasing power to attract large providers with resilience. Only the procurement route is alongside Berkshire West Local Authorities. The service design, delivery and monitoring will all remain Wokingham specific, catering for the needs of Wokingham children and families. The procurement process and subsequent contract will be overseen by an internal Wokingham Children's Services/Public Health working group.

The Executive is asked to agree to this request and to delegate the necessary authority, to proceed with governance and process decisions to enable the award of contract, to the Director of Children's Services, the Chief Executive and the Head of Public Health, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's.

BACKGROUND

One of the statutory duties of the Local Authorities for children is the commissioning of the Healthy Child Programme. The service will be aligned to Wokingham Borough Council's Wellbeing Board priorities, the Children & Young People's plan and the Council Plan.

The Healthy Child Programme is an evidence-based programme of best practice which incorporates –

- **Health Visiting:** supporting children from 0-5 years and their families, providing antenatal and postnatal support, encouraging the development of healthy lifestyles, safeguarding and protecting children
- **School Nursing:** working across education and health, providing a link between school, home and the community. Supporting Mental Health in Schools, reducing childhood obesity and providing sexual health support and guidance.

The Healthy Child Programme is a universal programme available to all children and aims to ensure that every child gets the good start they need to lay the foundations of a healthy life. This includes safeguarding children and working to promote health and development.

BUSINESS CASE

Please see Business Case attached as Appendix A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Up to £1.94 million	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Up to £1.94 million	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Up to £1.94 million	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

A commercial model for this procurement is being developed so the precise anticipated cost over the term of the contract is not currently known but will fall within the costs outlined above.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Consultations with Stakeholders and local families will be conducted as part of this procurement.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed on the new service specification once it has been finalised and after full consultation with key partners. The new service works

to address inequalities and ensure equitable provision of services. No detrimental impacts are anticipated.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

This will have a neutral impact.

List of Background Papers

Appendix A included

Contact Ingrid Slade	Service Adult Social Care
Telephone 07801664614	Email ingrid.slade@wokingham.gov.uk

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In accordance with the Procurement and Contracts Rules and Procedures (PCRP) (see section 3.1.1): a formal business case is required for any procurement with a total value above £50,000. The level of approval required for the Business Case depends on the type of procurement and total ascertainable value of the contract, as indicated in the table below:

1. Level of Approval

State “YES” in the applicable box at either Level 1 or Level 2:

Type of Procurement	Level 1		Level 2	
	Assistant Director & Director	“Yes”	Assistant Director, Director & Executive Approval	“Yes”
Goods and Services	£50k – £500k		> £500k	Yes
Schedule 3 Services	£50k – £615k		> £615k	
Works	£50k – £4,551k		> £4,551k	

NOTE: Executive meetings (Level 2) are held each month but the submission of papers is strictly controlled, resulting in a cycle of at least 6-weeks – speak to Democratic Services for assistance.

2. Project Information

Project / Contract Title	The Healthy Child Programme
Project / Contract Description	Re-procurement of the mandated Healthy Child Programme (Health visiting and school nursing service).
Expected Start Date & Duration (months)	New contract start date: 01/04/2022 Initial term of 36 months (3 years).
Any Extension/s Allowed (months) (e.g.: 1 x 24m / 1 x 12m + 1 x 12m)	It is anticipated that the contract will have a number of options to extend. This is likely to be on a 12 month basis.
Total Ascertainable Value	£1,937,612 per annum
Procurement Procedure (Open, Restricted, other agreed procedure)	Open procedure
If not an Open or Restricted procedure, has it been approved by Procurement? (state “Yes”, “No” or “Not Applicable”)	Not applicable
Budget Available (please state the value)	Up to £1.94m per annum
Source of Funding (revenue or capital or specified other)	Revenue
Any specific comments or notes associated with the budget	Ring fenced Public Health Grant

3. Project Justification

Link to Service or Corporate Objectives:

One of the statutory duties of the Local Authorities for children is the commissioning of the Healthy Child Programme. The Healthy Child Programme is an evidence-based programme of best practice which incorporates –

- **Health Visiting:** supporting children from 0-5 years and their families, providing antenatal and postnatal support, encouraging the development of healthy lifestyles, safeguarding and protecting children
- **School Nursing:** working across education and health, providing a link between school, home and the community. Supporting Mental Health in Schools, reducing childhood obesity and providing sexual health support and guidance.

The Healthy Child Programme is a universal programme available to all children and aims to ensure that every child gets the good start they need to lay the foundations of a healthy life. This includes safeguarding children and working to promote health and development.

The service will be aligned to Wokingham Borough Council's Wellbeing Board priorities, the Children & Young People's plan and the Council Plan.

Project Specific Objectives, Appraisal of Options and Project Timetable:

The health visiting service and the school nursing service are currently provided across Wokingham Borough Council under two separate contracts with the same provider, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Both contracts were due to expire on 31st March 2021 however approval was given to extend in light of the pandemic. The current contract will end 31st March 2022. The quality of the services is good, the provider is an NHS Trust body and have demonstrated the necessary background, experience and resource to manage this type of service at the required standard.

Wokingham's procurement strategy:

- The service specification will contain both mandated parts of the service, and an extension to the service based on the needs of Wokingham children and families.
- The outcome of the procurement will be a contract award to a single provider: Wokingham will have service level agreement and control of ongoing service monitoring for their area.
- Wokingham will set their own local Key Performance and Quality Indicators as part of their contract with the provider and subsequently manage the contract through quarterly contract and performance review meetings.
- This contract management will be governed by the Children's Services and Public Health Working Group which has representation from both services and strategy and commissioning.
- The term of the contract will be for an initial term of 3 years, over which all prices will be fixed. There will be a number of options to extend the contract.

The following two options have been considered. We are strongly recommending Option 1 as set out in the Executive Report

Option 1 – Procure Wokingham Healthy Child Programme alongside West Berkshire and Reading	
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined purchasing power. • Opportunity to contract at scale and increase competitive bids. • Opportunity to attract a larger provider with resilience. • All three local authorities have the same provider which aligns better with the wider health system (for example midwives/GPs will only have one health visiting service to liaise with rather than current three separate services). • Aligns with discussions around Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Communities. • Supports the local Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership 	<p>Risks & Mitigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement timeline. The procurement timeline will be led and co-ordinated by a team made of representatives from each LA, experienced in public health commissioning. There will be key dates and decision which will need to be made in order for the procurement timetable to remain aligned. • Lack of unified agreement on a single provider between the Authorities at provider bid assessment. Tendering alongside the other LAs should result in bids which promote the synergy of delivering across wider system. • Risk that the service is awarded to a provider who is unable to deliver on service specification for Wokingham. This will be managed through contract monitoring and management procedures.
Option 2 – Procure Healthy Child Programme as Wokingham Borough Council independently	
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no additional benefits of taking this approach in comparison to option 1. 	<p>Risks & Mitigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendering with smaller budget with risk of low number of bidders and poorer quality. • Wokingham may have a different provider to Reading and West Berks. This would negatively impact on wider systems and partners and health pathways for our local children and their families. • Reduced resilience within our service. • Additional local resource would be required for the administration of the contract.

Cost Benefit Analysis:

The service will make a major contribution towards improved health and wellbeing of our children and their families. There will be a clear focus on achieving key outcomes aligned to our Health and Wellbeing priorities and the Children & Young People’s plan.

Contract Management:

The WBC internal Children’s Services and Public Health Working Group will be responsible for monitoring of the contract on a quarterly basis and report into the Children’s Services Getting to Good Board. There will be an annual break clause in the contract should Wokingham determine that the service is unsatisfactory.

The service specification, which forms part of the contract, will contain locally agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be monitored by the local commissioner at the quarterly contract management and performance review meetings. KPIs can include staffing levels, partnership working, customer satisfaction and other indicators which will ensure that Wokingham maintains high levels of safe service to our children and their families.

4. Approval

Level 1

<i>Position</i>	<i>Department / Directorate</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Head of Public Health	Adult Social Care/Children's Services	Ingrid Slade	
Director	Children's Services	Carol Cammiss	

Level 2

<i>Date of Executive meeting / approval</i>
Executive Approval

TITLE	The Council's Proposed Approach to Poverty
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Communities, Insight and Change Keeley Clements
LEAD MEMBER	Leader of the Council - John Halsall

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report sets out the Council's strategic approach to addressing poverty and deprivation in line with the strategic aims of the Community Vision to develop Safe and Strong Communities and Enriching Lives.

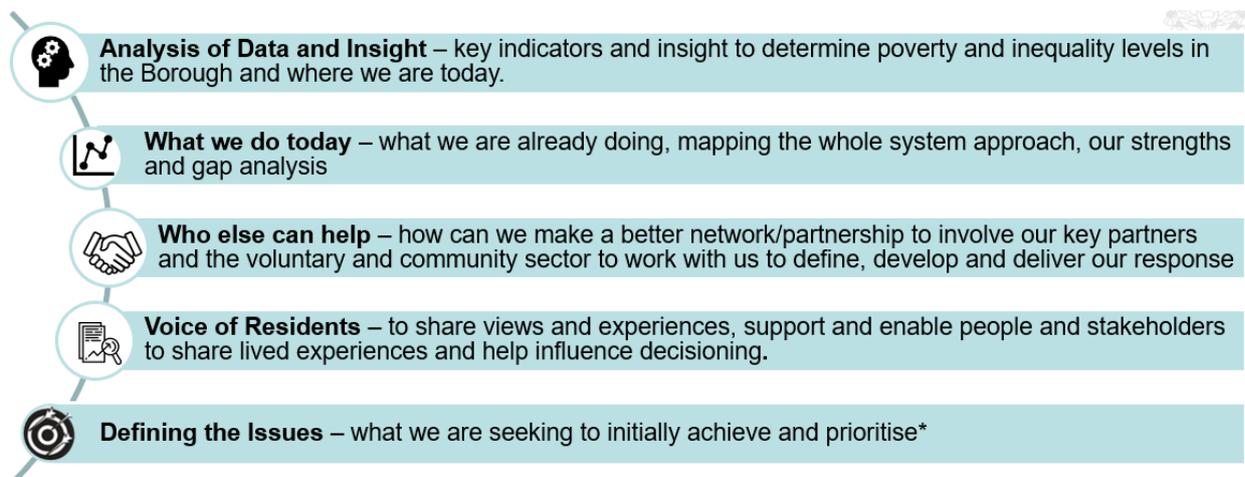
RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive endorse the Council's approach as set out within the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council, working closely with its partners, strives to support all residents to lead healthy and fulfilling lives with particular focus on supporting those in most need. Nationally, the level and extent of poverty has been rising and the pandemic has resulted in additional pressures and growing challenges, including disproportionate impacts on people already facing disadvantage. There is also an emerging picture of an increase in people facing employment and financial insecurity for the first time. To provide the right support to meet these increased pressures, it is necessary to strengthen our understanding of the drivers that are leading people into poverty and how best to prevent, mitigate and develop a clearer pathway out.

The approach is to initially focus on these 5 core blocks of work;



This report sets out the details of what these blocks of work entail, and the Executive is asked to endorse the approach and commencement of work with our partners as described, with a view to receiving updates at appropriate milestones.

BACKGROUND

The Covid 19 pandemic has had a huge impact upon the lives of residents in the Borough. It has brought into closer focus the hardship faced by people already living in poverty or facing financial or employment insecurity and the additional pressures arising from the pandemic. Existing inequality and disadvantage, for example, relating to wages, employment, health, gender, ethnicity, education and social isolation have been exacerbated by the crisis. It also opened up new issues such as access to home working, home schooling and reliance on public transport.

The Council, working closely with its partners, strives to support residents in most need, including measures to support the more deprived areas of the Borough and people facing poverty. Throughout the pandemic period the Council has focused on responding to the needs of residents, doing all it can in conjunction with the voluntary and community sector organisations to help residents access support, guidance and essential supplies as well as distributing grants/financial support and addressing housing needs.

In Wokingham, there has been an increase in people facing employment insecurity, either due to job losses or furlough and an increase in out of work benefit and universal credit claims since the pandemic began. There are also additional pressures facing young people in terms of access to education, employment or training but impacts have been felt through all age groups. Although the full scale of the economic and social impacts of the crisis are yet to be felt, it is likely that the impacts for some will be profound.

Addressing the Impact of Covid 19

The council quickly mobilised to support residents in most need and has implemented the following direct support to address Covid 19 Impacts:

- Expanding the 'One Front Door' citizens advice service
- Enhanced Mental Health Support
- £20m in business support grants and £20m other reliefs
- Flexible repayment plans for Council tax (and distributing Council Tax Hardship Fund)
- Economic recovery and business task force renewal
- Distributing the Covid Winter Grant – prioritising children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals through distribution of food vouchers during Christmas and Feb half term breaks, children who have left care (up to 25yrs) and families and individuals, with or without children, who are struggling to meet the cost of food, fuel and related items, as assessed by Citizens Advice "One Front Door".
- Digital Donations Initiative – supporting children and families with access to digital equipment to promote digital inclusion.

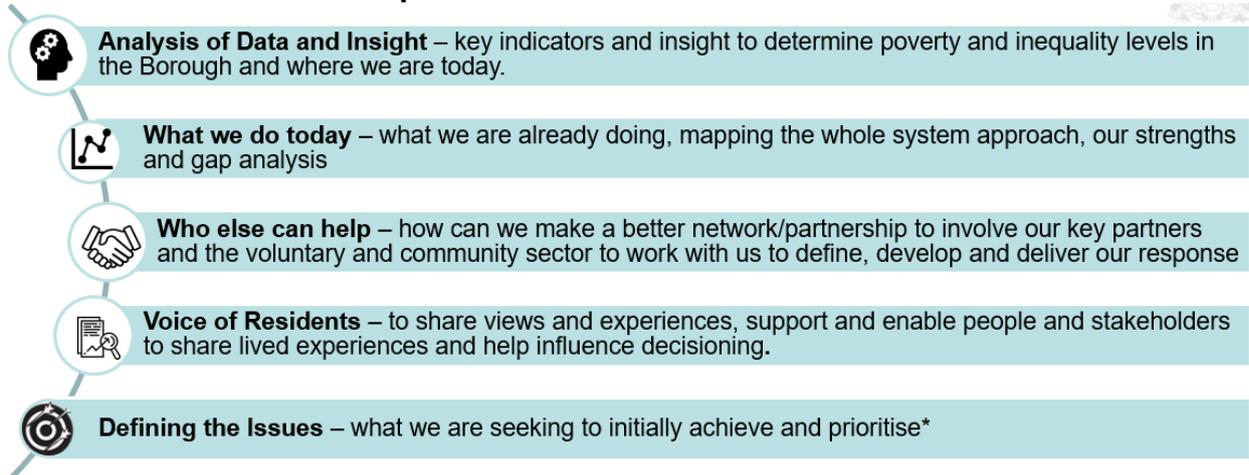
In addition to taking timely action in response to the needs and issues arising from the pandemic (as summarised above) it is necessary to strengthen our understanding of the drivers and impacts to ensure that we are supporting our residents where it is needed most.

Analysis of Issues

Strengthening the Councils Strategic Approach to Poverty

To ensure that our direction is properly informed, it is proposed that the following core areas of activity must be worked through to ensure that arising actions will lead to improved outcomes for residents in both the short and longer term.

5 Core Elements for Development



*A living workstream – we will work to horizons

Analysis of Data and Insight – the complex and interdependent nature of poverty means we must identify relevant data and insight that covers a wide range of factors. To address this we will:

- Work with third parties who specialise in this area to obtain as much data granularity around the topic as possible
- Glean as much insight from our Partners, Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (including Community Safety Partnership, Citizens Advice and charities) and work with them to develop our approach
- Source Voice of Customer through creation of lived experience forums such as the Poverty Truth Commission
- Create a strong mix of financial and non-financial indicators

From our initial work to date, we have identified we need to be able to fully track and monitor a mix of indicators to strengthen our understanding. A suite of indicators will be sourced around the following;

- Personal income and expenditure including debt
- Job market, worklessness, jobseeker claimants, furlough
- Benefits and welfare support
- Food Insecurity (referral numbers and accessing foodbanks)
- Children achieving their full potential (including educational attainment and developmental milestones)
- Adult education and training
- Free school meal and pupil premium eligibility
- Health Inequalities

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation and other national poverty and low-income indicators for children and adults
- Relationship between inequality and protected characteristics

Where we are today – analysis and monitoring of the data and insight indicators above will give us a clearer idea of where poverty and deprivation exists in the borough and how it manifests so we can focus our actions where they will have the most impact and better outcomes for our residents.

What we do today – will include (1) considering the pathway into, through or out of poverty from a residents' perspective ie customer journey, informed by 'Voice of Customer'; and (2) mapping the whole system approach to improve understanding of both gaps and strengths of the councils current approach with a view to ensuring the whole system is working together and both short and long term outcomes can be achieved.

The Council, working closely with its partners, strives to support residents in most need, including measures to support the more deprived areas of the Borough, to address the drivers of poverty, promote social inclusion and mitigate detrimental impacts in the following ways;

Homelessness and Housing

- 465 affordable dwellings were completed in the Borough in 2019/20
- Housing 1-4-5 challenge – delivering housing in partnership with our housing companies and through the HRA
- Regeneration to improve housing (eg. Gorse Ride)
- Tenancy Sustainment Service provides support and early intervention to residents in difficulties
- Rough Sleeper outreach work – wrap around support for rough sleepers
- Housing First Units – funding received
- Private rented sector access fund
- Discretionary housing payments

WBC and Partner Organisations Poverty Support

- One Front Door – Citizens Advice Wokingham – single point for help and advice on unemployment, debt, benefits, health and wellbeing
- Community Engagement outreach work – working directly within more deprived areas of the borough, offering advice, support and referral signposting to partner support as well as promoting social inclusion and tackling food insecurity through schemes such as 'Grub Club'
- Working with our Partners to ensure our residents can lead healthy and fulfilling lives

Unemployment and Support with Finances

- Debt management worker to support residents with financial difficulties
- Joined up support with our partners to support those seeking work including work with DWP, KickStart & Apprenticeships
- Local Welfare Payments
- Administering Eco-flex and Green Home grant scheme to alleviate fuel poverty
- Working to the Citizens Advice and LGA Council Tax Protocol principles of fairness and partnership working to support people to pay their bills and access debt advice

Who else can help – our approach will be to work collaboratively with residents, partners and key stakeholders to co-create a solution, working together to define, develop and deliver. We will create a shared understanding of the challenge to integrate actions to bring about sustainable long-term change.

This partnership operating model will include formation of an expert group of key organisations and stakeholders to maximise impact and use collective intelligence to its best advantage. This encourages accountability and responsibility across the whole system and can help to break down barriers and silos, enabling actions to mobilise in a timely way of their own accord to meet identified needs.

Voice of Residents – we will establish the structure to actively listen to views and experiences to gain actionable insight. Whilst the voluntary and community sector can play a vital role in providing a voice at the table to represent residents, involving people with lived experiences will provide richer insight.

Defining the Issues* – we will define what poverty means and how it manifests itself for our residents and fully establish what needs to be addressed in the short and longer term to have the most impact This will be a fluid and live plan with clear identifiable aims and horizons.

(*given the vastness and complexity of the issues, our approach is to do this in horizons and be continually and dynamically updated, we see this as the most challenging area given the number of partners)

Next Steps

The 5 core blocks of activity as described above will be worked through to inform a dynamic plan that will be brought back to the Executive for approval in due course, including details of key milestones and progress updates.

..FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue

Other Financial Information
The activity set out in this report to strengthen the Council's approach to poverty will initially be picked up within existing resources and activities. Any additional budget requirements will be sought from Executive as supplementary estimates.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
A plan to consult and involve residents is set out within the details of the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty
This report has had due regard to the public sector equality duty and where applicable and available has included information relating to impacts upon people with protected characteristics and inequality.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
The purpose of this report is to endorse the Council's proposal to strengthen its approach to poverty. Where cross cutting implications are identified through this work, the impacts will be given due weight in decision making

List of Background Papers
N/A

Contact Laura Callan	Service Strategy and Planning
Telephone 0118 974 6000	Email laura.callan@wokingham.gov.uk

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TITLE	Temporary Closure Remenham Footpath No 4 Henley Festival
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Chris Traill
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment and Leisure - Parry Batth

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The temporary closure will allow the Henley Festival to be organised and run in a safe manner whilst enabling residents and visitors to continue to use Remenham Footpath 4 via a short detour. The Festival Trust applies annually for this closure to enable the safe management and execution of a locally and regionally enjoyed festival.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) approve the making of an order for the closure of Footpath Remenham No 4, for a closure of an 80m section of the footpath for the set up and de rig of the Festival stage from Monday 5th to Wednesday 7th July 2021 inclusive and from Monday 12th July to Tuesday 13th July 2021 inclusive;
- 2) include within the closure a 620m section for evening performances from Wednesday 7th July to Sunday 11th July 2021 inclusive and day time performances on Saturday 10th July and Sunday 11th July 2021, under Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, subject to the receipt of the requisite consent of the Secretary of State for Transport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Authority is required to consider whether it is necessary for traffic to be restricted for the purpose of facilitating the holding of a relevant event and whether it is reasonably practical to hold the event otherwise than on the highway (in this case a footpath).

The applicant has stated that it is necessary to restrict traffic for the holding of the event and that it is not reasonable for the organisers to hold the event other than on the road in question.

Therefore a decision is needed on whether to approve the making of the closure order if the event is to proceed. The duration of the closure is also required to be approved by the Secretary of State for Transport.

