



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 15 September 2021

Note: Although members of the public are entitled to attend the meeting in person, space is very limited due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. You can however participate in this meeting virtually, in line with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/weA62HfLRvc>

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

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, 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.

To: The Members of Wokingham Borough Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
35.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence	
36.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 July 2021.	17 - 42
37.		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	
38.		MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive any announcements by the Mayor	
39.		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 Council Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
39.1	None Specific	Helen Palmer has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question: Question Please will Wokingham Council declare its support for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. Drafted by scientists, legal experts, ecological economists and environmentalists, the CEE Bill is designed specifically to reverse the climate and ecological breakdown we are facing. The Bill requires the UK to take responsibility for its fair share of greenhouse gas emissions, to actively restore biodiverse habitats, and to stop damaging our natural world through the production, transportation and	

disposal of the goods we consume. In this Bill, the nature emergency is tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis via an urgent, joined up, whole of government approach.

Due for its second reading next month, the Bill now has support of 115 MPs across 8 political parties and 103 Councils. Will Wokingham Borough become the 104th Council to support the CEE Bill?

39.2 None Specific

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

Question

Will the Leader of the Council please describe in precise detail the Council's declared policy, and how it duly guides its Members, on the use of private emails (rather than their official wokingham.gov.uk email addresses) when communicating to any individual, group, or media on matters connected with the Member's status as elected Councillors?

39.3 None Specific

Daniela Esposito has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Wokingham BC declared a climate emergency in 2019. Please could the Council confirm that this declaration applied to both Wokingham Borough and to the Council itself?

40.

PETITIONS

To receive any petitions which Members or members of the public wish to present.

41. None Specific

TENANTS' CHARTER - MODERNISING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - 2 YEAR ON UPDATE

[A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for Members to debate this item]

43 - 90

To receive an update report from the Involved Tenants on the progress of the Tenants' Charter and the achievements of the Involved Tenants Partnership working over the past year.

RECOMMENDATION That as requested by the Involved Tenants, Council:

- 1) consider the aspirations outlined in the Tenants Charter and continue to work in

partnership with the Involved Tenants to achieve these;

- 2) support the Involved Tenants as they begin to look at updating the full Tenants Charter to better suit the current projects, aims and aspirations of the partnership. The Involved Tenants are requesting this as so much has changed in the past year due to the pandemic and they would like to reflect this in areas that are overachieving and those that require further support.

42. Barkham

PROPOSED SOLAR FARM - BARKHAM

91 - 102

[A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for Members to debate this item]

To consider a recommendation from the Executive in relation to the commencement of a solar farm in Barkham.

RECOMMENDATION That, subject to securing the necessary planning consents, Executive asks Council to:

- 1) recommend the capital expenditure of the £20,283,000 funded from borrowing as previously set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- 2) approve delegation of decisions around the final extent and configuration of the Solar Farm to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Finance Officer) in conjunction with the Lead Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions where scheme amendments will not result in the average annual net income after capital financing costs falling below £200k;
- 3) note the estimated net income (after running costs and capital financing costs) of £12.0m over 25 years (equal to £480k per year on average) will be introduced into the Councils annual budget using an equalisation reserve;
- 4) approve commencement of the Solar Farm at Barkham.

43. None Specific

TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2020-21

103 - 112

[A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for Members to debate this item]

To consider the Treasury Management Outturn report for the 2020-21 financial year as recommended by the Audit Committee.

RECOMMENDATION That Council is asked to note:

- 1) the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2020-21 which was agreed at Audit Committee on 15th September 2021;
- 2) that all approved indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy have been adhered to;
- 3) the contents of "Table A", as set out in the report, which shows the net benefit per council tax band D equivalent, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £10.22 per band D for 2020/21. This credit provides income to the Council to invest in its priority services. This net benefit has increased from the £7.20 benefit estimated in the treasury mid-year report;
- 4) that the total external general fund debt is £458m, which reduces to £121m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness);
- 5) that although the Council is taking the opportunity of new borrowing at low interest rates in 2020/21, external debt is expected to reduce to c£350m by March 2022 as a result of repayment of legacy debt on maturity;
- 6) the Council's realisable asset value of approximately £400m, of which its commercial assets are estimated at approximately £240m.

44.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions

A period of 30 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

44.1 None Specific Rachel Bishop-Firth has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Parents of school aged children were pleased to see the law change on school uniform in April when the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act passed. The new law recognises that leaving school uniform decisions solely to governing bodies did not always work in the best interests of less well-off families, who were often left struggling to pay for school uniforms and basic equipment.

