

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2021 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.33 PM**

**Members Present**

Councillors: Keith Baker (Mayor), Abdul Loyes (Deputy Mayor), Sam Akhtar, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Prue Bray, Jenny Cheng, Rachel Burgess, Stephen Conway, Phil Cunningham, Peter Dennis, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, John Halsall, Maria Gee, Guy Grandison, David Hare, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Graham Howe, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Sarah Kerr, Morag Malvern, Charles Margetts, Rebecca Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Barrie Patman, Jackie Rance, Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant, Ian Shenton, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Caroline Smith, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Alison Swaddle and Shahid Younis

**In attendance:** Anne Chadwick, Gary Cowan, Jim Frewin and Simon Weeks

**38. PROCEDURE FOR COUNCIL MEETING**

The Mayor explained the procedure for the Council meeting. In order to keep Members and Officers safe there were limited numbers seated in the Council Chamber. Additional Members were seated in a second meeting room. Those Members were visible on screen and could hear and take part in the discussion in the Council Chamber. When votes were taken, those Members came into the Council Chamber one at a time and stated how they wished to vote on a particular item. Members not attending in person had been invited to join the meeting on Microsoft Teams. These Members could take part in discussions but were not able to propose, second or vote on any items.

**39. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Tahir Maher and Bill Soane.

**40. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the final sentence of Minute 29 (Climate Emergency Action Plan Second Annual Report) being amended to read:

“Paul Fishwick stated that he felt that the Action Plan continued to encourage more car use and instead it needed to include more improvements for walking and cycling”.

**41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members declared a general personal interest relating to items on the Agenda:

Councillor John Halsall declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis and WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Stuart Munro declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Shahid Younis declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes.

Councillor Wayne Smith declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes.

## **42. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that he and the Deputy Mayor had attended 30 events so far in the Municipal Year, an indication that community events were picking up post pandemic. He had also met with the four Group Leaders to discuss the operation of Council meetings. The Mayor's suggestions for improvement would be submitted to the Constitution Review Working Group in due course.

The Mayor also reminded Members of the upcoming Mayor's Ball to be held at Sindlesham Court on Saturday, 19 March 2022. Members were encouraged to attend the event and to consider providing raffle prizes.

## **43. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### **43.1 Helen Palmer asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following 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?

### **Answer**

The Council recognises that there is an intrinsic link between climate change and ecology and through its Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Council has already set up targets that will help to protect and support biodiversity in our Borough.

The Council has already established a strong track record for delivery on actions to address climate change, and is currently strengthening the existing strategies, policies and actions plans to deal with the effects of climate change.

The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Wokingham introduces natural climate solutions to combat land degradation and actions for improving the environmental quality, attractiveness and recreational potential of public spaces, rivers and waterways. Additionally, the CEAP establishes actions to improve grassland management, encourage wildflowers, hedge planting zones and the commitment for a major tree-planting exercise.

It is important to highlight that there are two pieces of legislation that will support addressing the climate crisis. The Agriculture Act 2020 provides range of powers to implement new approaches to farm payments and land management. In England, farmers will be paid to produce 'public goods' such as environmental or animal welfare improvements.

The Environment Bill, which is currently at the 3<sup>rd</sup> reading stages on the House of Lords, brings about urgent and meaningful action to combat the environmental and climate crises we are facing and acts as a key vehicle for delivering the bold vision set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. It will support the country's desire to build back better after Covid-19 with measures that support both economic growth and the Government's manifesto.

To support the Council efforts to address climate change and its effects, more support and guidance is needed from Central Government, as the Council's own statutory powers and responsibilities are limited in terms of what we are able to do in achieving net zero carbon. For this reason, we will await the vote on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill with interest and review the potential implications on the function of local government, our residents and our resources.

### **Supplementary Question**

Do you accept that Wokingham is part of the bigger picture and that the collapse of the ecosystem, which is imminent, will affect the whole world. I accept that you are doing local things and that is great, but I don't think that what the Government is doing is anywhere near strong enough. I see no harm in supporting this much stronger Bill. Do you agree?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am not in a position to comment on Government policy. All I can do is talk about what we are doing here in Wokingham, where I have already laid out that we are taking action to improve biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint and address climate change within our Borough. We will focus on biodiversity. We will improve biodiversity net gain across our Borough. We will do it using the mechanisms available to us.

### **43.2 Philip Meadowcroft asked the Leader of the Council the following 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?