BACKGROUND

A request has been received from the organisers of the Henley Festival of Music and the Arts for the closure of part of Footpath No.4 Remenham between the hours of:

Day (2021)	Times	Length of closure (metres approx)
Monday 5th July	00.01- midnight	80m
Tuesday 6th July	00.01- midnight	80m
Wednesday 7 th July	00.01- 17: 45pm	80m
Wednesday 7 th July	17: 45 - midnight	620m
Thursday 8 th July	17: 45 - midnight	620m
Friday 9 th July	17:45 - 01:00	620m
Saturday 10 th July	10:45 - 14:45	620m
Saturday 10 th July	17: 45 – 02:00	620m
Sunday 11 th July	10:15 – 14:15	620m
Sunday 11 th July	17:45 - 23:30	620m
Monday 12 th July	06:00 - midnight	80m
Tuesday 13 th July	00:01- 23:59	80m

The closure periods from Monday 5th July to Wednesday 7th July 2021 and from Monday 12th July to Tuesday 13th July 2021, are for the build and dismantling periods when there will be movement of equipment and vehicles on the footpath. The closures required for the set up and dismantling of the stage will be for the shorter length of footpath approximately 80m. An alternative route will run parallel to the closed section of the right of way at a distance of approximately 15m from the footpath. Henley Festival will make every effort to re-open the towpath sooner on Tuesday 13th July, as long as it is safe to do so.

The Festival takes place after the Henley Regatta. The Festival's organisers make use of the Regatta's infrastructure such as marquees and stands, which are already in situ. The main Festival events are held on a large 'floating stage' constructed in the river bed, the building of which takes place on and adjacent to Footpath No.4.

As Highway Authority, this Council has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the Highway Authority. As such, it is for the Council to consider any application for the closure of a highway, albeit on a temporary basis, in conjunction with this statutory duty.

Notwithstanding the above, in its capacity as a Traffic Authority, the Council is empowered by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to make an Order to regulate traffic on a temporary basis in order to facilitate the holding of certain events (a "relevant event") on the highway, provided that it is satisfied that the event cannot be held otherwise than on a road. At section 142(1) of the Act the term "road" is defined as any length of highway or any other road to which the public has access and therefore includes any footpath.

If the Order is made as recommended, it would continue in force for more than three days. Section 16B(1)(b) of the 1984 Act provides that, before the Order can be made, the consent of the Secretary of State for Transport would be required. Since 2009 the Secretary of State, after detailed consideration of the material facts, approved the

making of a similar length closure order annually. The length of time for the closure and the alternative route requested for 2021 is the same as that granted in 2019 and 2020.

Whilst there is no legal requirement to consult in respect of the application, the Council agreed at Executive on June 25th 2015, that for applications for temporary closures on rights of way affecting the Thames Path and the Blackwater Valley Footpath, (for special events) the following policy will be adopted:

- 1) prior consultation will be carried out with the following groups: The Ramblers' Association, The Open Spaces Society, Natural England, the relevant Parish Council and the ward member for the area through which the path is situated; and
- 2) the decision as to whether a closure will be made will be taken by the Executive unless it is agreed by the Executive Member for Environment that such referral to the Executive is not required.

Consultations were sent out in October to the local Ward Members, Remenham Parish Council, The Thames Path National Trails Officer, Loddon Valley Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society as well as Henley Town Council, who had asked to be consulted in previous years. Natural England confirmed in 2018 that they do not need to be consulted on application provided that the Thames Path National Trails Office are included.

Councillors John Halsall and Graham Howe as the local Ward Members, and Councillor Parry Bath as the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure have raised no objections to the temporary closure.

The Ramblers' Association, Thames Path National Trails Officer, Remenham Parish Council and Henley Town Council have raised no objection to the temporary closure.

The Open Spaces Society has objected to the closure and the points raised in their letter are considered below.

Details of the responses to the consultation and details of permission granted for the alternative paths by the landowner are included in the accompanying documents.

Over the past 4 years there have been complaints or objections to the Temporary Closure of part of footpath Remenham 4 during the Festival in July, from members of the public, local clubs or Remenham residents.

Analysis of Issues

Open Space Society issues	WBC response
Objection to the additional four hours added to the closure time for 2021.	<p>The hours that The Festival has applied for are the same as those granted in 2019 and 2020. There are no additional hours of closure proposed for 2021.</p> <p>The Festival wants to develop its work with local community organisations by offering a facility for groups to perform using the Festival's performance venue. The</p>

	performances will be using the floating stage and therefore the footpath is considered to be a part of the Festival venue and closure of the path is necessary at this time to enable the event to take place.
The event could be held elsewhere.	The event uses the same infrastructure as used during the Henley Regatta. It is not a matter for the Authority to specify where the organisers should hold the Festival but whether or not it is necessary to close the footpath at the point where they chose to hold the event.
The council must satisfy itself that it is not reasonably practicable for the event to be held otherwise than on a road. The OSS believes that there is nothing about the Festival which requires the use of a road.	The stage is next to the footpath where ticket holders watch the performances. Access needs to be limited to satisfy the licensing requirements and because electrical cabling etc. is placed across the footpath. It is therefore considered that it is necessary that the relevant event encompasses the use of the adjoining footpath.
The council needs to be aware of its statutory duty, under section 130 of the Highways Act 1980, 'to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of the highway'.	The duty is effectively suspended during such times as the Council uses its available statutory powers to close the path by legal order.
This is the Thames Path National Trail, a route of international importance, which should not be interfered with merely for a private event.	The legislation does not preclude the making of orders for commercial events or on national trails.
The council needs to 'have regard to the safety and convenience of alternative routes suitable for traffic which will be affected by the order.	The alternative routes identified for use by the public during the closure period is considered to be appropriate for this relatively short term diversion.
The OSS states that the alternative route needs to be a public highway.	This is not the case. WBC should only have regard to the suitability and convenience of the alternative route for the traffic affected by the order. The owner of the land agrees annually to the use of their land as an alternative footpath during the closure period and to date the alternative route has been provided for the duration of the closure periods so there is no reason to suggest that

	this would not be the case for the 2021 closure.
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BUSINESS CASE

Not applicable as the organisers of the Henley Festival pay all legal and advertising fees.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	N/A

Other Financial Information

The organisers of the Henley Festival pay all legal, advertising costs of the Closure Order.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

The local Members have been consulted together with the Parish Council, the Ramblers' Association, the Open Spaces Society, Thames Path National Trails Officer and Henley Town Council.

An objection to the closure is usually received from the OSS annually. Whilst the Authority must have regard for objections, the Temporary Closure Order can still be made by the Executive if it considers that the requirements of the legislation have been met. Any objections are sent to the Secretary of State so that they are aware of them to consider alongside the application for consent under section 16B(i)(b).

Public Sector Equality Duty

An initial equality impact assessment has been carried out and has not identified any negative impact to the proposal.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

The temporary closure of the path in itself will not cause any negative impact to the carbon neutral targets.

List of Background Papers

Application from the organisers of the Henley Festival
 Map of the proposed temporary closure and alternative paths
 Details of responses from consultees

Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Contact Andrew Fletcher	Service Delivery and Infrastructure
Telephone 07789 032544	Email andrew.fletcher@wokingham.gov.uk

HENLEY FESTIVAL 2021 APPLICATION FOR TOWPATH DIVERSION - hours applied for :

STAGE BUILD - short diversion taking walkers approx 15m off the towpath for a length of approx 80m around the stage construction site. [Between points C-D as shown on the Temporary Closure Plan]

Monday 5th July 2021 00:01 - Wednesday 7th July 2021 17:45

Henley Festival will make every effort to re-open the towpath sooner, so long as it is safe to do so.

SHOW NIGHTS – full diversion with diverted route to rear of the site [Closure between points A-B, with an alternate route from points B-E as shown on the Temporary Closure Plan]

Wed 7th July 2021 17:45 - midnight

Thurs 8th July 2021 17:45 – midnight

Friday 9th July 2021 17:45 – 01:00

Saturday 10th July 2021 10:30 – 14:30

Saturday 10th July 2021 17:45 – 02:00

Sunday 11th July 2021 10:15 – 14:15

Sunday 11th July 2021 17:45 – 23:30

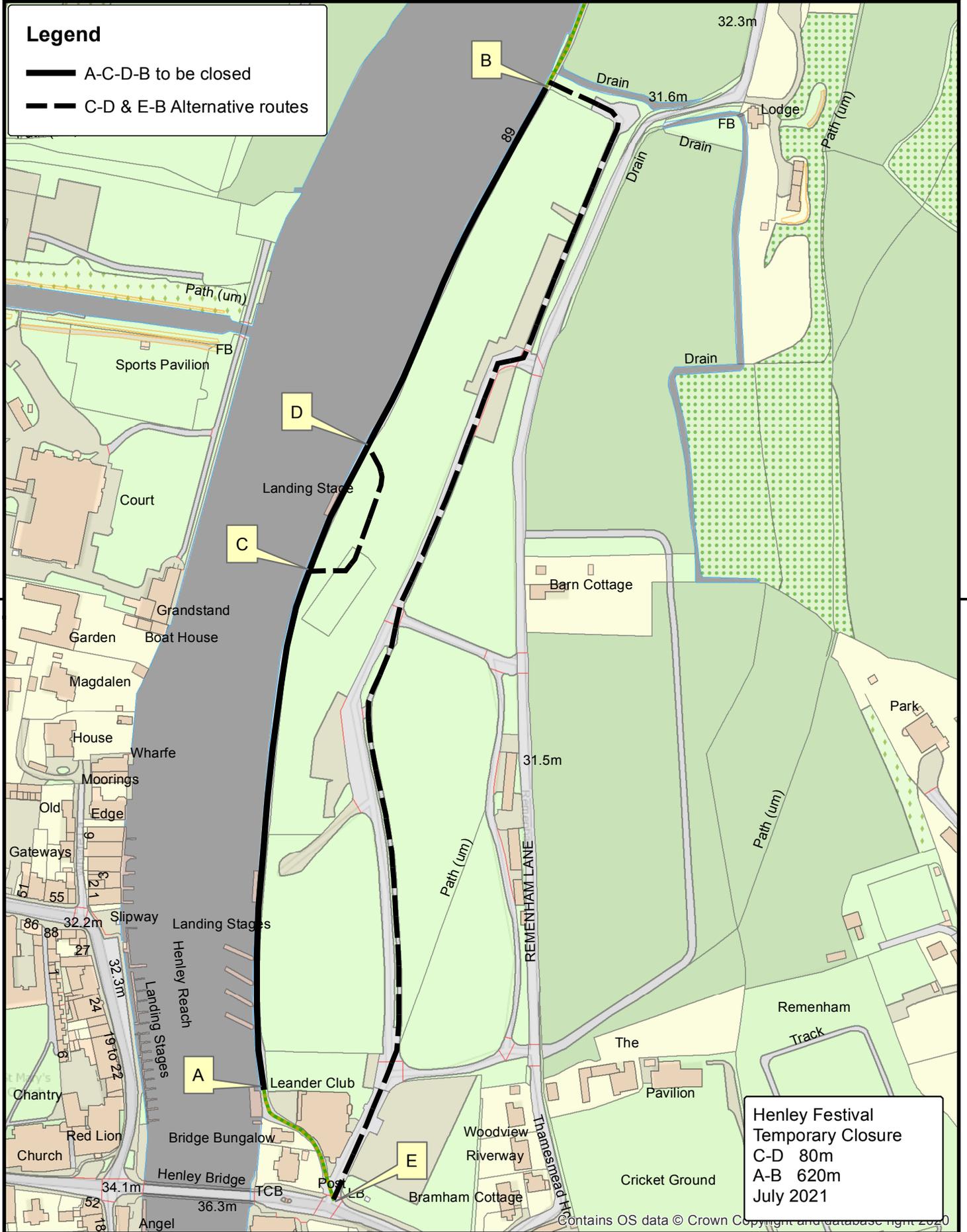
STAGE DE-RIG - short diversion taking walkers approx 15m off the towpath for a length of approx 80m around the stage construction site. [Between points C-D as shown on the Temporary Closure Plan]

Mon 12th July 2021 06:00 – Tues 13th July 2021 23:59

Henley Festival will make every effort to re-open the towpath sooner, so long as it is safe to do so.

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
 ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 SECTION 16A
 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER
 REMENHAM FOOTPATH 4 (PART) 2021



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Temporary Closure Remenham Footpath 4 Henley Festival 2021
Details of responses to stakeholder consultation and permission from landowner

Organisation	Date Received	Details of response
Open Spaces Society	7 th Oct 2020	Objects to the order on numerous grounds which have been considered and responded to in detail in the main report
Remenham Parish Council		No response received
Henley Town Council	30 th Nov 2020	No objection
Loddon Valley Ramblers (LVR)	13 th Oct 2020	No objection
Thames Path National Trail		No response received
Henley Royal Regatta	2 nd Nov 2020	Confirms that the alternative route will be made available and kept open for the use of members of the public during the closure period. Confirms that no other party is required to give consent.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	16 th November 2020
Service:	Delivery and Infrastructure
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Temporary Closure of Remenham Footpath 4 for the Henley Festival
Completed by:	Andrew Fletcher
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	No
Signed off by:	Francesca Hobson
Sign off date:	24 th November 2020

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1. Policy, Project or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:

A request has been received from the organisers of the Henley Festival of Music and the Arts for the closure of part of Footpath No.4 Remenham to allow for the land to be used to host the Henley Festival between 5th and 13th July 2021. During this time an alternative route will be available for the public to use.

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

The Council have powers to approve the temporary closure of public rights of way to allow for events to take place under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Whilst there is no legal requirement to consult in respect of the application, the Council agreed at Executive on June 25th 2015, that for applications for temporary closures on rights of way affecting the Thames Path and the Blackwater Valley Footpath, (for special events) the following policy will be adopted:

- 1) prior consultation will be carried out with the following groups: The Ramblers' Association, The Open Spaces Society, Natural England, the relevant Parish Council and the ward member for the area through which the path is situated; and
- 2) the decision as to whether a closure will be made will be taken by the Executive unless it is agreed by the Executive Member for Environment that such referral to the Executive is not required.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

The Henley Festival for Music and the Arts are the main beneficiaries of this decision. Should the closure be approved the public will have an alternate route available during the times that the public footpath is closed.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	No	
Gender:	No	

Disabilities:	No	The alternative route runs parallel to the closed path, will be fully signed and fully accessible. The effect of the closure is thus not considered to pose any impact on people with disabilities.
Age:	No	
Sexual orientation:	No	
Religion/belief:	No	
Gender re-assignment:	No	
Pregnancy and Maternity:	No	
Marriage and civil partnership:	No	

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low or high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by... Francesca Hobson

Date: 24th November 2020

TITLE	Domestic Abuse Services
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Communities, Insight and Change - Keeley Clements
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment and Leisure - Parry Batth

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report seeks agreement from the executive to procure a new domestic abuse support services contract and lays out the timetable to ensure a new contract is in place when the current contract expires at the end of June 2021.

Recommissioning will be based on meeting the projected increase in demand, adopting a whole systems approach, preventative demand management and local innovation.

The intention is to ensure effective support services are in place to protect the vulnerable in line with our aims to enabling safe, strong communities and changing the way we work for residents.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive agrees to:

- 1) procure a new domestic abuse support contract of an initial period of 5 years with an option to add a further two years to the contract period with a total contract value of £1,554,000;
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Community Insight and Change, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, authority to award the contract(s) to the successful bidder(s) following completion of the evaluation process.
- 3) note that following a review of the local demand levels and service performance, additional growth has been requested through the council's medium term financial plan (MTFP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic violence can happen against anyone, and anybody can be an abuser. Its effects are wide ranging and has a serious impact on adults, children, and their health and wellbeing. Ensuring effective access to information, specialist services and multi-agency support is a vital part of keeping our residents safe.

The council is responsible for commissioning domestic abuse support for individuals who are identified as being at high or medium risk of serious harm.

The current contract for the commissioned service provided by Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) is due to expire at the end of June 2021 and this report is to seek agreement to recommission specialist abuse services.

Services to be commissioned will include:

1. a helpline;
2. access to specialist independent domestic abuse advocates (IDVA's).
3. outreach, children and young people support, group-based programmes
4. refuge support.

Demand on WBC specialist services for domestic abuse support has increased substantially since 2018 meaning that additional short-term funding of £35,000 for an additional independent domestic abuse advocate has had to be provided to ensure service quality and safe caseloads within the commissioned service.

We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise and needs analysis to see how domestic abuse support spending in Wokingham compares to assessed levels of need. Wokingham is currently spending less on this mandated service than data demonstrates is required.

Additional funding of £115,000 in 21/22 increasing by a further £35,000 in 22/23 for Domestic Abuse has been requested as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process. This is based on the increased demand for services and additional statutory duties which are expected to be placed on Local Authorities from April 2021.

An increase in funding for these preventative services is being sought at an essential time. It is anticipated that further local increases in approaches from people in need of help will be seen. There are several complex reasons for the increase in victims accessing services including Covid19, therefore the council seeks to invest in more early intervention that helps to protect vulnerable victims, their families and those at risk from further physical or mental harm or abuse, which may put them at risk of requiring a more acute intervention.

Recommissioning will enable the borough to put the service in a position that is in line with future anticipated demand levels that allow an effective local response to domestic abuse. It will also ensure the borough has a sustainable commissioned service landscape that understands the needs of the local population. In addition it will re-align services to take a whole systems approach with an emphasis on prevention and allow for local innovation. An essential aspect of the tender process will be to create measurable outcomes and KPIs so that the impact and effectiveness of the service can be objectively assessed.

A competitive process will be run to ensure the most economically advantageous tender following a proportionate 60/40 split of quality and price evaluation is awarded the contract so that the contract has the greatest opportunity for delivering towards outcomes and performing effectively.

The procurement timescale:

- Commenced with a market interest group on 15th December 2020,
- tender specification to be signed off by project group in January 2021,
- bidding opens for tenders March 2021,

- decision made and successful organisation notified April 2021,
- TUPE transfer and new contract to commence 1st July 2021.

BACKGROUND

Domestic abuse is a crime, which can have a long-term and devastating impact on families and particularly children. It can take the form of psychological, physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse, and occur in a wide range of domestic settings. This can include physical violence, manipulation, isolation, control, and use of threats and humiliation which harm, frighten, or punish a victim.

New Statutory Responsibilities on Local Authorities

The Domestic Abuse Bill, 2020 introduces a statutory definition of domestic abuse which recognises that domestic abuse can extend beyond physical and sexual violence to other forms of abuse, including economic and coercive and controlling behaviour, and within the definition, children will be recognised as victims in their 'own right'.

Local Authorities will be required to put in place a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board by April 2021, whose functions will include the need to provide access to domestic abuse support for all victims (and their children) who reside in their area, including those who require cross-border support.

The council has recently created a dedicated domestic abuse coordinator role to increase co-ordination across the council. Consultation and engagement with our current Domestic Abuse Subgroup members and wider key stakeholders is underway to ensure we are ready to implement a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board in time for April 2021.

Need for domestic abuse support

Domestic abuse is prevalent across the country; however, its prevalence is likely to be significantly underestimated due to it being a 'hidden harm' taking place behind closed doors, hidden away from view.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that in the year ending March 2020 5.5% of adults aged 16 to 74 years (2.3 million people*¹) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

Locally it is estimated that 2,700 women (4% of the total population) and 1,500 men (2.2% of the total population), 4,200* in total Wokingham residents will have experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Research indicates that it takes between 35 and 50 incidents on average before a victim will have the confidence to contact statutory services, such as the police or social care, or a domestic abuse service meaning that it is vital that support options are available for victims.²

Support options can include advice and sign posting; outreach support, group work, access to legal remedies, long- term recovery support and criminal justice system sanctions and or emergency refuge or accommodation. Domestic abuse affects all

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2020>

*2 Victim estimates referenced in Wokingham Safelives Needs Assessment, population estimates Berkshire Observatory <https://wokingham.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/population/>

society regardless of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity therefore a truly inclusive response and service is required.

The contract for the current commissioned service provided Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) commenced in July 2017 to provide confidential support, information, outreach services and refuge accommodation for women and their children who are affected by domestic abuse and violence and is due to expire in June 2021

BUSINESS CASE

Demand on the Council's domestic abuse services have increased by 60% 2019/20 compared with the previous year with referrals rising from 207 to 304 primarily driven by increased awareness among professionals and victims with a corresponding increase in professional referrals.

A further increase in demand this year has resulted in additional short-term funding having to be provided to ensure service quality and safe caseloads. Although due to the nature of these services' future demand is hard to accurately predict, available information and data analysis indicates that a 25% annual increase to an estimated 594 cases by 2022-23 which is comparable with similar community safety partnership areas.

There has also been an increase in the number of cases discussed at Multi-agency Risk assessment conferences (MARAC), which is a meeting to discuss cases and put in place a co-ordinated action plan to safeguard adult victims and children. These cases are considered to be at high or medium risk of serious harm. MARAC cases saw an 89% increase on the previous year following greater awareness amongst the police and other professionals together with clearer referral pathways. 36% are repeat cases with 50% of referrals coming from the police, 30% from Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA's) and 15% from Children's social care.