We know that this is a real problem for lower income families in Wokingham. Councillors are hearing about some very high basic uniform costs, and in addition to these, schools have IT requirements. State schools can require children to have, for example, an ipad brand tablet and this is happening in Wokingham.

The Department for Education will now be publishing guidance about the costs aspects of school uniform policies. Will the Council commit to taking the proactive stance that other Councils have done to support all state schools in the Borough in adopting policies which mean that uniform and other education costs are kept truly affordable for all families?

44.2 None Specific Norman Jorgensen has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Could you provide an update on plans to put in place local deliberative processes that will bring our residents into the conversation on how we tackle climate change?

44.3 None Specific Jackie Rance has asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question:

Question

I was really pleased that the Planning Committee passed the application for Shinfield Studios in July. Could you tell me what conversations the Council is having with the Studios to ensure that there are local employment and skills development opportunities?

- 44.4 None Specific Sam Akhtar has asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question:
- Question**
The pandemic has hit hard for many people, not least in the area of jobs. Can you tell me what plans the Council has to support those who are out of work and to bring new jobs into Wokingham Borough?
- 44.5 None Specific Anne Chadwick has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:
- Question**
What is the Council doing to close the gap in the Climate Emergency Action Plan?
- 44.6 None Specific Michael Firmager has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:
- Question**
A solar farm might be grabbing the headlines, but the Council has numerous other assets at its disposal to install energy generating measures on, car parks, schools, offices, social housing, leisure centres. What has been done to utilise these assets in tackling climate change?
- 44.7 None Specific Imogen Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:
- Question**
I understand that Wokingham Borough Council organises 'Public Funerals', but I am unclear on exactly what that means.
- Please can you explain to me what the process or what happens to someone's remains when someone dies without any family members to organise a funeral for them?
- 44.8 None Specific Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:
- Question**
When will the examination in public for the local plan; if that is not yet available when will the local plan come to the Borough Council for approval?

44.9 None Specific

Jim Frewin has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

As a parent I remember the stress of going back to school after summer holidays. I believe Covid will have increased this stress. For those who have children with special educational needs, the stress is even more significant given the planning and preparation required to ensure the children are emotionally prepared for the back to school. As a Council we gave some parents less than 48 hours' notice of the detail of their school transport changes. Some parents were having to chase the day before to get details.

A number of residents have raised their concerns and distress about these very late changes. I tried to contact the relevant Executive members and Senior Officers. I am still waiting for some to respond. I thank those who did.

I understand this process is split across Service areas and Executive members. My question is what happened in this year's Special Education Needs school transport process to cause so much upset and distress to these children and their families?

44.10 Barkham

Carl Doran has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

The Barkham Farms solar farm received planning permission earlier this month.

As a member of the Planning Committee, I spoke in favour of the application and was pleased to vote for it.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan, which he will know I have long derided as ineffective, inaccurate and unacceptable, states that target RE12.1 for this specific solar farm project is 7,900 tons of carbon saved per year. That's 197,500 tons of carbon over 25 years.

However, it was stated in the planning application that this solar farm would realise a carbon saving of 92,000 tons over 25 years. That's over 100,000 tons less than the planned target.

Why have you missed this target by more than half?

44.11 South Lake

Laura Blumenthal has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Residents in my ward are concerned about speeding on Woodlands Avenue. The Council said it would look into installing a VAS sign. Please can you let me know how progress on this is going?

45.

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS

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

46.

STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

To receive any statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members, and Deputy Executive Members.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.23 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 20 minutes, and no Member shall speak for more than 5 minutes

47.

STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES

To receive any statements from Directors of Council Owned Companies.

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

48.

MOTIONS

To consider any motions

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

48.1 None Specific

Motion 462 submitted by Shirley Boyt

This Council aspires to a 70% recycling rate by 2030 and resolves to make it easier for every resident to recycle at every opportunity whether at home or on the move:

1. by replacing all litter bins in the Borough with dual litter and recycling bins commencing with those in local town centres, shopping parades and parks.
2. to provide dual litter and recycling bins on popular walking routes to schools in places not covered in 1 above.

48.2 None Specific

Motion 463 submitted by Gregor Murray

Building on our commitment to planting 250,000 new trees, this Council commits to achieving 'Tree Cities of the World' status for our Borough as part of the creation of a Borough wide Tree Strategy.