### **Answer**

The Information Security and Acceptable Use of ICT Policy (which is an internal Council policy for employees not for Members) sets out the standards expected regarding the use of ICT which includes email use.

An extract from the Policy states:

*“Emails sent when conducting Council business become part of the Council’s corporate record, even if sent from private business or personal email accounts. Council email accounts must not be used to conduct personal business or to run a private business.”*

All new staff (and existing staff at least every 2 years) are required to sign the Acceptable Use Policy.

Councillors may use private or other email addresses when conducting Council business. For example, Councillors are contacted by residents at non-Wokingham.gov.uk addresses, and, for example particularly, where Councillors are also Town or Parish Councillors.

However, as stated earlier, such correspondence, if it pertains to the Borough Council, forms part of the Council’s corporate record.

Your question also gives me the opportunity to apologise for the arrangements tonight, to you and all our Members and residents. The Opposition insisted that everyone from their Group who wishes to vote can vote and our Public Health advice insists that we cannot have more in the Chamber than we have.

I believe that votes from a politically balanced Chamber was more appropriate and worked well last month. It is regrettable that every vote will be a named vote, as the Mayor has stated. Consequently, it is unlikely that we will progress with much of the Agenda. That is a shame.

### **Supplementary Question**

When a Member is elected, they are given a Wokingham.gov.uk email address. To my simple mind, that is all a Member needs to communicate on any matter in which the Council is involved. But it appears that the Constitution does not provide a policy framework to guide Members’ use of their private email address when communicating as Members.

My enquiries indicate that there is some sort of convention that private email addresses are used during election periods instead of official Council email addresses. It strikes me that it would be helpful to all Members that the Constitution should prescribe clear rules on the use of private emails by Members. Two examples of the current confusion are illustrated by the fact that you and Councillor Howe and his predecessor, Councillor Pitts, have always signed off your District Councillors column in the Wargrave News with your private email addresses but, since last December, you have used your official Wokingham.gov.uk addresses. A second example is the use by some Members of the word Councillor in their private email addresses.

I understand that Whitehall guidance says that Ministers should use Whitehall email addresses and, if they do not, should ensure that they copy private emails and other communications concerning official business to their department’s computers, so that a full record is preserved.

Would this Westminster guidance on private email use be a good starting position for WBC to create a suitable set of rules and will you, Councillor Halsall, give it your enthusiastic backing?

### **Supplementary Answer**

The answer is no. It is not a policy that can be addressed on the hoof like this. It is

something that we will have to reply to in a written answer.

**43.3 Daniela Esposito asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following 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?

**Answer**

The short answer is yes. The Climate Emergency declaration applies to both Wokingham Borough Council and to the Borough. The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) sets targets to decarbonise the Council's operations as well as to support our residents, businesses and other stakeholders to transition to a low carbon economy within our scope of influence.

Over the last year, the Council has progressed in significant areas to deliver carbon reductions across the Borough. For example, the Dinton Activity Centre has been redesigned with eco-friendly features that make the building net zero carbon. The Council is working with the schools to improve the energy performance of their buildings through a retrofitting program and to identify opportunities to introduce renewable energy generation schemes.

The planning application for a new solar farm in Barkham has now been approved. The scheme is expected to generate enough energy to power over 7,000 homes. The Local Plan is currently being updated and includes policies that will help make new buildings across the Borough more sustainable.

Within the Council, we are working on reducing our carbon footprint by improving the energy performance of buildings, installing electric vehicle charging points, promoting home working, reviewing our policies, promoting changes in behaviour and finding innovative ways to support our community.

**Supplementary Question**

Would you consider the declaration as two declarations for clarity and monitoring of progress on each – the Council and the Borough more widely?

**Supplementary Answer**

Being completely honest with you, it is not something that I have ever considered. We have always wrapped the two things together – the Climate Emergency Action Plan is for Wokingham Borough Council, the Borough and its residents. I can see no reason why we would split it out and no reason why we wouldn't split it out. For reporting purposes going forwards, I will consult with the officers and see if it is possible.

**43.4 Andy Croy asked the Executive Members for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

My question is about the changes in numbers relating to the Barkham and other solar farms.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan of July 2020 included four proposed solar farms, at an estimated combined cost of £18 million. It showed estimated carbon savings by the four farms as 5,112t of carbon each but with a total of 25,560t carbon saved.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan of July 2021 still included four solar farms but the Barkham Farm by itself was now shown as costing £21 million. The cost of the remaining three farms was shown as to be confirmed. The Plan showed 7,970k carbon saved by Barkham and in addition showed the 3 un-costed farms still saving 5,112t carbon each. In effect, the Plan showed over 15,000t carbon saved but for no cost.