LINK TO SERVICE AND CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

This service aligns with our Community Vision and the Corporate Delivery Plan in several ways, supporting strategic values, principles, and plans:

- Safe, Strong Communities
- Changing the way we work for you

In addition, the service aligns with our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy particularly 'reducing inequalities' as well as supporting the new ASC strategy and priorities of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Priority; to work collaboratively with Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Community Safety Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards to provide the workforce with the frameworks and tools to work with Vulnerable Adults who are at risk of Domestic Abuse"

The service will also contribute to the following priorities within the developing Children & Young People's Plan:

- Priority 1 – Early Intervention and Prevention
- Priority 2 – Emotional Wellbeing
- Priority 3 – Contextual Safeguarding

There are synergies and joint working opportunities with the new substance misuse service and domestic abuse. The commissioning lead on both domestic abuse

procurement and substance misuse has stayed consistent to ensure continuity and direct input on the specification has been sought to ensure the services align.

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

It is estimated that by the time they start school, at least one child in every classroom will have lived with domestic abuse since they were born. These early experiences can have a huge impact on their later life. Research tells us that around 80% of victims never call the police. The effects and impact of domestic abuse are felt widely by all sections of society. Nationally it is estimated that domestic abuse costs the taxpayer an estimated £3.9bn per year and high-risk domestic abuse makes up nearly £2.4bn of this, with each fatality estimated to cost over £1m, this is before the emotional impact on the family and wider community is considered. It is estimated that every £1 spent on multi agency responses to domestic abuse victims at highest risk of harm, saves at least £6 of public money annually.³

Addressing ‘Hidden Harm’

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. Domestic abuse does not only occur between couples. It can also involve wider family members, including parental abuse by an adolescent or grown child. It can exist between older siblings, or the wider extended family in elder or honour-based abuse.

Whilst Wokingham has comparatively low police reported incidents compared to other areas, data indicates that the domestic abuse incidents are increasing. Furthermore, wider research consistently shows that domestic abuse can be more hidden in areas of affluence. Residents may be particularly impacted by financial / economic abuse.

Additionally, it appears that there may be local statistical underrepresentation of male, disabled, and LGBT victims of domestic abuse accessing services. A priority moving forward will be to seek to increase representation from these groups through increased awareness and inclusive messaging.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

The most significant risk is the failure to procure the appropriate level and provision of domestic abuse services. This is vital for the safeguarding of victims and providing access to local, specialist advice and support to enable them to keep safe and reduce harm. Additional risks are:

- Failure to keep vulnerable victims and children safe.
- Adverse impact on physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Extra pressure on other services including social care services, particularly for children, vulnerable adults, housing, mental health, police, and health.

PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE

Following a service development workshop held in October, with key internal and external stakeholders including the police, health, police, children’s services,

³ <https://safelives.org.uk/policy-evidence/about-domestic-abuse/how-widespread-domestic-abuse-and-what-impact>

commissioning, the police and crime commissioner's office and voluntary sector representatives a procurement project team has been formed.

A competitive process will be run according to the timetable below to ensure the most economically advantageous tender following a proportionate quality: price evaluation before awarding the contract so that the contract has the greatest opportunity for delivering towards outcomes and performing effectively.

It is proposed that a 60/40 split of quality and price allows for the right balance of focus for this procurement.

Procurement Timetable

Prior Information Notice (PIN) published	1 st December 2020
Market Engagement Event	15 th December 2020
Tender opening and evaluation	19 th March 2021
Communication outcomes	April 2021
Contract awarded & TUPE discussed	21 st May 2021
New Service in place	1 st July 2021

A market engagement event open to potential suppliers was held on 15th December 2020 and attended by over 20 organisations. Service user engagement was undertaken as part of a need's assessment; undertaken in 2020 due to the sensitive nature of the service, involvement of service users on the evaluation panel was assessed as not appropriate. Internal stakeholders including Children and Adult Services will be consulted with regarding the contract specification.

Term of the Contract:

The term of the contract will be 5 years with an option to extend for 1 year and then an additional final 1 year (based on satisfactory performance), bringing the total term to a maximum of 7 years. This is in line with standard industry recommended good practice to enable service provision to become well established within the community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	TBC - following tender process. £150-£200K	No MTFP request made £70,000	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	TBC - following tender process £150-£200K	No MTFP request made £105,000	Revenue

Other Financial Information
Due to the nature of these services' future demand is hard to accurately predict. We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise and needs analysis to see how domestic abuse support spending in Wokingham compares to assessed levels of need. Wokingham is currently spending less on this mandated service than data demonstrates is required and therefore an additional £70,000 in year 1 and £105,000 in year 2 onwards per annum has been sought via the MFTP process.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
Internal stakeholders including Children and Adult Services will be consulted with regarding the contract specification.

Public Sector Equality Duty
An initial equalities impact assessment has been completed and attached as appendix 3. A further Equality Impact Assessment will be considered for the new service specification once it has been finalised to review that no further amendment should be made. The new service will seek to address inequalities and ensure equitable provision of services in the future. No detrimental impacts are anticipated.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
We will refer to the council's climate change emergency strategy and action plan in the specification documents under the section of relevant policies for providers to be aware and outline how they may contribute.

List of Background Papers
Appendix 1: Project specific objectives Appendix 2: Procurement Business Case Appendix 3: Initial equalities impact assessment

Contact Narinder Brar	Service Customer and Localities
Telephone 07979255308	Email Narinder.Brar@wokingham.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

Project Specific Objectives

Commissioning of this service will meet the mandated and local needs by developing a specification:

- using the Care Act 2014 and statutory Care Act guidance to ensure commissioned services meet the mandate
- using the Wokingham domestic abuse needs assessment report produced by Safelives and the service development workshop held in October to tailor the specification
- developing services in line with the new Domestic Abuse Bill requirements

The integrated domestic abuse service aims to improve outcomes by:

- Ensuring that support planning and delivery is co-produced with the customers
- Delivers high quality care and support to achieve the aims of the service
- Is sensitive to the needs of an individual customer and non-discriminatory in the delivery of the service
- Accessible so that it can provide services when needed to all customers within its normal operating hours
- Promotes the safety of customers and that of their families, staff, and the wider public
- Well-co-ordinated between all staff, stakeholders, and partners, focused on safety and risk management
- Delivers short and medium term support to the point of physical and emotional wellbeing
- Empowers and supports staff
- Properly accountable to its customers and their carers

Service objectives:

- Maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the residents that use the service
- Effectively safeguard victims and hold perpetrators to account in partnership with other agencies
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour related to domestic abuse
- Support children who are impacted by domestic abuse
- Support people who perpetrate domestic abuse to access long term behavioural change programmes
- Enable victims and children to remain with their own homes, where it is safe to do so, or where it is not safe, to access short and long term suitable accommodation
- Increase the knowledge of professional workers to increase the early identification of domestic abuse, supporting residents to accessing specialist services

Appendix 2



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES PROCUREMENT BUSINESS CASE

In accordance with the Procurement and Contracts Rules and Procedures (PCRPs) (see section 3.1.1): a formal business case is required for any procurement with a total value above £50,000. The level of approval required for the Business Case depends on the type of procurement and total ascertainable value of the contract, as indicated in the table below:

1. Level of Approval

State “YES” in the applicable box at either Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3:

Type of Procurement	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3	
	Assistant Director & Director Approval		Executive Approval		Full Council Approval	
Goods and Services	£50k – £500k		> £500k	YES	Annual Value >£5m or TAV >£25m (if capital >£15m)	
Schedule 3 Services	£50k – £663k		> £663k			
Works	£50k – £4,733k		> £4,733k			

NOTE:

Executive meetings (Level 2) are held each month, but the submission of papers is strictly controlled, resulting in a cycle of at least 6-weeks – speak to Democratic Services for assistance.

Full Council meetings (Level 3) are held every second month and submission of papers is controlled as per Executive meetings – speak to Democratic Services for assistance.

2. Project Information

Project / Contract Title	Domestic Abuse Services
Project / Contract Description	Domestic Abuse Services
Expected Start Date & Duration (months)	Start: 1 st July 2021, Duration: 5 Years
Any Extension/s Allowed (months) (e.g.: 1 x 24m / 1 x 12m + 1 x 12m)	1 x 12m + 1 x 12m
Total Ascertainable Value	£1,554,000.
Procurement Advice <i>Provide a short summary of the advice or attach/append any written advice you have obtained, including the type of procedure, Brexit considerations and if the BC is for setting up of DPS or framework agreement.</i>	<p>The term of the contract will be 5 years with an option to extend for 1 year and then an additional final 1 year, bringing the total contract term to a maximum of 7 years. This is in line with standard industry recommended good practice to enable service provision to become well established within the community.</p> <p>The process will start with publishing a Prior Information Notice for early market engagement and awareness of the upcoming re-procurement.</p>

	<p>The procurement will be by way of open competitive tender. Advised to use OPEN Procedure (regulation 27)</p> <p>In 'open' procedures any supplier may submit a tender. The contract is advertised and the invitation to tender pack must be provided to any supplier who wishes to see it. All qualification is done at the tender stage. The procedure expects a minimum of 3 suppliers to submit a tender but until the documents are studied, it would not be possible to claim that all tenderers were qualified to deliver the contract.</p> <p>Commenced with a market engagement event on 15th December 2020.</p>
<p>Finance Advice <i>Confirm budget availability and add any comments relevant to the budget.</i></p>	<p>£1,554,000.</p> <p>Additional funding has been requested as part of the MTFP process. This is based on the increased demand for services and additional statutory duties which are expected to be placed on Local Authorities from April 2021.</p>
<p>Source of Funding <i>(revenue or capital or specified other)</i></p>	<p>Revenue</p>
<p>If procurement is for software, specify outcome of your consultation with IMT and/or Business Change</p>	<p>n/a</p>

3. Project Justification

Link to Service or Corporate Objectives:

- This service aligns with the Boroughs Corporate Delivery Plan and Community Vision in a number of ways, supporting strategic values, principles and plans:
- Safe, Strong Communities
- Changing the way, we work for you
- aligns with our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy particularly 'reducing inequalities'
- supporting the ASC strategy aim to protect and safeguard adults
- Following priorities within the developing Children & Young People's Plan:
 - Priority 1 – Early Intervention and Prevention
 - Priority 2 – Emotional Wellbeing
 - Priority 3 – Contextual Safeguarding

Project Specific Objectives, Appraisal of Options and Project Timetable:

The council is responsible for commissioning domestic abuse support for individuals who are identified as being at high or medium risk of serious harm. This includes support for children living in homes where domestic abuse is a factor and to enable perpetrators to access interventions to change their behaviour.

The current contract for the commissioned service provided by Berkshire Women’s Aid (BWA) is due to expire at the end of June 2021 and this report is to seek agreement to re-commission specialist abuse services.

Ensuring effective and timely access to information, specialist services and multi-agency support is a vital part of keeping residents safe. Future commissioned service provision must consider the changing demand and local population together with the new statutory requirements. This will ensure sustained and more stable outcomes for residents. Re-procurement presents an opportunity to re-align our services and ensure a whole systems approach with our partners with emphasis on preventative demand management work and allowing for local innovation and flexibility.

PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE

Prior Information Notice (PIN) published	1 st December 2020
Market Engagement Event	15 th December 2020
Tender opening and evaluation	19 th March 2021
Communication outcomes	April 2021
Contract awarded & TUPE discussed	21 st May 2021
New Service in place	1 st July 2021

Cost Benefit Analysis:

We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise and needs analysis to see how domestic abuse support spending in Wokingham compares to assessed levels of need and anticipated demand. A competitive process will be run to ensure the most economically advantageous tender following a proportionate quality: price evaluation before awarding the contract so that the contract has the greatest opportunity for delivering towards outcomes and performing effectively.

Contract Management:

An essential aspect of the tender process will be to create measurable outcomes and KPIs so that the impact and requirement of the service can be objectively assessed in the future, and so that each service is aligned to the appropriate strategic aim.

The contract management of these contracts will sit with Natasha Jones - People Commissioning with close input from the community safety manager and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. Performance data will be regularly collated, and quarterly monitoring meetings will be held with the provider. Feedback will be gathered from internal stakeholders for these meetings. It is anticipated that this will take half two days every quarter.

4. Approval

Please fill in the applicable fields according to the level of approval required.

Note: If Level-2 or 3 approval is required, the document should be signed by Assistant Director and Director at Level-1 first, and then presented to the Executive (and Full Council where appropriate) for final approval.

Level 1

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Assistant Director	Nicholas Austin	Communities Insight & Change	<i>Nicholas Austin</i>
Director	Keeley Clements	Communities Insight & Change	

Level 2

NOTE: Level 1 approval must be completed first.

Please state the date of the relevant Executive meeting or Individual Executive Member Decision at which the Business Case has been approved.

<i>Date of Executive meeting / approval</i>	<i>Item No</i>
Executive Approval	

Level 3

NOTE: Level 1 and 2 approval must be completed first.

Please state the date of the relevant Full Council meeting at which the Business Case has been approved.

<i>Date of Full Council meeting / approval</i>	<i>Item No</i>
Full Council Approval	

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	17 December 2020
Service:	Communities Insight and Change
Project, policy, or service EQIA relates to:	Domestic Abuse Service Procurement
Completed by:	Narinder Brar – Community Safety Partnership Manager
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Discussed at Procurement Project Team Meeting
Signed off by:	Nicholas Austin – Interim Assistant Director C&L
Sign off date:	17 December 2020

1. Policy, Project, or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:

The purpose of the project; is to procure a local specialist domestic abuse service. A new service is required to be procured as the current contract is due to end in June 2021. It will be procured to meet a change in local demand levels for service and changing local demographics as well as current good practice. Ensuring effective access to information, specialist services and multi-agency support is a vital part of keeping our residents safe. The council is responsible for commissioning domestic abuse support for individuals who are identified as being at high or medium risk of serious harm.

The service will include helpline, specialist independent domestic abuse advice, and outreach and refuge provision.

This service aligns with our Community Vision and the Corporate Delivery Plan in several ways, supporting strategic values, principles, and plans:

- Safe, Strong Communities
- Changing the way we work for you

In addition, the service aligns with our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy particularly ‘reducing inequalities’ as well as supporting the new ASC strategy and priorities of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Priority; to work collaboratively with Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, Community Safety Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards to provide the workforce with the frameworks and tools to work with Vulnerable Adults who are at risk of Domestic Abuse”

The service will also contribute to the following priorities within the developing Children & Young People’s Plan:

Priority 1 – Early Intervention and Prevention

Priority 2 – Emotional Wellbeing

Priority 3 – Contextual Safeguarding

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members etc.) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

A service development workshop held in October, with key internal and external stakeholders including the police, health, police, children’s services, commissioning, the police and crime commissioner’s office and voluntary sector representatives a procurement project team has been formed.

A market engagement event open to potential suppliers was held on 15th December 2020. Service user engagement was undertaken as part of a need’s assessment; undertaken in 2020 due to the sensitive nature of the service, involvement of service users on the evaluation panel was assessed as not appropriate. Internal stakeholders including Children and Adult Services will be consulted with regarding the contract specification.

The new service will be delivered through a competitive commissioning procurement process which started with a market engagement event on the 15th of Dec involving the procurement project team. The project team includes representatives from; commissioning, procurement, community safety, adults and children’s social care and health.

A business case and report has been to the council’s corporate leadership team and then on to the Executive for formal agreement.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. Domestic abuse does not only occur between couples. It can also involve wider family

members, including parental abuse by an adolescent or grown child. It can exist between older siblings, or the wider extended family in elder or honour-based abuse.

The main beneficiaries of the Project will be:

- Victims of domestic abuse and their families.
- Children and Young People affected by domestic abuse
- The service will be available to all Wokingham residents including a focus on increased accessibility for BME, male, and LGBT victims.
- Professionals – will benefit through improved training and awareness and clearly defined referral pathways.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

Commissioning of this service will meet the mandated and local needs by developing a specification:

- using the Care Act 2014 and statutory Care Act guidance to ensure commissioned services meet the mandate
- using the Wokingham domestic abuse needs assessment report produced by Safelives and the service development workshop held in October to tailor the specification
- developing services in line with the new Domestic Abuse Bill requirements

The integrated domestic abuse service aims to improve outcomes by:

- Ensuring that support planning and delivery is co-produced with the customers
- Delivers high quality care and support to achieve the aims of the service
- Is sensitive to the needs of an individual customer and non-discriminatory in the delivery of the service
- Accessible so that it can provide services when needed to all customers within its normal operating hours
- Promotes the safety of customers and that of their families, staff, and the wider public
- Well-co-ordinated between all staff, stakeholders, and partners, focused on safety and risk management
- Delivers short- and medium-term support to the point of physical and emotional wellbeing
- Empowers and supports staff
- Properly accountable to its customers and their carers

Service objectives:

- Maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the residents that use the service
- Effectively safeguard victims and hold perpetrators to account in partnership with other agencies
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour related to domestic abuse
- Support children who are impacted by domestic abuse
- Support people who perpetrate domestic abuse to access long term behavioural change programmes
- Enable victims and children to remain with their own homes, where it is safe to do so, or where it is not safe, to access short and long term suitable accommodation
- Increase the knowledge of professional workers to increase the early identification of domestic abuse, supporting residents to accessing specialist services

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low, or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	Positive	Increased information, help and guidance in a variety of languages will be made widely available locally.
Gender:	Positive	Research suggests 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men are affected by domestic abuse. Rape and sexual abuse can be features of domestic abuse. Clearer information for male victims about access to services and who and where to go for help and advice will be delivered.
Disabilities:	Positive	Research identifies that disabled people are more at risk of domestic abuse and staff need to be aware and recognise this increased vulnerability. The service will ensure that information and help is inclusive for the needs of victims and survivors with disabilities and reasonable adjustments are made when identified and required.
Age:	No Change	There is a significant body of research which identifies the impact of domestic abuse on all ages of individuals. The service will be available to all ages

Sexual orientation:	Positive	Research identifies increased vulnerability of LGBTQ individuals. The service will focus on increasing access and support for victims of domestic abuse who are LGBT. This will be through clear information and advice about where to access help and assistance.
Religion/belief:	No Change	Domestic abuse is about power and control over an individual, work has to be culturally sensitive. The service will be available to all religions and beliefs
Gender re-assignment:	Positive	The service will focus on increasing access and support for victims of domestic abuse who have had gender re-assignment. This will be through clear information and advice about where to access help and assistance.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	No Change	Research identifies that a significant proportion of domestic abuse starts/occurs in pregnancy. The service will be mindful of and fully available to anybody with this characteristic
Marriage and civil partnership:	No Change	Domestic abuse occurs within all forms of intimate partner relationships. The service will be fully available to anybody with this characteristic.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low of high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy, or service change.

TITLE	Proposed New Resource Base for Secondary Aged Children
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Children's Services - UllaKarin Clark

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This proposal will deliver appropriate resource base provision for Wokingham secondary aged children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. This will be value for money provision developed with sustainability in mind, and will provide continuity and a centre of excellence in SEND practice for the children in the borough who use it. The cumulative spend over five years will exceed £500,000, therefore this must be approved by the Executive.

This report demonstrates how the new resource base will deliver improved outcomes for children while delivering financial savings and a sustainable partnership between the provider school and WBC.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve the proposal to commission a new secondary resource base in Wokingham, including revenue and capital costs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Existing resource base provision for secondary aged children with a diagnosis of ASD in Wokingham has been provided by St Crispin's School since 2017 ('The Oaks'). The SLA agreed in 2017 funded the provision at what is now considered an unsustainably high level, which the Council cannot reconcile with its duty to seek value for money. Following a period of negotiation over service and fee arrangements, notice was given in April 2019 that Wokingham Borough Council intended to withdraw from the Service Level Agreement with St Crispin's and would cease to place children there from 30th September 2020.
- 1.2. The proposal in this paper is to commission a new resource base for secondary aged children (Years 7 – 11) with ASD and SEMH needs. The resource base would be hosted by a Wokingham secondary school and will take five children in its Year 7 intake, every year from September 2021, until they reach a full complement of 25 children in Years 7 – 11 by September 2025.
- 1.3. The resource base would be funded in line with the new resource base funding model being developed by Strategy & Commissioning with the SEND team. At present an interim model is being used for all primary age resource bases. Over

the life of the project, this is projected to demonstrate savings against the existing provision funding agreement.

- 1.4. In line with the draft SEND strategic objectives, WBC will develop a strong commissioning link with the new resource base, working together to ensure quality of outcomes, provide a steer on decision making and develop a financially sustainable partnership in which the local authority leads on high quality services for children with SEND.

The Executive is asked to approve the proposal for a new resource base for Wokingham.

BACKGROUND

2. Background and Context

2.1. A resource base is specialist provision for children with SEND within a mainstream school, sometimes known as a SEN unit or specialist resource base ([SEND Code of Practice, 2015](#)). It is designed for children who struggle to cope with mainstream education without additional support, but who do not require the intensive interventions of a special school. Resource bases allow a child to stay in mainstream school by having the opportunity to access the resource base for some of the time, in addition to attending their timetabled classes. This access varies from child to child and school to school; in rare cases, children will access the resource base for 100% of their class time, but generally the proportion of time spent in the resource base is somewhere between 20% and 80%. To be placed in a resource base, a child must have an EHCP that names the resource base in Section F as the required provision.

3. National policy

3.1. Resource bases and their use are governed by the SEND Code of Practice, which requires the local authority to make provision available for children with SEND as named in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Further legislation is referred to below.

3.2. The [Area Guidelines for SEND and Alternative Provision](#) give guidance for the physical spaces used for SEND education, including resource bases. Although this is called 'guidance', the expectation from the Department for Education is that resource units and other provisions commissioned by local authorities will be devised in line with it. The new resource base provider will be expected to demonstrate how they will meet the physical needs of the provision, with a focus on how they will manage the expanding spatial and staffing needs of a five-year staggered intake.