This will be done by:

- 1) Maintaining clear responsibility within the Council for the care of trees across our Borough.
- 2) Agreeing a policy for the care and management of our forests and trees across the Borough. This must include standards for tree care, where and when they apply and penalties for non-compliance.
- 3) Working with external partners to create and maintain an inventory of the local tree resource so that effective long-term planning for planting, care and removal can be established.
- 4) Setting aside an annual budget for the implementation of the tree management strategy and management plan.
- 5) Holding an annual celebration of our Borough's trees and acknowledge the residents schools, charities and Council staff that contribute to our city tree programme.
- 6) Creating a 'Garden Forest' program to allow residents the opportunity to plant some of our 250,000 new tree commitment in their own gardens.
- 7) Developing a continuous education process aimed at informing residents of the importance of trees, tree planting and tree protection and how best to care for the trees in their own gardens and communities.
- 8) Committing to planting a Covid19 memorial wood

within the Borough, of native trees, as a long-lasting memorial to those who have lost their lives during the 2020-21 Pandemic.

Once the above conditions are met an application for Tree Cities of the World status should be made as soon as possible.

Further information on the Tree Cities of the World status and benefits can be found at

www.treecitiesoftheworld.org

48.3 None Specific

Motion 464 submitted by Chris Bowring

This Council notes that Slough Borough Council has issued a Section 114 notice, meaning that it does not have enough money to meet its spending plans for the year. As such, Slough cannot commit to any new spending, and can only pay for its statutory services.

This Council further notes that Wokingham Borough Council is operating from a healthy financial position, with a prudent level of reserves for extraordinary situations and sensible investments made to generate an income for services.

This Council calls on the Executive to maintain its policies of keeping the Council's balances at adequate levels to fund services and make debt repayments and making investments in our communities that will provide funding for Council services.

Furthermore, this Council commits to ensuring that it is regularly publicising the state of the Council's finances to local residents, to provide reassurance that Council Taxpayers' money is safe in the Council's hands.

48.4 None Specific

Motion 465 submitted by Ian Shenton

This Council formally declares an ecological emergency and will:

1. Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies are maximised.
2. Add ecological implications alongside those for climate in committee and Council reports.

3. Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing guidance through a biodiversity supplementary planning document.
4. Strive to enable the development of a 20% mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for Wokingham through the new local plan.
5. Create a Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.
6. Re-establish the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum to allow the Council to collaborate effectively with partners and the wider community.
7. Where possible, embed ecological initiatives within all Council work areas, including Covid-19 recovery projects and programmes.
8. Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration.
9. Work with local, county, regional and national partners to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Wokingham Borough ensuring robust connectivity between them.
10. Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing the use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
11. Provide advice for local communities and businesses on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.
12. Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.
13. Working collaboratively with the Berkshire Local

Nature Partnership, Wokingham Biodiversity Forum, a cross party working group and other stakeholders, produce a local nature recovery strategy and associated action plan with an annual progress report to full Council.

48.5 None Specific

Motion 466 submitted by Clive Jones

There needs to be a fundamental change in how we generate and consume energy in all aspects of our lives. Both electricity generation and distribution are undergoing rapid evolution, in both shape and scale. The distribution grid, must now cope with power flows in both directions. In scale, electrification of heat and transport will require a quadrupling of electricity capacity. Local, community-based energy schemes can make a significant contribution to addressing both issues and encourage a sense of local empowerment to tackle climate change.

Community schemes encourage local generation and storage to match local demand thus relieving pressure on the grid. Local schemes would be given new impetus and be able to contribute more renewable energy if local people could buy their electricity directly from local suppliers. But the disproportionate cost of meeting regulatory approvals makes it impossible to be a local energy supplier at a local scale and so, under the current system, this local energy gets sold back to the central grid.

The Local Electricity Bill is a private members' bill with cross-party support that was introduced unopposed in June 2020. If this Bill was passed in Parliament it would give the energy regulator, OFGEM, a duty to create a Right to Local Supply. This would enable local community energy groups to achieve their vision of supplying generated energy back to the local area, help us as a Council to meet our carbon reduction aspirations for the Borough, and also bring multiple benefits to the local community. It is supported by many stakeholders, local authorities, and town Councils and currently has the backing of 208 MPs.

Council Agrees to:

1. Resolve to support the Bill.
2. Authorise the Leader to contact our MPs to discuss their support for the Bill and how they can enable its passage into law.

3. Authorise the Chief Executive to write to the Minister of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, supporting the aims of the Bill and asking for these aims to be taken into account in the forthcoming Energy White Paper.

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