3.3. There is currently no national strategy for children with autism, although Think Autism (2014), the strategy for adults with autism, is being refreshed to include children and young people. The government originally consulted on this in 2018 and proposed to deliver the updated strategy by Autumn 2019 but this has been delayed.

3.4. In the absence of a strategy, the [NICE Clinical Guideline 170 \(2013\)](#) contains the most comprehensive official guidance in the management and support of ASD in under 19s. A secondary resource base commissioned for children with ASD will be expected to be able to demonstrate how they will develop a deeper knowledge of ASD as a condition and experience in delivering interventions as per the NICE guideline that effectively work with children with ASD and their parents.

4. Local policy

4.1. This project directly correlates to Priority 1 in the draft SEND Strategy for Wokingham, 'Build local provision to better meet local needs', by improving the effectiveness and cost of resource base provision by delivering a new tailored

resource, and focusing on the increasing need for resource base provision that specialises in ASD with SEMH needs within Wokingham's cohort of SEND children. Priority 4 of delivering better outcomes via 'intelligence and strategic commissioning' is also met through this project as commissioners will have strong strategic input to delivery throughout.

4.2. This project also links to the Wokingham Borough Council Community Vision priority 'Enriching Lives', stating the intention to 'Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background'.

5. Legislative Background

- 5.1.1. All SEND provision is covered by the SEND Code of Practice (2015), but there are other pieces of legislation and case law that are relevant to resource bases in general and this project in particular:
- 5.1.2. [Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#): The local authority has a duty to secure the type of special educational provision named in section F of a child's Education, Health and Care Plan
- 5.1.3. [Section 27 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#): The local authority has a duty to keep the education and training it provides under review, and also has a duty to consult children, parents and other stakeholders in the process. However, the Act does not stipulate under what circumstances a full consultation must take place
- 5.1.4. [Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#): General duties conferred on local authority and health commissioners to children with SEND and their families; schools' responsibilities to the same
- 5.1.5. The [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#), which sets out the process for assessing and agreeing an EHC plan and the duties incumbent following agreement
- 5.1.6. [R\(AD\) v Hackney \[2019\] EWHC 943](#): This is relevant to how provision is funded and allows for flexibility in how funding formulae for resource bases is calculated. This case also followed a previous judgement in [R \(Hollow and others\) v Surrey County Council \[2019\] EWHC 618](#) in determining that the s.27 duty to consult is relevant to global strategic consideration of sufficiency, at regular intervals to ensure regular review. This duty is discharged through meetings with the parent carer forum, SEND improvement board, and other regular meetings. Therefore, there is no legal duty under the PSED to consult as no reduction in provision is proposed and WBC have agreed to continue funding the students already at The Oaks until they complete year 11, recognising that a move midway through their school career could be traumatising for the children in this provision. However, as it is good practice to consult, the project includes time for engagement with stakeholders and a short formal consultation period.
- 5.1.7. The Public Sector Equality Duty as laid out in [section 149 of the Equality Act 2010](#): public bodies have a duty not only to have due regard to the need

to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity, but also to foster good relations between different groups. Disabled people including children with SEND are a protected group under the Equalities Act, therefore this provision applies here.

6. 2017 Review and Current Provision

6.1. In 2017, a SEND review recommended that discussions be held with the secondary resource base hosts, St Crispin's School, with a view to taking children with more complex needs and revising how they were funded, to be 'fair, transparent and consistent' and made recommendations regarding place sufficiency, currently being considered under continuous improvement.

6.2. Following this work, WBC reviewed the provision and the funding relationship at St Crispin's. A place at St Crispin's resource base is priced at £30,000 per child under the SLA agreed by an interim Assistant Director in 2016, therefore is not subject to the local authority funding formula for all other resource bases. Relative to the other resource bases in Wokingham and comparable provision for ASD elsewhere, the costs of places at The Oaks were unsustainably high, and even exceed the costs of special school placements at Addington. Negotiations over cost and admissions took place in 2018, which ultimately resulted in no common position being reached. In April 2019, WBC gave notice of their intention to withdraw from St Crispin's from 30th September 2020.

6.3. The current SLA funding agreement is shown in the table below. Please note this does not include the substantial capital investment in the building at St Crispin's in 2016/17 but does include a diminishing annual revenue contribution to start-up costs, and that the projected spend in 21/22 will not occur as Wokingham withdrew from the agreement, effective from 30th September 2020.

Financial Year	Places	Formula £	Top-up £	Total £
2017/2018	5	30K per place	50,000	200,000
2018/2019	10	30K per place	25,000	325,000
2019/2020	15	30K per place	25,000	475,000
2020/2021	20	30K per place	10,000	610,000
2021/2022	25	30K per place	5,000	755,000
Total	2,365,000			

6.4. It is estimated that the new resource base will mainly accommodate children in the new Band 6 category, equivalent to the higher end of the current 'ASD3' category. The projected costs including any additional start-up costs but not including capital of the new resource base are as follows:

FY	Pupils on roll from September	Apr-Aug	Sep-Mar	TOTAL
2021-22	5	-	57,175.42	57,175.42
2022-23	10	40,839.58	114,350.83	155,190.42
2023-24	15	81,679.17	171,526.25	253,205.42
2024-25	20	122,518.75	228,701.67	351,220.42
2025-26	25	163,358.33	285,877.08	449,235.42
			CUMULATIVE TOTAL	1,266,027.08

6.5. This figure has been calculated using the current interim resource base funding model (see 8.2) to give an estimate of the likely cost when the finalised funding model is implemented in April 2021.

6.6. Since notice was given, there have been a number of staff changes in the senior leadership at WBC. Coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, this has meant that the work to deliver a new secondary resource base has not been possible until now.

7. Resource Base Funding

7.1. Resource bases are funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), distributed to local authorities by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Resource base funding is an initial £10,000 per pupil per year, plus the top up, broken down as follows:

7.1.1. **Element 1:** Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) - £4,000 per pupil per year

7.1.2. **Element 2:** Notional SEN - £6,000 per pupil per year

7.1.3. **Top-up funding:** Funding to meet the needs stated on a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan, to be determined by the local authority

7.2. Under ESFA rules, local authorities must pay element 1 and 2 funding to resource bases for empty places in order to maintain affordability for running the base within the school, hence the payment for empty places. Resource base funding has not been reviewed for several years and schools are receiving variable amounts of top up funding, which in some cases is so low that the empty place funding is effectively covering the cost of provision for the lower number of children in the base.

7.3. A new funding model is being developed to address the inequity in funding between resource bases by using a needs-led approach to individual pupil top-ups. The model is currently being finalised and will be adopted for use in the next financial year (April 2021). Using a matrix of descriptors, each pupil will be placed into a band with a correlating financial value. This value has been calculated to take into account the specific needs of pupils based on any

diagnosed condition, using the likely cost of provision and support needed. The full matrix is available as Appendix A.

- 7.4. The matrix was shown to schools at two workshops in December 2019 and schools approved the descriptors of need in it. Subsequent staff changes and the global pandemic paused the work until October 2020.
- 7.5. Following schools' feedback on the matrix, work was undertaken to match up the descriptors more effectively and apply a comprehensive cost to the descriptors of need. This was a sizeable task and commissioning convened a panel of experts including the Principal Educational Psychologist and a SEND consultant to assist in determining the final bandings.
- 7.6. At present, there are 98 resource base places in Wokingham (20 secondary¹, 78 primary) and 37 of them (all primary) were empty at the last schools census. Under the ESFA rules, WBC must pay the element one and two funding for empty places in resource bases by agreement in order to make it financially viable for schools to host the resource base. This is a total of 10k per pupil place which means that a total of £370,000 was spent on empty places last year.
- 7.7. Given the information we currently have, and the nature of the ASD resource base classroom including space constraints, numbers of support staff, and sensory needs, it appears that the current available resource base secondary provision numbers (five places per year from Years 7 – 11) is the right number to commission now.

8. Current bandings

8.1. An interim funding model was implemented in April 2019. This was based on the model used by West Berkshire and the values were traduced from there to provide adequate funding for Wokingham. In this model from Wright's 2017 report, children are placed into a band based on their needs, which correlates to a funding amount that can pay for that provision. Wokingham's resource bases have reported that this amount of funding is much more equitable and affordable for them.

8.2. The current funding values are as follows²:

SEN Band	Rate
ASD1	£13,037
ASD2	£16,320
ASD3	£19,603
HI2	£15,625
HI3	£20,645
PD1	£4,220

¹ The Oaks started taking five pupils per year in 2017 and is currently in its fourth year, hence having 20 pupils in attendance.

² Acronyms: ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder; HI – Hearing or Visual Impairment; PD – Physical Disability; SL – Speech and Language

PD2	£7,503
PD3	£10,786
SL1	£0
SL2	£2,894
SL3	£6,177

8.3. The above is an interim solution while a permanent and sustainable model bespoke to Wokingham is developed. The new funding model due to start in April 2021 is more relevant to Wokingham children and seeks to address the disparity in levels of funding for different resource bases, using clinically-informed descriptors to fund a range of provision. The model is currently being finalised and will be put forward for approval in Spring 2021 before being adopted.

9. New Resource Base

9.1. A new resource base for Wokingham will allow commissioners to ensure quality in service delivery and appropriate monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for children, ensuring that the borough's children can access the right provision at the right time. Funding will be allocated equitably and appropriately using the needs-led funding model in line with all other WBC resource bases. Commissioners will use partnership working to strengthen links between the resource base and the local community, including good communication between parents/carers, schools and the Authority. In line with work around the SEND strategy, the provision will deliver sustainable and consistent high-quality outcomes for children with ASD who need support to thrive in a mainstream environment, improving levels of inclusivity throughout the borough.

9.2. Due to the compact timescale, all Wokingham secondary schools have been invited to express interest in delivering the resource base, in anticipation of and contingent on CDLT approval. A full application process will take place in Winter/Spring 20/21. The resource base would open in September 2021 and take five children into its Year 7 intake each year until they have a full complement of 25 children in Years 7 – 11. Children in the current provision will remain there for their remaining statutory schooling.

9.3. Due to the tight timescale available to enable the resource to be in place for September 2021, it was agreed that requests for expressions of interest should take place immediately, in anticipation of this option being supported. If it is decided that this option is not to be supported, those schools which have expressed an interest will be contacted and advised of the situation.

9.4. The new resource base would have the following features:

- The resource base will offer places for five children per year group over and above the school's agreed admission number
- The places will be available for Wokingham children meeting the admissions criteria set out below
- The aim is for students accessing this new resource to take part in the school's main curriculum

- Students accessing this resource will normally be in mainstream classes with opportunities to access some individualised learning to meet sensory needs, which cannot be addressed in mainstream classes, as they arise
- The resource base will only be available to young people diagnosed with ASD, whose EHCP specifically indicates the need for resource base provision.
- Children will be allocated to the resource base by Wokingham Borough Council's Special Educational Needs Service based on the following criteria:

Any child deemed suitable for a placement within the resource base will receive support:

- to manage access to a broad and balanced mainstream curriculum delivered by specialist subject teachers with social skills, pastoral support, extracurricular activities including support to address Social, Emotional and Mental Health related issues
- with information, advice and guidance about future education and work options tailored to meet his/her specific needs
- to access supervised break and lunchtime activities
- within an inclusive environment which demonstrably values all of its children
- from agencies and organisations which are external to the school
- in ensuring a close relationship between his/her home setting and the school

9.5. We recognise that there is a minimum level of staffing required to manage the running of a resource base and that in the first few years, the funding formula on its own may not be totally sufficient to address that situation. We would therefore discuss this with the successful school, for an agreed solution to be incorporated into the service level agreement.

10. Capital provision

10.1. Due to the compact timescale of the project, the need for capital funding is still to be fully determined. However, there are three scenarios regarding capital provision, briefly described as follows:

10.1.1. Scenario 1:

- School already has accommodation that meets SEND area guidelines and can be repurposed without cost
- No capital required
- Project proceeds without capital bid
- Potential cost: £0

10.1.2. **Scenario 2: (most likely)**

- School has buildings suitable for year 1 and 2 of delivery; will need to build in that time
- Current and proposed buildings must meet SEND area guidelines
- Capital needed in year 2 or beyond
- Potential cost: £150k+

10.1.3. Scenario 3:

- School has no suitable accommodation, new build needed in year 1 (year 1 managed in existing classroom)
- Capital needed in year 1
- Potential cost: £1m+

10.2. Taking into account the viability of existing buildings and accommodations in Wokingham's secondary schools, it is estimated that the most likely scenario is one where existing buildings need some refurbishment or extension, but that this will not be necessary until year 2 of delivery, as in the first year, five pupils can be accommodated with relative ease. Using the SEND Area Guidelines for estimating the square footage of required classroom space, around 135sqm will be needed for five pupils in year 1, building up gradually to a total of approx. 405sqm in year 5. The cost of this is estimated to be £200,000.

10.3. There are existing capital budgets already designated for SEND provision to cover this amount, which could be repurposed to provide capital funding for this project. These include the following sources:

- Section 106 funding (amount tbc)
- Special educational provision capital funding (approx. £225k)
- SEND investment programme (approx. £300k)
- General SEND fund (approx. £800k)

10.4. Please note all amounts are subject to confirmation by capital finance following approval of the project by the Executive. Due to timescale, the project is working on estimations and full capital cost details will be made available as soon as they are confirmed.

11. Procurement

11.1. As this procurement is 'public sector to public sector' (i.e. the Local Authority to the School), the requirement to follow an OJEU timetable does not apply under [Part 2 Regulation 12 Public Contracts Regulations 2015](#); however, with WBC procurement support, the commissioning team plan to follow best practice and use a timetable to evaluate bids using a panel of assessors and a moderation report.

11.2. As part of the application process, it is proposed that all applicants with acceptable submissions attend an interview to discuss the plans and proposals for the resource base, including questions about responding to incidents and examining the level of practice knowledge held within the school.

12. Issues and Risks

12.1. A comprehensive dynamic risk assessment has been compiled should this option be approved, and is available as an Appendix. The main risks to the project, both on timely delivery and of total failure, are below³:

³ See 'Legal implications' for detail on the legal risks

12.2. Accommodation

12.2.1. As the project is planned on a tight timescale, it is necessary for any applicant schools to have appropriate accommodation already in place, at least for the first year of delivery. As space is at a premium in Wokingham, there is a potential risk that no school will be able to physically accommodate the resource base. However, this risk is mitigated by the incremental nature of the resource base growth, as much less space will be required in Year 1 than Year 5, allowing time to develop the spatial requirements, as per the Area Guidelines.

12.3. Timescales

12.3.1. Due to the delays noted earlier, this project is planned with an unusually short duration before implementation and delivery. The risk is that any lapse or delay in the project milestones would endanger the delivery start date, which could put the Council in breach of their statutory duty under the SEND Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act.

12.3.2. To mitigate this risk, all internal project team members would have to acknowledge they understand the need for timeliness and prompt responsiveness on this project. It is proposed that the project be owned by the Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships together with the Director for Children's Services, in order to give leadership focus and strategic pull when it is needed.

12.4. Communications

12.4.1. There is a potential risk of negative public perception, particularly among the SEND community in Wokingham, regarding the closure of the existing provision and the commissioning of a new resource base. Work has been done to bring together SEND parents and carers, VCS organisations working in SEND and the Council, to develop a multiagency response to the SEND needs in the borough. Relationships have improved as a result, thus mitigating this risk.

12.4.2. However, the closure of a school or other educational provision carries a risk of negative media and public perceptions. Although WBC gave notice on St Crispin's in April 2019, it is acknowledged that official communications regarding this development were limited. The Communications, Engagement and Marketing (CEM) team at WBC have already been consulted about this project and agreed to join the project team, in order to handle any communications risks as they arise.

13. Recommendations

13.1. It is recommended that the Executive approve a new resource base for secondary aged pupils with ASD whose primary needs relate to SEMH being commissioned in Wokingham, with a start date for the first Year 7 intake of September 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

NB: These figures are for top up only. Place funding is £10k total explained below. Pls see s.10 for Capital provision information	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£86, 342	Yes	Revenue (DSG)
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£190,607	Yes	Revenue (DSG)

Other Financial Information

Resource bases are funded through the High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) local authorities receive from the Department for Education (DfE), with funding consisting of 3 separate 'elements'.

Element 1

Funded from the Schools Block of the DSG, this is the funding (Age Weighted Pupil Unit or 'AWPU') that the school has as part of core budget setting. This is nationally referred to as £4,000 per pupil per annum, but the actual amount is dictated through the AWPU in the Schools Block Funding Formula. As the AWPU formula is based on the October census preceding the start of the financial year, where a commissioned place in a resource base is empty at the census date the school does not receive this funding as part of their core budget. The commissioning local authority is therefore required to fund this element for any empty places from the High Needs Block.

Element 2

Funded from the High Needs Block of the DSG, this is 'place' funding, recognising the increased costs over and above the 'core' funding in element 1 involved in delivering a resource base. This is set through the National Funding Formula and is currently £6,000 per place per annum. The local authority pays this based on the number of commissioned places in each resource base, regardless of the number of pupils placed there, or which local authority pupils originate from.

Element 3

Funded from the High Needs Block, this is 'top-up funding' based on the individual needs of the child. This is payable by the Local Authority responsible for the EHCP of the individual. Each local authority derives their own funding model for top-ups. The current interim arrangement in Wokingham varies per place, with the current range for children with ASD ranging from ASD1 £13,037 to ASD3 £19,603⁴. The current secondary ASD resource base provision was not priced according to need, but set at a flat fee of £30,000 per place.

⁴ As The Oaks is currently funded on a flat fee arrangement at £30k per place, we are not currently sighted on the levels of need of children in The Oaks.

The financial model for all Wokingham resource bases is currently subject to review. Work is underway to move all resource bases to a needs-led funding model by April 2021. Schools applying for this opportunity would be offered further information prior to the application process opening. The project team would be able to give an estimated range, based on the likely profile of pupils attending.

Against the well documented backdrop of financial challenge within the High Needs Block, bringing the ASD secondary resource base under the same funding model as other local resource base settings is a positive step forward. This should improve cost effectiveness, enhance visibility and understanding of how rates are set, and provide for greater equity across local settings.

A number of **financial risks** will however require to be managed:

Economies of Scale – it is recognised that there are fixed costs associated with the operation of a resource base that can prove challenging to meet when a setting is low in numbers. There is therefore a risk that for both the initial years of the new resource base when numbers are low, and the remaining years of the current resource base as numbers decline, that additional 'economies of scale' funding might be required to ensure financial sustainability. Where this is considered appropriate, this should be clearly set out as part of any funding arrangement separately from the ongoing funding model agreed.

Investment in accommodation for new resource base setting – as identified in paragraph 15.2 the identification of a suitable accommodation space is essential for the successful delivery of any new resource base. Any capital investment required to deliver that is not currently identified in the Council's capital programme and therefore early discussion on the financial implications of this will be necessary.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Under s.3 of the SEND Code of Practice, local authorities must engage with parents, carers and children and young people when commissioning services. There is no mandate for formal consultation. This project will use collaboration wherever possible and the following events have been planned:

Early engagement with VCS SEND organisations in Wokingham: November 2020 and ongoing

Stakeholder meeting for schools interested in hosting resource base: 7th January 2021

Stakeholder meeting for parents/carers and children and young people: 14th January 2021

As part of the governance and monitoring arrangements, an advisory group will be set up to give support to and feedback on the resource base delivery. This will include a parent carer.

HR IMPLICATIONS

The risks that apply to most commissioning projects apply here, including the risk to project timeliness of any possible TUPE and HR implications. Due to the fact that this

project aims to incrementally grow the new provision over five years, this is felt to be a manageable risk, as there will not be a large number of staff whose roles are affected.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Due to the tight timescale, it is highly likely that the usual date in mid-February when children and families are informed of their place in a named resource base will not be met for the five children who will be placed in the new resource. The statutory requirement is that the children and families are notified of the type of placement at this point; although it is best practice for the named school to be known also at this point, it is proposed that we work with those families affected on a one-to-one basis to ensure they are kept in close communication about the process and deal with any concerns as they arise. There would only be a short delay as the planned award date would be in Spring 2021.

While this is not ideal, the above situation would be manageable and not present a risk to the project. However, there are two risks whereby legal action could arise:

- Parents unhappy with the process could seek INMSS places via tribunal
- Parents or other stakeholders who are unhappy with the process could seek judicial review of the decision to withdraw from the existing provision and commission a new resource base

The likelihood of these risks occurring are assessed as low, as the planned process is fair, transparent and abides by all procurement rules.

KEY OR RELEVANT MILESTONES AND TIMESCALES

A full project plan is appended, however for ease of reference key milestones are:

Project start date: November 2020
Project end date: September 2021
Application process open: February 2020
Application process close: late February 2020
SEND parent usual allocation date: February 2021
Proposed date of award: 5th April 2021
SEND parent actual allocation date: 6th April 2021
Implementation period: April – September 2021
Children start in resource base: September 2021

IMPACT ON WIDER ORGANISATION AND ESCALATION TO CLT (if appropriate and why)

Due to the cumulative value of this project over five years, which will exceed £500,000, this project would be escalated for approval by the Executive before award could be made. There will be a positive financial impact on the wider organisation, as the project represents improved value for money and more responsible stewardship of resource.

Appendix 1 – List of acronyms

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
DfE: Department for Education
ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder
SEMH: Social, Emotional and Mental Health
PD: Physical Disability

PMLD: Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities
 HI: Hearing Impairment
 ESFA: Education and Skills Funding Agency
 EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan
 INMSS: Independent or Non-Maintained Special School
 SLA: Service Level Agreement
 PSED: Public Sector Equality Duty
 WBC: Wokingham Borough Council

Public Sector Equality Duty
 The Public Sector Equality Duty has been considered and will be met in this project. Specific reference to it will be made in the specification. By improving the educational experience and attainment of pupils entering the resource base, the project will advance equality of opportunity for all. No equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as an initial risk assessment shows there is no risk of inequalities occurring as a result of this project. Equalities will be specifically addressed within the specification.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*
 None

List of Background Papers
 Project plan
 Risk register

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Risk category	Risk	Description	Impact level	Probability	Priority	Mitigation	Post-mitigation impact	Post-mitigation probability	Post mitigation priority	Owner
Accommodation	No suitable RB accommodation in any Wokingham schools	Classrooms size and space	5	2	10	Interim arrangements if necessary once school identified with capital plans later if required	5	1	5	PI
Commissioning	SLA & specification	Nominated school does not agree proposed SLA in a timely manner	5	1	5	SLA will be written collaboratively with school. Time allowed in project plan for negotiation	5	0	0	PI
Commissioning	Consultation requirements threaten project timetable		5	3	15	To discuss with consultations/procurement to agree realistic timescale. Early engagement with SEND Voices.	5	1	5	PI
Commissioning	Tight timetable means any lapse potentially threatens delivery by Sept 21		5	4	20	Prepared realistic project plan Developing project board Whole project owned by DCS & AD	5	2	10	PI
Legal	Parents object to proposed late allocation and seek places elsewhere via tribunal	Parents apply for school places in Autumn term but resource base places are allocated without application, only expressed preference. This is usually in February but in the project plan award may not happen til March, thus the five parents whose children are going to enter the new resource base would find out where their children were going a month later than everyone else. The low number of parents must be balanced with the already unfavourable perception of WBC in some quarters of the local SEND community and the chance the timetable may lapse even further, when assessing the risk.	5	3	15	Regular contact with relevant parents Early engagement with relevant parties inc SENDIASS & SEND Voices Clear messaging about project purpose and timescales	5	2	10	PI
Comms	Unfavourable public perception leads to project delay		4	3	12	Engage comms from day 1 and throughout project	4	1	4	PI
Legal	Parents take out JR proceedings		5	2	10	Robust and well documented process Good audit trail for any data-based decisions	5	1	5	PI
Data	Problems with the reliability, accuracy and availability of pupil data lead to mistakes	Possibility that identified resource base doesn't meet needs of the five pupils allocated a space there	5	3	15	Work closely with the SEND team throughout project. Triangulate data where possible.	5	1	5	PI
Finance	Resource base funding model not finalised in time for schools to understand the financial implications of applying and may not apply	Schools will not know the exact amount of funding the new resource base will attract	5	3	15	Meetings taking place with all affected schools currently to build trust and confidence in WBC. Funding formula will be comprehensively modelled and shared with Schools Forum.	5	1	5	PI
Finance	Schools unhappy with proposed funding model and do not apply		5	3	15	Meetings taking place with all affected schools currently to build trust and confidence in WBC. Funding formula will be comprehensively modelled and shared with Schools Forum.	5	1	5	PI
Governance	Business case is not approved and project is either delayed abandoned	Project must go through several governance stages. Approval at all points is not assured.	5	1	5	AD LAP has asked for this project. DCS will be asked to own project.	5	0	0	PI

Governance	Proposed funding model for resource bases is not approved in governance	Project must go through several governance stages. Approval at all points is not assured.	3	1	3	Meetings taking place with all affected schools currently to build trust and confidence in WBC. Funding formula will be comprehensively modelled and shared with Schools Forum. SMT and Finance are behind the approach.	3	0	0	PI
Procurement	No schools apply	Timetable for project is a challenge. Schools will need to be highly motivated to apply.	5	3	15	Project plan, risk register, engagement with schools, schools event held early on in process	5	1	5	PI
Procurement	Consideration of possible TUPE restrictions may delay project		4	2	8	Early advice sought from HR and legal if necessary. Start process early as possible	4	1	4	PI
Team	SEND colleagues input and support essential to project may not be available	Due to unfilled vacancies, staff may not be available as required	5	5	25	To be considered by ST			0	
Team	Capacity required for this project will pull Senior Specialist away from planned BAU	This major project will require significant dedicated time. PI will prioritise this project, resource base financial review and resource base SLA. Other projects including INMSS framework, prep for moving SEND placements to operational commissioning, short breaks, SEND contracts and work on Sensory Consortium service will NOT be done by PI.	3	5	15	Consideration by Category Manager & AD re work to stop or be reallocated			0	RT
Team	Changes in staff affect project continuity	PI & RT both interim	3	3	9	Strong handovers if necessary. Work with colleagues to minimise risk. Ensure knowledge disseminated throughout project team. Ensure actions recorded, shared and filed accessibly.	3	2	6	WH

TITLE	Delivering the Gorse Ride Regeneration Project - Confirmation of Compulsory Purchase Order
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 28 January 2021
WARD	Finchampstead South;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The regeneration of Gorse Ride is supported by the planning and corporate policies of the Council and is a key part of the Council's housing strategy. The use of compulsory purchase powers will enable all necessary land interests to be acquired to secure the delivery of the regeneration of Gorse Ride and the consequential benefits to the local community.

In January 2019, the Executive approved in principle the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land at Gorse Ride and granted authority to start the process to make a CPO, including the appointment of legal representatives and the preparation of all necessary documentation. This report updates the Executive on progress made and seeks authority from the Executive to now proceed to make the CPO.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) agrees that the Council should make a compulsory purchase order ("CPO") to acquire the land as shown indicatively edged red and shaded pink on the draft plan at Appendix 1 of this report ("the Land") required to deliver the proposed regeneration of land known as land at Gorse Ride South, Finchampstead, Wokingham ("the Site") pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ("the 1990 Act") because it considers that:
 - a. the acquisition of the Land will facilitate the carrying out of the development, redevelopment or improvement of the Site;
 - b. the development, redevelopment or improvement of the Site is likely to contribute to the achievement of any one or more of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough of Wokingham; and
 - c. there is a compelling case in the public interest for the CPO.

- 2) agrees to authorise the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Finance, to:
 - a. take all necessary steps in relation to the Land to secure the making, the confirmation and the implementation of the CPO including publication and service of all relative notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry; and
 - b. approve terms for the acquisition of legal interests (including rights if required) by agreement including for the purposes of resolving any objections to the CPO.
- 3) authorises, if the CPO is confirmed, to the extent that it is not already held for such purposes, that that part of the Site already within the Council's ownership shown shaded green on the plan, at Appendix 2 of this report, be appropriated for planning purposes as described in section 226 of the 1990 Act on the date immediately before the Council implements the confirmed CPO by the making of a vesting declaration or service of notice to treat/notice of entry, such land being then no longer required for the purpose for which it is currently held.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to consider the making of a CPO to achieve the regeneration of the Site, being the Council's largest housing estate within the Borough. The regeneration of the Site has been a corporate and planning objective of the Council for many years.

Following significant public engagement and design work, a resolution to grant planning permission was secured on 09 December 2020. Planning permission is expected to be granted in January 2021. Once planning permission has been granted the only impediment to regeneration of the Site is the need to assemble all necessary land interests. It is therefore appropriate for the Council to now consider use of its compulsory purchase powers.

Since first developing the regeneration proposals for the Site, the Council has engaged with residents on the estate with a view to acquiring the properties by negotiation to enable regeneration proposals to proceed. Whilst the Council has had considerable success in acquiring the necessary land interests which will enable the regeneration of the Site to proceed, it has not as yet however been possible to acquire all necessary land interests by negotiation. The Council is however now the owner of a significant proportion of the Site, as shown shaded in green on the plan at Appendix 2 of this report.

Whilst the Council intends to continue to endeavour to acquire the outstanding land interests by agreement, it considers the use of compulsory purchase powers to be appropriate and in accordance with national and local policy.

The Executive approved the "in principle" use of compulsory purchase powers in respect of the Site in January 2019. Since then, alongside attempts to acquire by agreement work has been carried out to finalise the proposals for and identify all land interests required to delivery regeneration of the Site and to prepare the necessary CPO documentation. This paper now asks the Executive to approve the making of the CPO.

BACKGROUND

The Executive, at its meeting on 31 January 2019, considered the recommendations of the Executive Member for Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, Adult Social Care and Housing and approved the in-principle making of a CPO to acquire the necessary land interests to facilitate the regeneration of the Site. A copy of that report and decision is at Appendix 4 of this report.

The Executive also authorised the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Members with responsibility for Housing and Finance, to take all necessary steps required for the making, confirmation and implementation of a CPO, including securing the appointment of an external specialist CPO adviser to prepare all necessary documents required to support this process, including a Statement of Reasons and requisite statutory notices.

Following the Executive decision in January 2019, the Council has carried out a detailed land referencing exercise which has identified the land interests that need to be included in the CPO. A revised draft CPO map is at Appendix 1 of this report. This map will be further refined and finalised before the CPO is made. In addition, significant progress has been made in preparing the CPO documentation, including the Statement of Reasons or making the CPO, a draft which is at Appendix 3 of this report.

The Council already owns a significant proportion of the Site, being the Council's largest housing estate within the Borough. However, a number of the properties have been acquired by third parties over the years, including through the 'Right To Buy' programme. There are also third party rights across parts of the Site. The Council has successfully acquired some of the properties in third party ownership and is in discussions to acquire others. These discussions will continue alongside making of the CPO with a view to concluding acquisition by agreement where possible.

In addition, since the inception of the regeneration plans for the Site, the Council has worked hard with its housing tenants at Gorse Ride to understand their accommodation needs and identify suitable alternative accommodation, either within the regenerated estate, in close proximity to it and at alternative locations within the Borough. The Council has further provided assistance to help those residents wishing to sell and purchase an alternative property.

Regeneration of the Site

The regeneration of the Site has been a longstanding corporate and planning objective of the Council. It is supported by national and local planning policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development. The regeneration of the Site reflects some of the key planning principles of the NPPF including securing high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings and promoting healthy and safe communities.

The NPPF requires that proposed dwellings should complement local buildings in relation to scale, density, layout and access. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy outlines that development should be appropriate to the surrounding street scene, and without detriment to the amenity of neighbouring residents. Development proposals should seek

to comply with the National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (October 2019) and the Borough Design Guide, both of which provide further advice on best practice.

The NPPF further stresses the importance of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment. One of the Core Planning Principles is to seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. The National Design Guide and Borough Design Guidance also emphasise the importance of good design in achieving places where people want to live.

The regeneration of the Site has been designed having regard to the above guidance.

Regeneration of the Site further reflects several of the key objectives in the Council's draft Housing Strategy and Local Plan Update:

- Providing additional housing meeting a wide range of needs;
- Improving the quality of residents' homes;
- Helping build strong communities; and
- Building sustainable homes for the future.

It is also in line with the Council's Local Development Plan policies, particularly:

- Policy CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan ("MDD"), which sets the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map;
- Core Strategy Policy CP9, which sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. As the Site is within a modest development location, the proposal is acceptable in principle; and
- MDD policy TB08 sets out open space, sport and recreational standards for residential development. Policy TB21 requires applications to demonstrate how they comply with the Council's Landscape Character Assessment. Policy CC03 requires new development to protect and retain existing trees where possible.

The Scheme

In August 2019, a fully detailed planning application for the regeneration of the Site was submitted to the Council, as local planning authority. The application was allocated reference number 202133 and a resolution to grant permission was secured on 09 December 2020. The Planning Permission will permit regeneration of the Site as follows

"The redevelopment of the existing Gorse Ride South Estate, comprising demolition of existing buildings (178 no. dwellings) and replacement with 249 no. dwellings (mixed-tenure flats and houses) together with associated access, parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage."

The Scheme will more specifically provide:

- 249 new dwellings of mixed tenure (74% affordable; 26% market);
- 416 parking spaces (398 parking spaces and 18 garages); and

- Public open space, including a central village green area, new children's play area and Trim Trail

The Scheme will also secure financial planning contributions towards Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG); Strategic Access Monitoring & Management fee (SAMM), off-site public open space provision, travel planning, public transport provision and will contribute towards biodiversity net gain.

The Council is satisfied that the Scheme for which the Planning Permission has been sought is in accordance with the adopted policy for the regeneration of the Site and will achieve the purposes for which the CPO is proposed to be made.

Scheme Benefits

The Council's key ambition for the proposed regeneration of the Site is to improve the existing Gorse Ride estate through the demolition of existing poor quality housing stock and its replacement with well-designed new housing. The existing housing stock detracts from the overall appearance and character of the local area and is of poor quality in appearance and layout. It is not economically viable to repair or retrofit the existing stock, which are prefabricated and subject to maintenance issues as a result of damp, condensation and high running costs. New homes will be built which are of high quality, good design and are constructed to current standards. In addition, the Scheme will deliver wider benefits for the local area through the provision of enhanced public realm including a new village green.

The Council considers that the Scheme will make a significant contribution to the social, environmental and economic well-being of the area. In particular, the Scheme will deliver the following public benefits:

- Environmental Benefits

The existing Gorse Ride estate is of poor quality and underutilises the land. The Scheme will deliver both quantitative and qualitative improvements to housing stock within the borough through the demolition of 178 poor quality housing units and the creation of 249 new well designed housing units. It will bring vitality to the area and revitalise and enrich the community for the future. A high quality environment will be provided, which is suitable for modern living and for the future.

The Scheme will successfully integrate within the existing landscape and will enhance rather than detract from the amenity of the surrounding areas. In particular, the Scheme will deliver significant public realm and landscaping improvements, including circa 200 new trees. A new central village green will be created, which will be the heart of the new community, as well as a smaller area of public open space in the western part of the Site. This will be a significant improvement on the existing provision.

- Social Benefits

The Scheme will provide significant social benefits to the local area by creating a new community of which residents can feel proud. The new village green will provide an area for relaxing and playing. Activity spaces will be provided including for instance, children's play areas, a sensory garden, table tennis tables, and the attenuation basins. It will also create a central hub to form the heart of the new community, making it a

space available to all and to bring people together. The landscaping strategy for the Site will further enhance the amenity of the area.

In addition, linkages throughout the new community and connecting into the wider community will be created to assist integration and improve accessibility.

A total of 26% of the new housing units will be private market units available to buy. 74% of the new housing units will be affordable housing and the Council has undertaken significant work to ensure that the provision of this affordable housing meets local needs. The mix of private market units and affordable housing units will ensure that the area is accessible to more people and enable the integration of a diverse group of residents.

- **Economic Benefits**

The Scheme will include significant new housing, comprising a mix of units and tenures, which will enhance the housing stock available in the local area and in a highly sustainable location. This will help meet the needs of the borough in terms of housing land supply.

In addition, the Scheme will create circa 100 construction jobs per year. The opportunity to target newly created jobs to local people via an employment and skills plan will be implemented by the main construction contractor.

The CPO

The Council has sought for some time to assemble land ownership of the Site. A large number of interests have already been acquired but it has not been possible to secure every interest. The Council considers that the inability to acquire all necessary land interests by agreement is likely to delay regeneration of the Site.

Having regard to the advice in 'Compulsory purchase process and the Crichel Down Rules: guidance' (July 2019) ("the Guidance"), the Council considers it appropriate to make a CPO to acquire any outstanding land interests. In particular, the Guidance recognises that compulsory purchase is an important tool to use as a means of assembling the land needed to help deliver social and economic change and encourages local authorities to consider using their compulsory purchase powers in a proactive way to ensure that benefits are secured for communities without delay.

If the Executive endorses the recommendation set out in this report then the Council proposes to:

- Make the CPO to acquire all necessary land interests within the Site, and following confirmation of the CPO, appropriate the Site for planning purposes;
- In parallel with the CPO, continue to seek to acquire all necessary land interests by agreement; and
- Apply for an order pursuant to section 247 of the 1990 Act to stop up highway within the Site to facilitate delivery of the Scheme.

Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers

The Council has the power in section 226 of the Act to make a CPO for any land within the Borough if the Council thinks that the purchase of the land will facilitate the carrying out of development, redevelopment or improvement on or in relation to the land.

Pursuant to section 226 of the 1990 Act, the Council may not exercise this power unless it thinks that the development, redevelopment or improvement is likely to contribute to the achievement of any one or more of the following objectives:

- The promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;
- The promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area;
- The promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

In deciding to use this power to make a CPO, the Council has had regard to all other available compulsory purchase powers, including section 17 of the Housing Act 1985, which authorises the acquisition of land for housing purposes. The Council has chosen to utilise its power in section 226 of the 1990 Act because it considers that the regeneration of the Site will deliver wider regeneration benefits to the community and the locality, than just the provision of housing. The Council has had regard to the advice on acquiring land for housing purposes by compulsory purchase as set out in the Guidance.

The Guidance provides updated and revised guidance to acquiring authorities in England on the use of CPO powers. Paragraph 1 states:

"Compulsory purchase powers are an important tool to use as a means of assembling the land needed to help deliver social, environmental and economic change. Used properly, they can contribute towards effective and efficient urban and rural regeneration, essential infrastructure, the revitalisation of communities, and the promotion of business – leading to improvements in quality of life"

Importantly the Guidance requires that a CPO should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest (paragraph 2 of the Guidance).

Particular guidance on orders made by local authorities under section 226 is contained in Section 1 of Tier 2 of the Guidance. Paragraph 95 states:

"This power is intended to provide a positive tool to help acquiring authorities with planning powers to assemble land where this is necessary to implement proposals in their Local Plan or where strong planning justifications for the use of the power exist. It is expressed in wide terms and can therefore be used to assemble land for regeneration and other schemes where the range of activities or purposes proposed mean that no other single specific compulsory purchase power would be appropriate"

Paragraph 105 of the Guidance also recognises that it is not always feasible or sensible to wait until the full details of a scheme have been worked up and planning permission has been obtained before proceeding to prepare a CPO. An acquiring authority will however have to demonstrate that there are no reasons why any required planning permission for the scheme should not be secured.

A compulsory purchase order to which there are objections will require confirmation by the Secretary of State to become effective. The Guidance at paragraph 106, provides

that any decision by the Secretary of State about whether to confirm a CPO made under section 226 will be made on its own merit but the factors which the Secretary of State can be expected to consider include:

- *"Whether the purpose for which the land is being acquired fits in with the adopted Local Plan for the area, or, where no such up to date Local Plan exists, with the draft Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework;*
- *The extent to which the proposed purpose will contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area;*
- *Whether the purpose for which the acquiring authority is proposing to acquire the land could be achieved by any other means. This may include considering the appropriateness of any alternative proposals put forward by the owners of the land, or any other persons, for its reuse. It may also involve examining the suitability of any alternative locations for the purpose for which the land is being acquired;*
- *The potential financial viability of the scheme for which the land is being acquired. A general indication of funding intentions, and of any commitment from third parties, will usually suffice to reassure the Secretary of State that there is a reasonable prospect that the scheme will proceed. The greater the uncertainty about the financial viability of the scheme, however, the more compelling the other grounds for undertaking the compulsory purchase will need to be".*

The Guidance also requires the Council to have regard to the following when considering making a CPO:

- *That the purposes for which the compulsory purchase order is made justifies interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected;*
- *Whether the scheme is likely to be blocked by any physical or legal impediments to implementation, including the programming of any infrastructure accommodation works or remedial works that may be required and any need for planning permission or other consents.*

The Guidance looks to acquiring authorities to seek to acquire land by agreement wherever practicable. However, the Guidance recognises, at paragraph 17, that it may be sensible for acquiring authorities to start formal CPO procedures in parallel with their efforts to acquire by agreement. The Guidance notes that undertaking negotiations in parallel can help to build a good working relationship with those affected by the scheme and can help to save time at the formal objection stage by minimising the fear that can arise from misunderstandings.

In the making of the CPO, the Guidance encourages acquiring authorities to offer those concerned about a CPO access to alternative dispute resolution techniques where appropriate.

In considering the case for the CPO, the Council has also had regard to the advice in the Guidance on the making of a CPO to acquire land for housing purposes pursuant to section 17 of the Housing Act 1980 relating to the compulsory purchase of land, houses or other properties for the provision of housing accommodation to achieve a quantitative or qualitative housing gain.

BUSINESS CASE

Land Proposed for Compulsory Acquisition

The land required for regeneration of the Site and proposed for compulsory acquisition is indicatively identified edged red and shaded pink on the draft plan at Appendix 1 of this report. The draft plan is in the process of being finalised as the land referencing process to identify all interests in the Site required to deliver the Scheme is completed. It comprises of the following properties:

1. 4 Firs Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
2. 6 Firs Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
3. 29 Firs Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
4. 10 Dart Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
5. 11 Dart Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
6. 9 Orbit Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
7. 11 Orbit Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
8. 15 Orbit Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
9. 24 Orbit Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 10.5 Billing Avenue Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 11.8 Billing Avenue Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 12.9 Billing Avenue Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 13.10 Billing Avenue Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 14.11 Billing Avenue Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 15.15 Billing Avenue, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JE
- 16.22 Gorse Ride South Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EH
- 17.24 Gorse Ride South Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EH
- 18.26 Gorse Ride South Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EH
- 19.30 Gorse Ride South Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EH
20. Electricity substations at Whittle Close, Orbit Close, Dart Close and Firs Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham
21. Gas governor at Whittle Close, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
22. Any unregistered land in uncertain ownership, including subsoil under existing footpaths.

The Case for Compulsory Acquisition

The Council's case for making the CPO is more fully set out in the draft Statement of Reasons at Appendix 3 of this report.

As set out above, regeneration of the Site has been a longstanding corporate and planning policy objective of the Council. The regeneration of the Site by delivery of the Scheme for which planning permission is bring secured will deliver new housing, and social, economic and environmental benefits for the Council's residents and the area of Gorse Ride.

The Council has sought over the last four years to assemble land ownership of the Site and has been successful in securing control of a large part of the freehold interest in the Site, as shown on the plan at Appendix 2 of this report, including the acquisition of 22 freehold properties. These are listed below.

1. 2 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
2. 3 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
3. 14 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
4. 17 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
5. 18 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
6. 21 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
7. 22 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
8. 23 Firs Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JQ
9. 2 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 10.6 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 11.8 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 12.9 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 13.18 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 14.19 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 15.22 Dart Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JG
- 16.5 Orbit Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 17.6 Orbit Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 18.14 Orbit Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 19.23 Orbit Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 20.28 Orbit Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF
- 21.18 Whittle Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JH
- 22.4 Whittle Close Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JF

However, notwithstanding the Council's efforts since 2016, it has not been possible to acquire or secure control of all interests in the Site and a number of interests remain to be resolved. The Council proposes to continue to try to acquire or secure control of such interests following any resolution to make a CPO and the making of any CPO.

For a number of the outstanding interests, an in principle agreement has been reached with the freeholder as to the acquisition of their interest but the legal contracts have not been exchanged at the time of writing this report. Therefore whilst it is anticipated that the interest will be acquired by negotiation, they are included in the CPO in case the Council does need to utilise these powers. The schedule in Part 2 of this report lists in more detail the status of these negotiations. In the event that the acquisition of a property is concluded before the CPO is made then it can be removed from the CPO

The Council is committed to acquiring all interests in the Site through negotiation in the first instance and is engaged with the majority of the freeholders of outstanding interests as to the acquisition of their properties. As part of the negotiation process the Council is supporting homeowners with their relocation through a number of ways. This includes a payment of a home loss payment (10% of the value of their home) plus disturbance payments which include refunding of removals service, legal fees, mortgage redemption fees and mail redirection. The Council has also set up an equity loan scheme through Loddon Homes Limited ("LHL") to assist eligible homeowners to acquire a new property by bridging the gap between property values in Gorse Ride compared to other areas of the borough and beyond. The loan is offered for up to 49% of the property value, up to a maximum of £150,000. The loan period is unlimited, there is no interest to pay and residents only need to pay the loan back when they sell the property. There is also no rental amount to pay.

In determining whether to proceed with compulsory acquisition, the Executive is reminded that, for those directly affected, there will be interference with convention

rights incorporated into law by the Human Rights Act 1998. The Council is satisfied that the harm to these rights is justified by the public benefits which will be secured by the Scheme, The Council will however take all necessary steps to minimise the effect of such interference so that it is proportionate and necessary for the implementation of any authorised compulsory acquisition.

The Council considers that the inability of the Council to secure the outstanding land interests in the Site will have the effect of delaying the regeneration of the Site and delivery of the consequential benefits to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area.

The Council accordingly considers that there is a compelling case in the public interest for the Council to exercise compulsory purchase powers as proposed in this report.

Financial Implications

The Council has committed to funding the regeneration of the Site and delivery of the Scheme. This includes all planning, design, site assembly and construction costs. It is anticipated that the project will also receive funding from Homes England.

Timetable for Progress

Making the CPO

In the event that the Council proceeds with the making of the CPO, it is proposed that the CPO will be made in February 2021.

Notice of the making of the CPO will be given to categories of “qualifying persons”, namely owners, lessees, tenants and occupiers and published in the local newspaper.

The timetable thereafter will depend on whether any objections are made to the CPO and the nature and scope of those objections.

If no objections are received to the CPO then the CPO can immediately be confirmed and implemented subject to compliance with all statutory requirements.

If objections are received then the Council will work to secure removal of those objections. If the objections cannot be resolved within a reasonable timescale, it is anticipated that the Secretary of State will arrange for a Public Inquiry to be held to consider any outstanding objections. It is envisaged that any Public Inquiry would be arranged for late summer 2021, with a decision being reached by the Secretary of State by the end of 2021.

Alongside the procedural issues associated with the CPO, the Council intend to progress discharge of the conditions imposed on the Planning Permission, the start of demolition of the existing vacant properties on the Site and appropriate procurement processes for the construction of the Scheme.

Implementing the CPO

The Scheme is divided into three phases.

Phase	No. of properties to be demolished	No. of properties to be built	Construction programme
2A	78	100	2021-2023
2B	49	94	2024-2026
2C	51	55	2026-2028

The Council has three years to implement the CPO from the date of its making. The priority will initially be to use the CPO to acquire properties in Phase 2A, if they have not been acquired through negotiation.

The Council has an ambitious programme of start on site of the demolition of Phase 2A from 1 May 2021 and a start on site of the main contractor in autumn 2021. This programme relies on the Council securing vacant possession of the Phase 2A of the Site by negotiation. If the CPO is required to secure vacant possession of Phase 2A then this could delay the start on site by 4 months (if no objections received) or up to 12 months if objections received and Public Inquiry is held.

The Council will continue to seek to acquire interests in Phases 2B and 2C by negotiation. However the Council is committed to acquiring all interested in the Site, including those interests in Phases 2B and 2C within 3 years of making of the CPO. These acquisitions would be ahead of the anticipated construction programme for these phases but it would mitigate the most significant risk around site assembly and would allow Phases 2B and 2C to be constructed earlier than the anticipated programme. An earlier construction programme for the later phases would improve the efficiency of the construction, particularly around allowing earlier work on utilities and reducing the need and length of time for temporary connections. It would also reduce the uncertainty for residents in later phases and reduce the time there was disruption to their lives through the construction programme.

Following land assembly, the Site will transferred in phases to "LHL", and Wokingham Borough Council development team will work on behalf of LHL to let the contract for construction of the Scheme. LHL will, following completion of the Scheme, manage and maintain the Scheme, including the communal parts, such as any open space and public realm, and the affordable housing to be provided as part of the Scheme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£80,000 for the preparation and making of the CPO Order	Yes	Capital

Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	N/A	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	N/A	

Other Financial Information

Funding for the Gorse Ride regeneration project is included within the Council's published Medium Term Financial Plan. The published figures include all regeneration activity - including planning and design, site assembly and construction. It is anticipated that the project will also receive funding from Homes England.

Budget figures specifically related to property acquisition, including the CPO process, cannot be published publically as they are commercial sensitive and would undermine the Council's position in negotiating with individual landowners.

The estimated costs for site assembly, including all procedural costs for the CPO (counsel, legal, Public Inquiry costs, and relevant compensation costs) are however on budget and within the budgets currently approved for the Gorse Ride regeneration project.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

A Community Steering Group was set up in October 2017 to involve the community in the design and implementation of the regeneration of the Site. This group continues to meet monthly and includes residents from the Site. The Steering Group is kept informed of the site assembly process as it progresses.

The Council has a dedicated Residents Engagement Officer for the Scheme who deals directly with affected residents and offers assistance to guide them through the property acquisition and relocation process. A specific meeting to address the concerns of owners was also held in March 2018 and FAQ documents produced to provide detailed information about the regeneration scheme and relocation options for residents. Residents are regularly kept informed of the relevant stage in the process through letter, phone calls and 1:1 sessions.

1:1 consultation sessions are held regularly with Council tenants within the Site to ensure that suitable, alternative accommodation is identified and provided as soon as possible.

Legislation and regulations which govern the CPO process, stipulate how the CPO itself should be advertised and consulted upon, and the Council will follow due process in this regard.

Public Sector Equality Duty

In considering the case for making the CPO, the Council has also had regard to the human rights implications and to its public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated into domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights ("the Convention"). The Convention includes provisions in the form of articles, the aim of which is to protect the rights of the individual. In resolving to make the CPO the Council should consider the rights of property owners under the Convention, notably under the following Articles:• Article 1 - This protects the right of everyone to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. No one can be deprived of possessions except in the public interest and subject to the relevant

national and international laws. • Article 8 - This protects private and family life, home and correspondence. No public authority can interfere with these interests except if it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in the interest of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country. • Article 14 - This protects the right to enjoy rights and freedoms in the Convention free from discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, or national or social origin. In the case of each of these Articles under the Convention, the Council should be conscious of the need to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the interests of the public. In the light of the significant public benefit which would arise from the regeneration of the Site, it is considered appropriate to make the CPO. It is not considered that the CPO would constitute any unlawful interference with individual property rights. The opportunity has been given to landowners and other affected parties to make representations regarding the Council's planning policies which underpin the proposed CPO. Further representations can be made in the context of any Public Inquiry which the Secretary of State decides to hold in connection with the CPO. Those directly affected by the acquisition of their land interests will be entitled to compensation (in accordance with the statutory code) proportionate to the loss which they incur. The Council further has a duty, when exercising any power, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, taking steps to meet the needs to people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the Scheme was undertaken in April 2018. The Council has considered each protected characteristic to identify whether the regeneration of the Site or delivery of the Scheme could have a detrimental impact of such protected characteristics. The EQIA identified a number of impacts on the protected characteristic and actions to be undertaken to address any negative impacts identified. The EQIA is a live document and was updated in January 2021. It will be continue to be updated as the Scheme progresses and is implemented to ensure that identified actions are undertaken to mitigate any impacts. {an update to the EQIA is programmed for January 2021 – if this is undertaken in time this report will be updated to report that this update has been done} The Council is content that it has discharged its public equality duty and that the regeneration of the Site and the delivery of the proposed Scheme will have no detrimental impact, or where there may be an impact, steps have been taken to mitigate it, on the protected characteristics set out above.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

The proposed regeneration of the Site will replace old and inefficient housing with new housing stock designed to the latest sustainability policy requirements.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Part 2 of this report includes sensitive personal and financial information relating to the current status of the negotiations between the Council and individual owners regarding the acquisition of their property.

List of Background Papers
Part 2 – Further information regarding status of property acquisition negotiations
1 Draft plan showing indicatively the land proposed to be included in the CPO edged red and shaded pink
2 Plan showing the freehold land already owned by the Council shaded green
3 Draft Statement of Reasons
4 Executive Report and Decision dated 31 January 2019

Contact Sarah Morgan	Service Commercial Property
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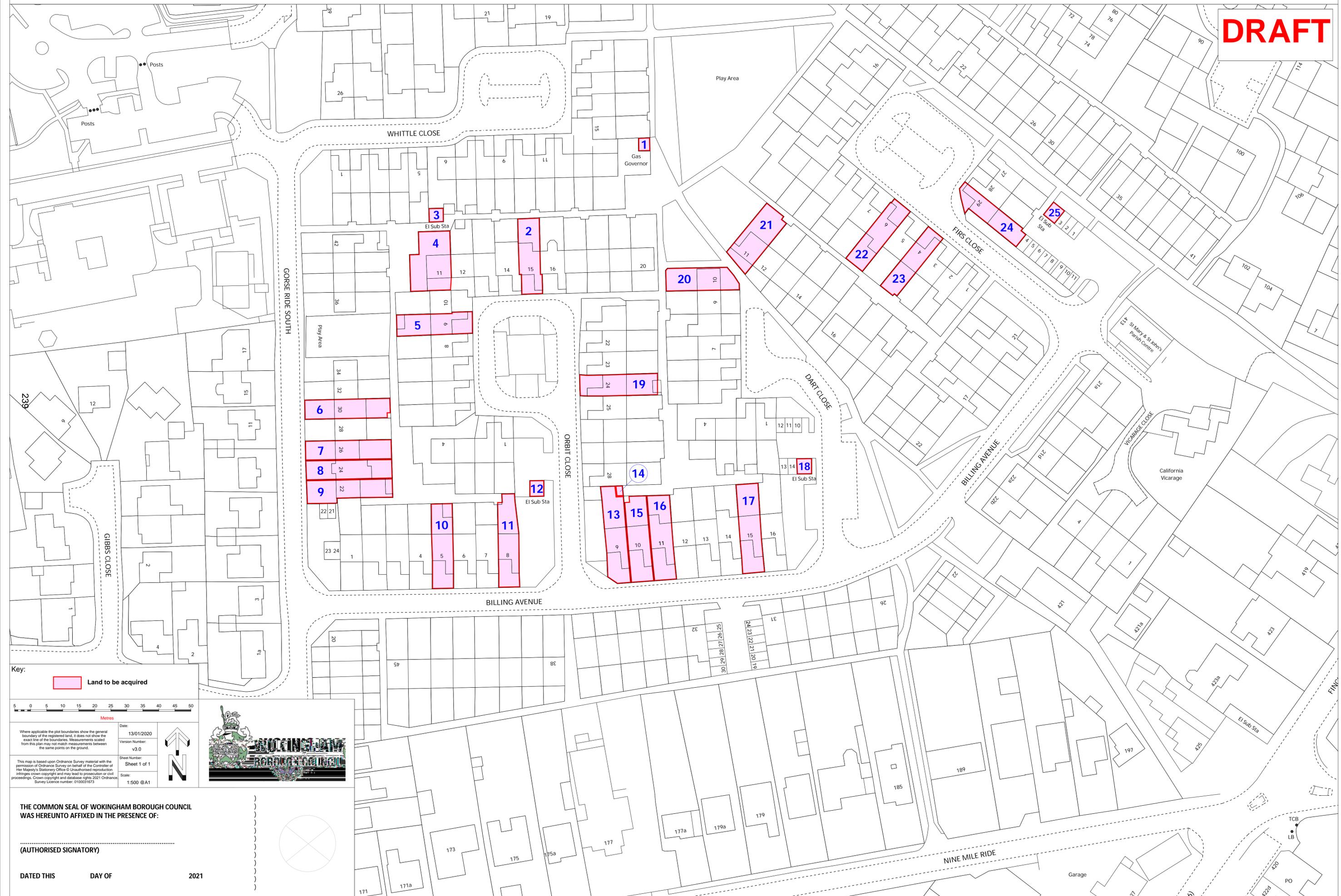
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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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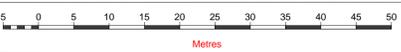
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MAP REFERRED TO IN THE WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL (GORSE RIDE SOUTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD, WOKINGHAM) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2021

DRAFT



Key: Land to be acquired



Date: 13/01/2020
 Version Number: v3.0
 Sheet Number: Sheet 1 of 1
 Scale: 1:500 @ A1



THE COMMON SEAL OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL WAS HEREUNTO AFFIXED IN THE PRESENCE OF:

(AUTHORISED SIGNATORY)

DATED THIS DAY OF 2021



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Gorse Ride South, Finchampstead, Wokingham

- Key:
- Land Owned By Wokingham Borough Council
 - Land subject to our research

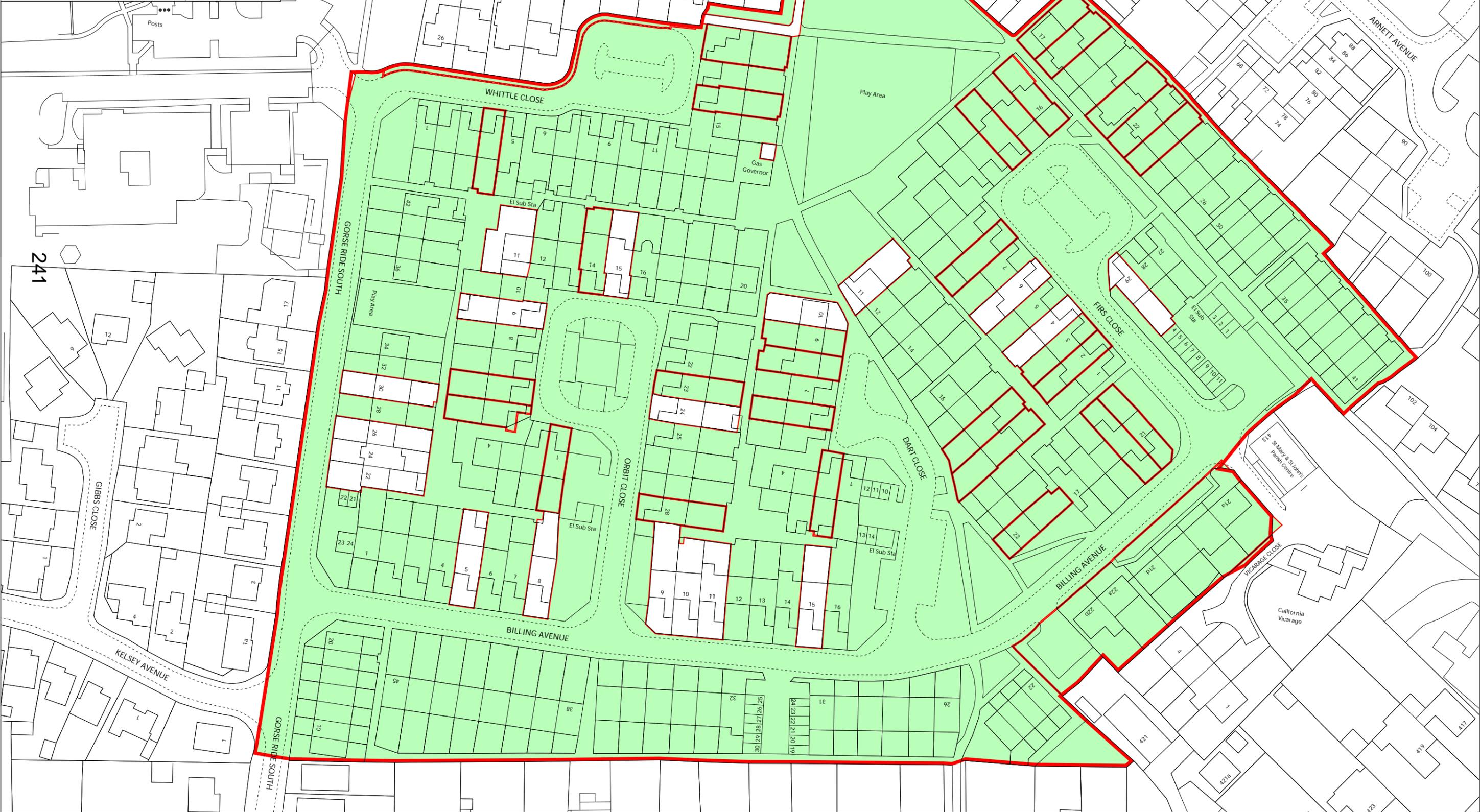
Ref: Scale: 1:1000 @ A3 Date: 12/01/2021

Where applicable the plot boundaries show the general boundary of the registered land, it does not show the exact line of the boundaries. Measurements scaled from this plan may not match measurements between the same points on the ground.

North Point:



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**THE WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(LAND AT GORSE RIDE SOUTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD, WOKINGHAM)
COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2021**

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

AND

THE ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981

**STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S
REASONS FOR MAKING THE ORDER**

[January 2021]

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 2. Location and Description of the Order Land
 3. The Scheme
 4. Planning Position
 5. Case for Compulsory Purchase/Purpose of Acquisition
 6. Related Orders
 7. Human Rights and Equality Considerations
 8. Conclusion
 9. Additional Information
- Appendix A
- Appendix B

DRAFT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wokingham Borough Council ("**the Council**") has made The Wokingham Borough Council (Land at Gorse Ride South, Finchampstead, Wokingham) Compulsory Purchase Order 2021 ("**the Order**") which it has submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation.
- 1.2 The Order has been made to enable regeneration of land at Gorse Ride South ("**the Site**"), by the demolition of existing buildings and provision of 249 new dwellings, together with associated access, parking, landscaping and public open space ("**the Scheme**"). The Scheme has been an objective of the Council for many years. The Scheme is being promoted by the Council and will be delivered by the Council through its wholly owned company, Loddon Homes Limited ("**LHL**").
- 1.3 Although the Council owns the freehold interest in much of the Site, implementation of the Scheme requires the acquisition of various land and property interests. The Council has endeavoured to acquire the necessary interests by negotiation, but it has not been possible to reach agreement with all of the parties affected.
- 1.4 Implementation of the Scheme will secure economic, social and environmental for Wokingham. The benefits of the Scheme are described in detail in section 5 of this Statement.
- 1.5 Planning permission (reference 202133) was secured for the Scheme on [] January 2021 ("**the Planning Permission**"). It authorises full planning permission for the proposed development of the existing Gorse Ride South Estate, comprising demolition of existing buildings and replacement with 249 dwellings (mixed tenure flats and houses) together with associated access, parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage ("**the Scheme**").
- 1.6 The Council resolved on 28 January 2021 to make a compulsory purchase order; reports were presented to the Council's Executive in January 2019 and January 2021 in relation to the powers conferred by Section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). The Council has consequently made the Order in order to secure the outstanding interests in the Site, as shown on the map accompanying the Order, required for the purpose of implementing the Scheme ("**the Order Land**").

2. Location and Description of the Order Land

2.1 The Order Land, comprising approximately 5.2 hectares, is located in Finchampstead in Wokingham. The Order Land is more specifically described in the schedule of interests accompanying the Order and is identified shaded pink on the map accompanying the Order.

2.2 The Order Land comprises the following land and property in Finchampstead, Wokingham:

- 4 Firs Close;
- 6 Firs Close;
- 29 Firs Close;
- 10 Dart Close;
- 11 Dart Close;
- 9 Orbit Close;
- 11 Orbit Close;
- 15 Orbit Close;
- 24 Orbit Close;
- 5 Billing Avenue;
- 8 Billing Avenue;
- 9 Billing Avenue;
- 10 Billing Avenue;
- 11 Billing Avenue;
- 15 Billing Avenue;
- 22 Gorse Ride South;
- 24 Gorse Ride South;
- 26 Gorse Ride South;
- 30 Gorse Ride South;
- Electricity substations at Whittle Close, Orbit Close, Dart Close and Firs Close;
- Gas governor at Whittle Close; and
- Unregistered land comprising subsoil under existing footpaths.

3. **The Scheme**

Purpose of the Scheme

- 3.1 The purpose of the Scheme is to secure the regeneration of the Site by demolishing the existing poor quality housing stock and providing an increased number of new housing units built to current design standards.

Scheme

- 3.2 The Scheme, for which the Planning Permission has been secured, includes the "redevelopment of the existing Gorse Ride South Estate, comprising demolition of existing buildings (178 no. dwellings) and replacement with 249 no. dwellings (mixed-tenure flats and houses) together with associated access, parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage".

- 3.3 In particular, the Scheme will provide for:

- 249 new dwellings of mixed tenure (74% affordable; 26% market);
- 416 parking spaces (398 parking spaces and 18 garages); and
- Public open space, including a central village green area, new children's play area and Trim Trail.

Layout

- 3.4 The Scheme is laid out to provide as follows:

Phase	No. of properties to be demolished	No. of properties to be built	Construction programme
2A	78	100	2021-2023
2B	49	94	2024-2026
2C	51	55	2026-2028

- 3.5 Phase 2A will provide *[insert description of mix, types, tenures]*.

- 3.6 Phase 2B will provide *[insert description of mix, types, tenures]*

- 3.7 Phase 2C will provide *[insert description of mix, types, tenures]*.

- 3.8 The public open space to be provided as part of the Scheme will be provided *[insert description of programme for its delivery]*.

- 3.9 The estate roads to be provided as part of the Scheme will be delivered on a phased basis as each part of the Scheme comes forward. Access through the estate will be maintained at all times during the construction programme for those needing it.

Design Detail of the Scheme

- 3.10 The key elements of the Scheme are:

- []

- 3.11 Against this background the design of the Scheme has evolved following an extensive period of consultation and design development to include:

- []

3.12 Overall the Scheme will deliver a well-designed comprehensive housing scheme in accordance with government guidelines and Local Plan policies.

Delivery of the Scheme

3.13 The Council is committed, subject to completing the acquisition of all necessary land interests in the Site, to securing the early delivery of the Scheme. The grant of the Planning Permission is an important step in this process and securing the making, confirmation and implementation of the Order to complete the land assembly process will be a further important milestone.

3.14 The Council further has, by way of committed financial provision within its published Medium Term Financial Plan, the financial resources necessary to acquire all necessary land interests by agreement or pursuant to the Order and to deliver the Scheme. As such, the Council is in a position to proceed with the Scheme following completion of the land assembly process. It is anticipated that the project will also receive funding from Homes England, although this is not vital.

3.15 The Council has three years to implement the CPO from the date of its making. The priority will initially be to use the CPO to acquire properties in Phase 2A, if they have not been acquired through negotiation.

3.16 The Council intends to start demolition of the properties in Phase 2A from 1 May 2021 with a start on site of the main contractor in autumn 2021. This programme relies on the Council securing vacant possession of the Phase 2A of the Site by negotiation. If the CPO is required to secure vacant possession of Phase 2A then this could delay the start on site by 4 months (if no objections received) or up to 12 months if objections received and Public Inquiry is held.

3.17 The Council will continue to seek to acquire interests in Phases 2B and 2C by negotiation. However, the Council is committed to acquiring all interests in the Site, including those interests in Phases 2B and 2C, within 3 years of making of the CPO. These acquisitions would be ahead of the anticipated construction programme for these phases but it would mitigate the most significant risk around site assembly and would allow Phases 2B and 2C to be constructed earlier than the anticipated programme. An earlier construction programme for the later phases would improve the efficiency of the construction, particularly around allowing earlier work on utilities and reducing the need and length of time for temporary connections. It would also reduce the uncertainty for residents in later phases and reduce the time there was disruption to their lives through the construction programme.

3.18 Following land assembly, the Site will transferred in phases to LHL, and Wokingham Borough Council development team will work on behalf of LHL to let the contract for construction of the Scheme. LHL will, following completion of the Scheme, manage and maintain the Scheme, including the communal parts, such as any open space and public realm, and the affordable housing to be provided as part of the Scheme.

3.19 It is anticipated that the Scheme will be constructed over a period of approximately [] months, meaning that the Scheme will be completed by [].

4. Planning Position

- 4.1 The regeneration of the Site has been a longstanding corporate and planning objective of the Council. It is supported by national and local planning policy.

The Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2 The following national, regional and local planning policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant to the Scheme.

National Planning Policy

- 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development. The regeneration of the Site reflects some of the key planning principles of the NPPF including securing high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings and promoting healthy and safe communities.
- 4.4 The NPPF requires that proposed dwellings should complement local buildings in relation to scale, density, layout and access. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy outlines that development should be appropriate to the surrounding street scene, and without detriment to the amenity of neighbouring residents. Development proposals should seek to comply with the National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (October 2019) and the Borough Design Guide, both of which provide provides further advice on best practice.
- 4.5 The NPPF further stresses the importance of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment. One of the Core Planning Principles is to seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. The National Design Guide and Borough Design Guidance also emphasise the importance of good design in achieving places where people want to live.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.6 The Scheme is also in line with the Council’s Local Development Plan policies, particularly:
- (a) Policy CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (“MDD”), which sets the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map;
 - (b) Core Strategy Policy CP9, which sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. As the Site is within a modest development location, the proposal is acceptable in principle; and
 - (c) MDD policy TB08 sets out open space, sport and recreational standards for residential development. Policy TB21 requires applications to demonstrate how they comply with the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment. Policy CC03 requires new development to protect and retain existing trees where possible.

- 4.7 The regeneration of the Site has been designed having regard to the above guidance.
- 4.8 Regeneration of the Site further reflects several of the key objectives in the Council's draft Housing Strategy and Local Plan Update:
- (a) providing additional housing meeting a wide range of needs;
 - (b) improving the quality of residents' homes;
 - (c) helping build strong communities; and
 - (d) building sustainable homes for the future.

Determination of the Application

- 4.9 The application, in respect of which the Planning Permission has been granted, was considered by the Council's Planning Committee on 9 December 2020. The report to members noted that *"the proposal complies with the Development Plan and is considered to be sustainable development that would deliver significant public benefits; there are no material considerations that weigh significantly against the proposal"*.
- 4.10 The report further noted that *"the application demonstrates that the development would successfully integrate within the landscape context and without having an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents. The necessary decamping of the existing residents from the site has been carefully considered as part of the process. The development would be phased accordingly to ensure that disruption caused through relocation is minimised as far as possible. The proposals are in accordance with the Council's policies and guidance on living, amenity and parking space. The development would provide a high quality modern housing scheme together with landscaped public open space, while retaining the majority of significant trees on the site. It should be noted that the scheme will also comprise planting of up to 200 new trees. Contributions can be secured toward the off-site provision of SANG, improvement of existing public open space and a net gain for biodiversity. The development would not cause any significant adverse highway impacts and would not result in significant residential amenity impacts to existing, new or neighbouring residents"*.
- 4.11 The committee members resolved unanimously to support the scheme and the Planning Permission was subsequently granted on [] January 2021.
- 4.12 The Council further committed the following by way of mitigation of the Scheme:
- (a) An affordable housing scheme – tenure split to be agreed on a phased basis and in accordance with local needs;
 - (b) SANG and SAMM financial contributions;
 - (c) Biodiversity Net Gain (financial contributions, on and off-site provision);
 - (d) Public open space improvements (financial contribution, off-site provision);
 - (e) Public transport provision improvements (financial contribution)

- (f) My Journey Travel Plan Contribution;
- (g) Commitment to construct all estate roads to adoptable standard and to provide an adoptable highways plan; and
- (h) Dedication of the roads on the application site for adoption by the Council.

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5. Case for Compulsory Purchase/Purpose of Acquisition

Compulsory Purchase Powers

- 5.1 The Council has the power in Section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) to make a compulsory purchase order for any land in their area if the Council think that the purchase of the land will facilitate the carrying out of development, redevelopment or improvement on or in relation to the land.
- 5.2 Pursuant to Section 226(1)(a) the Council may not exercise the power unless they think that the development, re-development or improvement is likely to contribute to the achievement of any one or more of the following objectives:
- (a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;
 - (b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area;
 - (c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.
- 5.3 It is immaterial that the development, re-development or improvement may be carried out by a third party.
- 5.4 The Guidance provides guidance generally on the exercise of compulsory purchase powers.
- 5.5 Importantly the Guidance requires that a compulsory purchase order should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest. The Guidance further states that an acquiring authority, when considering the making of a compulsory purchase order, shall have regard to the following factors:
- (a) an acquiring authority should be sure that the purposes for which it is making a compulsory purchase order sufficiently justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected. Regard should be had, in particular, to the provisions of Article 1 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights (paragraph 12 of the Guidance);
 - (b) that adequate resource is likely to be available to enable the acquisition of the land pursuant to the order and for the scheme underlying the order to proceed (paragraph 14 of the Guidance);
 - (c) that the scheme underlying the order is unlikely to be blocked by impediments to implementation (paragraph 15 of the Guidance); and
 - (d) that there is no obvious reason why planning permission for the scheme might be withheld (paragraph 15 of the Guidance).
- 5.6 Particular guidance on orders made by local authorities under Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is contained in Tier 2 Section 1, of the Guidance. Paragraph 95 states:-

"This power is intended to provide a positive tool to help acquiring authorities with planning powers to assemble land where this is necessary to implement proposals in their Local Plan or where strong planning justifications for the use of the power exist. It is expressed in wide terms and can therefore be used to assemble land for

regeneration and other schemes where the range of activities or purposes proposed mean that no other single specific compulsory purchase power would be appropriate".

- 5.7 Importantly, the Guidance requires that a compulsory purchase order should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest.
- 5.8 A compulsory purchase order to which there are objections will require confirmation by the Secretary of State to become effective. The Guidance provides that any decision by the Secretary of State about whether to confirm an order made under Section 226 will be made on its own merit but the factors which the Secretary of State can be expected to consider include:-
- (a) *"Whether the purpose for which the land is being acquired fits in with the adopted Local Plan for the area, or, where no such up to date Local Plan exists, with the draft Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework";*
 - (b) *"The extent to which the proposed purpose will contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area";*
 - (c) *"Whether the purpose for which the acquiring authority is proposing to acquire the land could be achieved by any other means. This may include considering the appropriateness of any alternative proposals put forward by the owners of the land, or any other persons, for its reuse. It may also involve examining the suitability of any alternative locations for the purpose for which the land is being acquired";*
 - (d) *"The potential financial viability of the scheme for which the land is being acquired. A general indication of funding intentions, and of any commitment from third parties, will usually suffice to reassure the Secretary of State that there is a reasonable prospect that the scheme will proceed. The greater the uncertainty about the financial viability of the scheme, however, the more compelling the other grounds for undertaking the compulsory purchase will need to be".*
- 5.9 The Guidance also requires the Council to have regard to the following when considering making a compulsory purchase order:-
- (a) That the purposes for which the order is made sufficiently justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected;
 - (b) The degree to which other bodies (including the private sector) have agreed to make financial contributions or to underwrite the scheme and on what basis such contributions or underwriting is to be made;
 - (c) Evidence relating to financial viability;
 - (d) Whether the scheme is likely to be blocked by other impediments to implementation.

The Council's support for the Scheme

- 5.10 The Scheme is wholly consistent with adopted planning policy for the Site and finds significant support in national planning policy and guidance. It will deliver substantial

regenerative benefits to the local community. Importantly, the Council considers that the Scheme will deliver the comprehensive regeneration of the Site and that, in the absence of the Scheme and the Order to enable it, the regeneration of the local area would not be achieved.

Resolution to make the Order

- 5.11 The Council resolved on 28 January 2021 to make the Order, reports were presented to the Council's Executive in January 2019 and January 2021.
- 5.12 In resolving to make the Order the Executive took into account the various factors referred to in this Statement and also the rights of property owners under the European Convention of Human Rights ("the Convention"), as incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998. The Executive noted especially the advice of the Secretary of State in the Guidance and the following protected rights:
- (a) Article 1 protects the right of everyone to the peaceful enjoyment of possession, so that no one can be deprived of possessions except in the public interest and subject to the relevant national and international laws.
 - (b) Article 8 protects private and family life, home and correspondence, so that no public authority can interfere with these rights except if it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in the interest of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the Country.
 - (c) Article 14 - This protects the right to enjoy rights and freedoms in the Convention free from discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, or national or social origin.
- 5.13 The Executive was satisfied that the harm to the rights of those affected by the Order is justified by the public benefits which will be secured by the Scheme. In particular, in balancing the rights of the individuals affected and the interests of the public, and especially in the light of the significant benefits arising from the Scheme, the Executive considered that the Order should be made.

Justification for the Order

- 5.14 The Council considers that the Order is fully justified. Its resolution to make the Order accords entirely with the advice in the Guidance which encourages local authorities to exercise their compulsory purchase powers to ensure that sites are brought forward for development.
- 5.15 The Council believes that all of the land included in the Order is required for the Scheme to proceed.
- 5.16 The Council has determined, for the purposes of Section 226(1)(a), that the purchase of the Order Land will facilitate the carrying out of the development, redevelopment and improvement of the land the subject of the Scheme. In this respect the Council also believes, as regards Section 226(1A), that the Scheme will contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wokingham.

Scheme Benefits

5.17 The main aim of the Scheme is to improve the existing Gorse Ride estate through the demolition of existing poor quality housing stock and its replacement with well-designed new housing. The existing housing stock detracts from the overall appearance and character of the local area and is of poor quality in appearance and layout. It is not economically viable to repair or retrofit the existing stock, which are prefabricated and subject to maintenance issues as a result of damp, condensation and high running costs. New homes will be built which are of high quality, good design and are constructed to current standards. In addition, the Scheme will deliver wider benefits for the local area through the provision of enhanced public realm including a new village green. This will make a significant contribution to the social, environmental and economic well-being of the area.

5.18 In summary, it is considered that the Scheme will deliver the following public benefits:

Environmental Benefits

5.19 The existing Gorse Ride estate is of poor quality and underutilises the land. The Scheme will deliver both quantitative and qualitative improvements to housing stock within the borough through the demolition of 178 poor quality housing units and the creation of 249 new well designed housing units. It will bring vitality to the area and revitalise and enrich the community for the future. A high quality environment will be provided, which is suitable for modern living and for the future.

5.20 The Scheme will successfully integrate within the existing landscape and will enhance rather than detract from the amenity of the surrounding areas. In particular, the Scheme will deliver significant public realm and landscaping improvements, including circa 200 new trees. A new central village green will be created, which will be the heart of the new community, as well as a smaller area of public open space in the western part of the Site. This will be a significant improvement on the existing provision.

Social Benefits

5.21 The Scheme will provide significant social benefits to the local area by creating a new community of which residents can feel proud. The new village green will provide an area for relaxing and playing. Activity spaces will be provided including for instance, children's play areas, a sensory garden, table tennis tables, and the attenuation basins. It will also create a central hub to form the heart of the new community, making it a space available to all and to bring people together. The landscaping strategy for the Site will further enhance the amenity of the area.

5.22 In addition, linkages throughout the new community and connecting into the wider community will be created to assist integration and improve accessibility.

5.23 A total of 26% of the new housing units will be private market units available to buy. 74% of the new housing units will be affordable housing and the Council has undertaken significant work to ensure that the provision of this affordable housing meets local needs. The mix of private market units and affordable housing units will ensure that the area is accessible to more people and enable the integration of a diverse group of residents.

Economic Benefits

5.24 The Scheme will include significant new housing, comprising a mix of units and tenures, which will enhance the housing stock available in the local area and in a

highly sustainable location. This will help meet the needs of the borough in terms of housing land supply.

- 5.25 In addition, the Scheme will create circa 100 construction jobs per year. The opportunity to target newly created jobs to local people via an employment and skills plan will be implemented by the main construction contractor.

Conclusions

- 5.26 The Council is Council is satisfied that the Scheme will achieve its aim and will deliver significant benefits to the local area. The Council accordingly considers that there is a compelling case in the public interest for the Order to facilitate the Scheme.

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6. Related Orders

- 6.1 An application will be made pursuant to section 247 of the 1990 Act to stop up or divert certain areas of highway within the Order Land. This will facilitate delivery of the Scheme by allowing the internal highways within the Site to be reconfigured to align with the Scheme.
- 6.2 It is expected that any objections to the application will be considered together at any public inquiry relating to objections to the Order.

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7. Human Rights and Equality Considerations

Human Rights

- 7.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated into domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights (“ECHR”). The ECHR includes provisions in the form of Articles, which aim to protect the rights of the individual.
- 7.2 Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 prohibits public authorities from acting in a way which is incompatible with rights protected by the ECHR.
- 7.3 As is clear from the Guidance, a compulsory purchase order should only be made where there is a “*compelling case in the public interest*”, and that a public authority pursuing a compulsory purchase order should be sure that the purposes for which it is making that order sufficiently justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected. In making this assessment, the authority should have regard, in particular, to the provisions of Article 1 of the First Protocol and Articles 6 and 8 to the ECHR.
- 7.4 Article 1 of the First Protocol of the ECHR states that “*every natural or legal person is entitled to peaceful enjoyment of his possessions*” and that “*no one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by the law and by the general principles of international law....*”.
- 7.5 Whilst the owners of the land comprised in the Order Land may be deprived of their property if the Order is confirmed and thereafter implemented, this will be done in accordance with the law. The public benefits associated with the Order are set out in this statement, and the Council considers that the Order strikes a fair balance between the public interest in seeing the regeneration proceed (which is unlikely to happen in the absence of the Order), and the private rights which will be affected by the Order.
- 7.6 In this case, despite efforts being made, the Council has not been able to secure agreements with the owners of the Order Land nor has it been possible to locate the owners of the land in “unknown” ownership. Such parties will be entitled to compensation calculated under the CPO Compensation Code in respect of land acquired by the Council pursuant to the Order.
- 7.7 Article 6 of the ECHR provides that: “*in determining his civil rights and obligations ...everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law*”. The Article 6 rights are met by the procedures for objection and confirmation, the right to bring a legal challenge in the High Court under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and the right to have any claim for compensation determined by the Upper Tribunal.
- 7.8 The regeneration of the Order Land has been comprehensively consulted upon. There has been an opportunity to make representations regarding the planning policies that promote development of the Order Land. The Council has further entered into extensive discussions and negotiations with the affected landowners regarding the future of the area and the regeneration proposals.
- 7.9 Where parties object to the Order, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will arrange either for those objections to be considered by way of written representations, or for a public local inquiry to be held to provide those parties with an opportunity to be heard. Should the Order be confirmed, a person

aggrieved may challenge the order in the High Court if they consider that there are sufficient grounds for doing so. In relation to compensation disputes, affected persons have the right to refer any claim for compensation to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber), an independent body. This process is compliant with Article 6.

- 7.10 Article 8 of the ECHR provides that: "*everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence*" and that "*there shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of....the economic wellbeing of the country...*".
- 7.11 Whilst there may be some interference with the rights of the owners of the land comprised in the Order, this will be done in accordance with the law. The Council considers that the benefits associated with the Scheme as set out in this report, strike a fair balance between the public interest in seeing the Scheme proceed (which is unlikely to happen in the absence of the Order), and the private rights which will be affected by the Order.
- 7.12 The Council has carefully considered the matters it has to balance in reaching its decision to progress the Order, and has decided that there is a compelling case in the public interest to proceed with making it, so as to enable the redevelopment of the Site to proceed.

Equality

- 7.13 The Council further has a duty, when exercising any power, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, taking steps to meet the needs to people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.14 The Council has been mindful of its equality duty and has had regard to the impact of the regeneration of the Site and provision of the Scheme on such protected characteristics. An Equalities Impact Assessment ("EQIA") of the Scheme was undertaken in April 2018. The Council has considered each protected characteristic to identify whether the regeneration of the Site or delivery of the Scheme could have a detrimental impact of such protected characteristics. The EQIA identified a number of impacts on the protected characteristic and actions to be undertaken to address any negative impacts identified. The EQIA is a live document and was updated in January 2021. It will continue to be updated as the Scheme progresses and is implemented to ensure that identified actions are undertaken to mitigate any impacts.

Consultation with the Local Community

- 7.15 The regeneration of the Order Land has been a long term aspiration and objective of the Council, and a high priority of the local community. Engagement with the local community to develop a better understanding of individual, group and business interests varied needs and aspirations for the site has been ongoing for a long period of time. Some of the key engagement activities and findings are outlined below.

- 7.16 Regular newsletters about the proposed regeneration of Gorse Ride Estate are published by the Council to keep the local community informed of progress and developments.
- 7.17 In addition, since October 2017, monthly steering group meetings have been held about the proposed regeneration of the Site. The group was formed in order to enable residents and local community groups to work with the Council and its partners to bring about positive change, raise and address any issues and concerns regarding the decant/rehousing strategy and emerging regeneration proposals.
- 7.18 The group is made up of local residents (which include Council tenants, private leaseholders/owner-occupiers) within the Gorse Ride area and also those in the immediate surrounding the area. The group has representatives from wider stakeholders, including St Mary's and St John's Parish Centre, FBC Centre, Gorse Ride and Nine Mile Ride Schools, elected WBC Ward Members, Finchampstead Parish Councillors, relevant Council Lead Members and the Council.
- 7.19 The focus of the group is to keep residents fully informed and involved on the Scheme and to enable the Council's project team to engage with the group as the Scheme progressed from inception to grant of the Planning Permission. It will continue to meet during the construction and post occupation phases. Through this forum, residents have been able to understand and examine development proposals at the earliest opportunity (prior to formal Council decisions being made), comment upon, challenge, influence, raise concerns, shape proposals and help identify solutions that enhance the Scheme and bring value to the local area.
- 7.20 During the preparation of the Scheme and during its determination period, the Council undertook a wide range of consultation and engagement events to enable local interested parties to comment on the proposed scheme.

Conclusions

- 7.21 The Council is content that there has been thorough engagement with persons affected by the Scheme and that it has discharged its public equality duty. The Council considers that the redevelopment of the Site pursuant to the Scheme will have a positive impact on the local community and on persons with protected characteristics. Where there is potential for the Scheme to have a detrimental impact on those with protected characteristics, steps have been taken to mitigate that impact.

8 **CONCLUSION**

For all the various reasons set out in this Statement, the Council considers that there is a compelling case in the public interest and that the Order should be confirmed to facilitate the regeneration of the Site.

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9 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General Information

- 9.1 The documents relating to the Order are listed in Appendix A to this Statement and can be viewed online on the Council's website at [].
- 9.2 The additional documents listed in Appendix B to this Statement, which the Council may also refer to at any public inquiry, can also be viewed online on the Council's website. The Council reserves the right to add or remove documents from this list in the light of any objections and representations made in respect of the Order.
- 9.3 Anyone requiring hard copies of the documents listed in Appendices A and B may request them by contacting [] at the Council by telephone on [] or by email to []@wokingham.gov.uk.
- 9.4 Persons requiring further information regarding the Order or owners and occupiers of the Order Land who wish to negotiate a sale or discuss matters of compensation should contact [] at the Council by telephone on [] or by email to []@wokingham.gov.uk.

Statutory Procedures

- 9.5 Any objection or other representation concerning the Order must be made in writing to National Planning Casework Unit, 5 St Philips Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2PW before [] 2021 and should state the title of the Order and the grounds of objection or representation.
- 9.6 If objections to the Order are received from any person who is an owner, lessee or occupier (except tenants for a month or a period less than a month) of the Order Land and such objections are not withdrawn, then an opportunity will be given by the Secretary of State for objectors to state their views at either a public inquiry or hearing before an independent inspector after the end of the objection period.
- 9.7 If a public inquiry or hearing is to be held, all objectors will be notified individually at least 6 weeks beforehand and those who have made representations or wish to support the proposals will be similarly informed. Notice of any public inquiry or hearing would also be published in the local press.
- 9.8 It should be noted that it might be necessary to communicate the substance of all comments received to other people. If a public inquiry or hearing is held, letters of objections and other representations would be passed to the inspector holding the public inquiry or hearing.

Compensation

- 9.9 Provision is made by statute with regard to compensation for the compulsory purchase of land and the depreciation in the value of affected properties. More information is given in the series of booklets published by the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled 'Compulsory Purchase and Compensation' Listed below:
- (a) Booklet No 1 – Compulsory Purchase Procedure;
 - (b) Booklet No 2 – Compensation to Business Owners and Occupiers;

(c) Booklet No 4 – Compensation to Residential Owners and Occupiers.

9.10 Copies of these booklets are available free of charge from the National Planning Casework Unit, 5 St Philips Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2PW or online at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/compulsory-purchase-system-guidance

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APPENDIX A

Order Documents

- 1 The Order
- 2 The Order Map
- 3 Statement of Reasons for the Order

APPENDIX B

Reports and Minutes

- 1 Executive Paper dated January 2019
- 2 Minutes of Executive Meeting on 31 January 2019
- 3 Executive Paper dated January 2021
- 4 Minutes of Executive Meeting on 28 January 2021

Planning Application Documentation

- 5 Planning Application Form
- 6 Plan showing application boundary
- 7 Planning Statement dated March 2020
- 8 Design and Access Statement dated March 2020
- 9 Masterplan
- 10 Other approved drawings
- 11 Landscape Design Statement dated October 2020
- 12 Committee Report dated 9 December 2020
- 13 Planning Permission dated [] January 2021

Planning Policy Documentation

- 14 National Planning Policy Framework (March 2019)
- 15 National Planning Policy Guidance
(Available online at <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk>)
- 16 Extracts from Core Strategy for Wokingham (January 2010)
- 17 Extracts from Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (December 2012)
- 18 Extracts from National Design Guide (October 2019)

19 Extracts from Borough Design Guide (May 2012)

Other Documentation

20 Draft plan showing the proposed extent of highway to be stopped up

21 Equalities Impact Assessment (January 2021)

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TITLE	Delivering the Gorse Ride Regeneration Project - Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 31 January 2019
WARD	Finchampstead South;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive – Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, Adult Social Care and Housing - Parry Batth

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

- To enable the voluntary or compulsory acquisition of all necessary third party land interests to bring forward comprehensive regeneration of the Gorse Ride Estate.
- To seek an in principle resolution to use CPO (Compulsory Purchase Powers) that will provide certainty with regards to site assembly and the demonstration of the Council's commitment to rejuvenate the area.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) Notes the considerable progress already underway to support the rehousing of tenants and homeowners on the Gorse Ride estate.
- 2) Authorises the in principle use of a CPO to acquire all property interests (the extent of which is shown indicatively edged red on the plan in Appendix 1) required to deliver the Gorse Ride Regeneration Project
- 3) Agrees that Council Officers continue to negotiate the acquisition by agreement of all third party interests in the land in advance of confirmation of a CPO.
- 4) Authorises the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Members with responsibility for Housing and Finance, to take all necessary steps required for the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO, including securing the appointment of an external specialist CPO adviser to prepare all necessary documents required to support this process, including statements of reasons and requisite statutory notices.
- 5) Authorises the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Members with responsibility for Housing and Finance to make General Vesting Declarations (GVDs) under the Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981 and / or serve notice to treat and notices of entry (if required) following confirmation of the CPO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report to seek approval to proceed with the making of a CPO to achieve the comprehensive regeneration of the Gorse Ride estate.

The Executive on 16 May 2018 agreed various recommendations to enable regeneration of the Gorse Ride Estate (Phase 2+) to proceed. Budgets have been approved that have allowed key aspects of the project to be progressed.

The Phase 2 + (main estate) proposals are at detailed design stage and a planning application is programmed for formal submission in Spring 2019. The existing 178 sub-standard properties will be replaced with around 255 brand new affordable and mixed tenure homes centred around a village green, constructed to modern standards. There will be a net gain of circa 77 dwellings on site. These new homes will be delivered over an 8-10 year period. Development is expected to start in Summer 2020 and all new homes are expected to complete by 2028/29.

As at 3rd December 2018, 140 homes were in Council ownership, 3 were owned by a third party housing association and 35 were owned privately. To allow the programme for demolition and rebuilding to start by Summer 2020, the Council needs to complete land assembly by acquiring all third party property interests within the project boundary, as well as obtaining vacant possession of all homes occupied by Council tenants. Failure to do this will delay delivery of the regeneration and add further uncertainty and disturbance for residents.

The Council remains committed to its proactive land assembly strategy. This includes continuing with its tenant rehousing programme and acquiring third party property interests voluntarily without the need to exercise the CPO. However, in principle resolution for the Council to use its compulsory purchase powers for the acquisition of third party property interests as a last resort (if acquisitions by agreement cannot be achieved in a reasonable timeframe) is sought. The ability to use CPO will enable the regeneration scheme to proceed in accordance with the published timeframes shared with residents.

If a CPO is confirmed, the Council will use its statutory powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to apply the CPO to all third party property interests, including rights of access over land contained within the red line project boundary shown in the plan in Appendix 1.

If this report is approved, Council officers will begin the preparatory and planning work to use CPO (should they be required) for all interests not yet in the ownership or control of the Council.

BACKGROUND

The Gorse Ride estate was built in the 1970's using the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Development Group (MOHLG) non-traditional construction technique, where the homes were largely made up of pre-fabricated timber panels. Due to its design and form of construction, the homes overtime have suffered from poor thermal insulation, structural defects and above and below ground drainage problems that have proved difficult and costly for the Council to maintain.

On 16 May 2018, the Executive approved the plans and funding to regenerate the main Gorse Ride Estate (Phase 2 +). The plans involve the demolition and clearance of 178 existing properties and their replacement with brand new, high quality homes of mixed tenure. The Council also agreed the rehousing of affected tenants and the acquisition of private properties on the estate in order to facilitate the scheme.

In September 2018, architects ACG and consultants AECOM were jointly appointed to take the Masterplan forward through to detailed design, planning and delivery and completion stages.

BUSINESS CASE (Including Options and Evidence of Need)

Phase 2 + Masterplan Refinement / Phasing

Since the May 2018 resolution, residents and stakeholders have continued to provide input on the development of the Masterplan for the estate through the Steering groups and other meetings. The current plan includes a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and bungalows, 2, 3, 4 and 5 bedroom houses varying in height from 1 to 4 storeys. These homes will accommodate household needs of existing residents (Council tenants and homeowners) who wish to return to the rebuilt estate and also provide dwellings to meet housing needs within the wider Borough. The design stage will conclude with the formal submission of a detailed Planning Application to provide around 255 new affordable and mixed tenure homes in Spring 2019. If planning consent is achieved, then development will commence in Summer 2020.

The estate will be re-developed over an 8 to 10 year period in 3 phases (2A, 2B and 2C) to the indicative timeframes set out below.

Phase (no. of existing homes)	Decant start	Development Commencement	Development Completion
2A (68 Properties) 1-41 Firs Close, 17-21 Billing Ave and 1-22 Dart Close	In progress	August 2020	March 2023
2B (49 Properties) - 9-16 Billing Ave, 1-28 Orbit Close and 6-18 Whittle Close	September 2020	March 2023	December 2025
2C (61 Properties) - 1-5 Whittle Close, 8-42 Gorse Ride South (even nos) and Billing Ave (1-8 and 21a-45).	April 2023	December 2025	April 2028

The current plans will deliver the following indicative tenure mix:

- 158 x social rented homes (at target rents)
- 21 x shared ownership homes at 35% equity share and rent on unsold equity capped at the 1.5% per annum
- 76 x private sale homes (including replacement homes for current homeowners who wish to remain on the estate)

Land Assembly Strategy

The land required for the Gorse Ride Estate Regeneration and proposed for compulsory acquisition is identified edged red on the plan at Appendix 1. There are 178 properties on the Phase 2 + estate that will need to be vacated. As at 3rd December 2018, 140 homes were in Council ownership, 3 were owned by a third party housing association and 35 were owned privately.

In order to ensure scheme viability and delivery, the development start and completion of each phase has to occur within a defined timeline and in accordance with the identified phasing plan. The land assembly exercise is also dependent on residents relocating from their existing properties to suitable alternative properties on or off site in line with the phasing plan timelines. Delays in achieving vacant possession to kick start development of Phase 2A by Summer 2020 and subsequent relevant phases thereafter could negatively impact the deliverability of the scheme. Where the acquisition by agreement is not forthcoming, the use of CPO will be critical in achieving vacant possession as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The programme for the decanting and rehousing of affected residents is well underway in accordance with the phasing plan. Council Officers have conducted interviews with the majority of Council tenants who have been invited to register their rehousing preferences, including whether they wish to return to the newly built estate or wish to move off site. Similarly individual meetings have also been held with homeowners to discuss their circumstances and offer information and advice on rehousing options.

In accordance with their wishes, to date 6 tenants have been rehoused in permanent replacement accommodation off site within the borough and statutory compensation has been paid.

Homeowners have been given the option of selling back to the Council and moving either off site or moving to a new home at a later date on the rebuilt estate, including through an equity share scheme where financial support is required.

Over the last 6 months, the Council has made offers to acquire privately owned freehold properties on the same basis as if a CPO was in force. This includes paying the market value for properties plus 10% statutory home loss payment (7.5% for non-resident homeowners) and meeting disturbance costs. This negotiated route has led to the purchase of 4 properties by agreement enabling homeowners (who had decided to sell early) to make their own rehousing arrangements off site. The Council has agreed terms of sale for a further 6 properties and there are ongoing negotiations with other homeowners.

Positive discussions have been held with the external Housing Association that owns 3 properties on the estate regarding plans for the re-housing of their tenants and the acquisition of these properties.

The Council remains committed to its proactive land assembly strategy. This includes continuing with its tenant rehousing programme and acquiring third party property interests voluntarily without the need to exercise the CPO. Whilst considerable progress has been made, it may not be possible to achieve full vacant possession of land within the timeframes required for development through negotiation alone. For example, if private owners do not engage with the Council or negotiations become complex and protracted, then delays to the land assembly process will pose a significant risk to the delivery of the scheme. As well as a delay in the programme, there will be a negative impact on the financial viability as well as Council reputation. A delay in the project would also result in further uncertainty and disturbance for residents. In order to give certainty to the project, the Council should proceed with the CPO process to enable possession of homes using CPO as a last resort.

CPO Process / Timetable / Costs

If approved, Council Officers (in consultation with Lead Members) acting under delegated authority will undertake work associated with the preparation and making of the CPO, following which the Order will be submitted to the Secretary of State.

The CPO process is made up of a number of stages which can take between 18 and 24 months to complete in total. Progress may depend on whether any objections are made to the CPO and the nature and scope of these objections and the form of inquiry that occurs i.e. written representations or Public Inquiry. If no objections are received then the CPO can immediately be confirmed and implemented subject to compliance with statutory requirements.

If objections are received, the Council will seek to address these. If the objections are not resolved within a reasonable timeframe, it is likely that the Secretary of State will arrange for a Public Inquiry to consider any outstanding objections before he reaches a decision on the CPO.

If confirmed by the Secretary of State, the CPO must be implemented within 3 years (this period can be extended) by serving a Notice to Treat and then a Notice of Entry on the proprietors of the relevant interests.

If authority to pursue a CPO is granted, Council Officers will commission a specialist legal firm to provide advice and take all necessary steps to bring forward CPO powers. The costs of preparing, making and implementing a CPO could vary from £20,000 to £125,000, depending on whether additional stages to the CPO process are triggered by objections that lead to the requirement for Written Representations or Public Inquiry.

Legal Powers for Use of CPO

The Council has the power in Section 226 (1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) to make a CPO on being authorised to do so by the Secretary of State, to acquire compulsorily any land in their area if they are satisfied that the acquisition will facilitate the carrying out of

development, re-development or improvement on or in relation to the land and will contribute to economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

Government guidance on the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers states that they should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest.

The regeneration of the Gorse Ride Estate provides a compelling case for the making of the CPO. The redevelopment is needed as the majority of the existing housing stock is in poor condition, outdated, poorly insulated with significant maintenance costs and liabilities arising from its non-traditional construction type. The Council's stock condition report carried out by Rand Associates in 2011 and an updated stock condition survey in 2017 both identify significant investment requirements over the next 30 years to ensure the properties meet basic Decent Homes Standard and remain well insulated.

Comprehensive regeneration of the estate will remove the unsatisfactory MOHLG homes and will replace these homes with new, high quality homes that will be built to Secured by Design Principles and include Lifetime Homes Standards which will help to create a thriving balanced and sustainable community. The regenerated estate will naturally connect with the surrounding area.

The third party property interests are spread right across the estate and not confined to particular areas. Therefore, it will not be possible for comprehensive regeneration to happen without acquiring these interests. It cannot be guaranteed that voluntary acquisition by agreement will succeed in all cases and therefore without the use of CPO, the scheme may be undeliverable.

Land Proposed for Compulsory Acquisition

Appendix 1 shows the proposed CPO boundary and the affected areas. A list of third party land interests to be acquired is also included in Appendix 1 and will be confirmed following the land referencing exercise.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£25,000	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£100,000	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Capital

<p>Other Financial Information</p> <p>The Council will be required to cover all costs associated with the preparation, making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO. These costs include the purchase price or any compensation for any land or interest the Council has to acquire either pursuant to the CPO or in consequence of blight notices and legal, surveying and other professional costs. The budget for the acquisition of residential interests on the Gorse Ride estate has previously been approved by the Executive on 16 May 2018. It is anticipated that these and CPO costs will be met from within this agreed budget.</p>
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<p>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</p> <p>Consultation documents and minutes of all Steering Group meetings can be accessed via the link below. http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/housing-and-tenants/tenant-services/gorse-ride-estate-regeneration/</p>

<p>Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps</p> <p>If this report is agreed, work associated with the preparation and making of the CPO will be undertaken, following which the Order will be submitted to the Secretary of State. The CPO process (which is made up of a number of stages) is likely to take between 18 to 24 months to complete.</p>

<p>Timeline for Review and Evaluation</p> <p>Review and evaluation will take place on a monthly basis by the Project Board.</p>
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<p>List of Background Papers</p> <p>Gorse Ride Executive report 16 May 2018 Background project documents: http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/housing-and-tenants/tenant-services/gorse-ride-estate-regeneration/</p>
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<p>Contact Zareena Ahmed-Shere</p>	<p>Service Place Commissioning</p>
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APPENDIX 1 - Land Proposed for Compulsory Acquisition

Phase 2A

- 3 Firs Close
- 14 Firs Close
- 17 Firs Close
- 18 Firs Close
- 23 Firs Close
- 29 Firs Close
- Electric Substation Firs Close
- 2 Dart Close
- 6 Dart Close
- 9 Dart Close
- 10 Dart Close
- 11 Dart Close
- 18 Dart Close
- 19 Dart Close
- 22 Dart Close
- Electric substation Dart Close
- Gas Governor Whittle Close

Phase 2B

- 9 Billing Avenue
- Land adjoining 9 Billing Avenue
- 10 Billing Avenue
- 11 Billing Ave
- 15 Billing Avenue
- 5 Orbit Close
- 6 Orbit Close
- 9 Orbit Close
- 11 Orbit Close
- 14 Orbit Close
- 15 Orbit Close
- 23 Orbit Close
- Electric Substation Orbit Close
- 18 Whittle Close
- Electric substation Dart Close
- Parcel of unregistered land

Phase 2C

- 5 Billing Ave
 - 8 Billing Ave
 - 22 Gorse Ride South
 - 24 Gorse Ride South
 - 26 Gorse Ride South
 - 30 Gorse Ride South
 - 4 Whittle Close
- Electric Substation Whittle Close

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DECISION RECORD SHEETS
FOR
DECISIONS MADE AT THE
EXECUTIVE MEETING
HELD ON
THURSDAY, 31 JANUARY 2019

DECISION SHEET

ACTION BY

81. Officer Response to Grounds Maintenance Scrutiny Review

Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby

DECISION

That:

- 1) the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee into the Grounds Maintenance Contract as set out in Attachment 1 to the report be noted;
- 2) the Officers' respective responses to each recommendation, as set out in the Background section of the report, be supported.

Reason for Decision

The Executive has a duty to consider reports from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

None

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

DECISION SHEET

ACTION BY

82. Revenue Monitoring Report 2018/19 - End of December 2018

Director of Corporate Services -
Graham Ebers

DECISION

That:

- 1) the quarter three 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 estimated general fund budget carry forwards of £575k identified at this stage be noted;
- 3) the updates on adult social services' and children services' action plans be noted;
- 4) a supplementary estimate of £100k in 18/19 for "Optalis IT business case feasibility study" be approved;
- 5) a supplementary estimate of £200k in 18/19 for "HRA void costs" be approved.

Reason for Decision

The Executive had previously agreed to consider revenue monitoring reports on a quarterly basis

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

None

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

DECISION SHEET**ACTION BY****83. Capital Monitoring 2018/19 - End of December 2018**Director of Corporate Services -
Graham Ebers**DECISION**

That:

- 1) the quarter three position for the Capital budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- 2) the new budget adjustments in the Capital Programme for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix B to the report, including the additional £1,177,000 grant received from the Department of Transport for Highways Maintenance, be noted and approved;
- 3) the new budget virements in the Capital Programme which constitutes a change of use, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be noted and approved.

Reason for Decision

The Executive previously agreed to consider capital monitoring reports on a quarterly basis

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

None

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

DECISION SHEET

ACTION BY

84. Shareholders' Report

Director of Corporate Services -
Graham Ebers

DECISION

That:

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the month ending 30 November 2018 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 31 December 2018 be noted.

Reason for Decision

The Executive agreed to review the work of the Council Owned Companies on a regular basis

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

None

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member

Councillors Julian McGhee-Sumner, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro and Anthony Pollock declared personal interests in this item

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

DECISION SHEET

ACTION BY

85. Delivering the Gorse Ride Regeneration Project - Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Director of Corporate Services -
Graham Ebers

DECISION

That:

- 1) the considerable progress already underway to support the rehousing of tenants and homeowners on the Gorse Ride estate be noted;
- 2) the in principle use of a CPO to acquire all property interests (the extent of which is shown indicatively edged red on the plan in Appendix 1) required to deliver the Gorse Ride Regeneration Project be authorised;
- 3) Council Officers continue to negotiate the acquisition by agreement of all third party interests in the land in advance of confirmation of a CPO;
- 4) the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Members with responsibility for Housing and Finance, be authorised to take all necessary steps required for the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO, including securing the appointment of an external specialist CPO adviser to prepare all necessary documents required to support this process, including statements of reasons and requisite statutory notices;
- 5) the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Members with responsibility for Housing and Finance, be authorised to make General Vesting Declarations (GVDs) under the Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981 and / or serve notice to treat and notices of entry (if required) following confirmation of the CPO.

Reason for Decision

To progress the regeneration of the Gorse Ride estate

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

None

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None