To summarise, the cost of the Barkham solar farm is more than four times the original estimate while the current Climate Emergency Action Plan includes carbon savings estimates for 3 farms for which there are no costs attached.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a living document. Given the extraordinarily inaccurate estimates as to costs of solar farms and totally misleading accounting for carbon savings, how can residents trust the plan?

### **Answer**

The Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the associated Action Plan established a series of commitments to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030.

As it is clearly stated in the 2020 report "*The action plan is a predictive tool that allows us to understand generally, where we are heading and to implement new actions accordingly. Without this tool, we would not have a clear path on what the scale of the approach should be*". The broad targets set within the Climate Emergency Action Plan allow us to understand the level of commitment that is required. However, as was made clear in the plan, these targets and financial implications are best estimates based on the information we had at the time.

The £18m recorded in the report published in July 2020 is the committed funding to initiate these projects, which as we already mentioned, will be informed as we progress with the delivery of each project. Solar farms, as any other infrastructure project, are subject to location, site specific and capacity requirements. All these factors will affect the cost of the project and are only known until proper feasibility assessments are completed. Therefore, the real cost and carbon savings for each solar farm can only be confirmed once the necessary studies are finished.

The solar farm at Barkham will be funded through prudential borrowing. As the detail of the Barkham project has evolved, the financial appraisal has been developed using expert advice on costs and performance. Importantly, after taking into account the delivery, running and capital financing costs of the project, the appraisal is still forecasting a healthy return to the Council over the lifetime of the installation.

It is envisaged that the other solar farms will be delivered on a similar basis and there is no evidence at this time to suggest that they will not demonstrate a similar return on investment to the Council when they are brought forward. The access to funding for these other solar farms therefore is not considered to be a barrier to delivery and residents may therefore be assured that the delivery of the solar farms remains a significant commitment by the Council as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

### **Supplementary Question**

I appreciate that there is a lot of detail in the plan to keep track of and it is difficult to keep your eye on all the parts. But this is at least an £8m gap which, to my knowledge, has not

been publicly discussed to date.

I am sure that you and every Councillor will be dismayed at the magnitude of this problem. I do not know if this is a transparency issue, a lack of attention to details or what it is. In the light of this issue, do you think that you have the commitment to transparency, attention to detail or the competence to properly discharge the delegated authority requested for you in relation to the Barkham Farm project?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I think that the solar farm in Barkham stands up as an economic investment. With the fuel prices as they are at the moment, we have put in conservative estimates which show that, even after paying down the loan and the interest on the loan, building the solar farm will generate approximately £400k per annum of profit for the Council that we can invest in other Climate Emergency initiatives and other initiatives that our residents want.

With the energy prices the way they are at the moment, the conservative estimate is only going upwards. So, we will be making an even greater return on that investment. I was told yesterday that the equipment cost factored into the budget for this project still holds true. So we will be providing it at the same cost and making more back as a result. I think that it is a great investment and, if it was my money, I would still do it.

### **44. PETITIONS**

The following Member presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out against the petition.

John Halsall	John Halsall presented a petition on behalf of residents of Wargrave asking for consideration to be given to the potential merger of Robert Piggott Infant and Junior schools on one site in Wargrave.  <b>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Children's Services.</b>
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### **45. TENANTS' CHARTER - MODERNISING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - 2 YEAR ON UPDATE**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 43 to 90, which provided an update on progress during the year on the aspirations in the Tenants' Charter. The report was developed by the Involved Tenants and had been approved by the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel.

The report stated that the WBC Council Tenants Charter included ten key priorities. The report outlined achievements against each priority and set out the future aspirations of the Involved Tenants.

Members welcomed the report and highlighted the positive working relationship between the Council and the Involved Tenants Partnership.

Steve Bowers, Chairman of the Tenant Landlord Improvement Panel, welcomed the positive working relationship between the Council and the tenant groups and noted the progress made over the past year despite the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was moved by John Kaiser and seconded by John Halsall that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

**RESOLVED** That the Council:

- 1) endorses the aspirations outlined in the Tenants' Charter and commits to continue to work in partnership to achieve these;
- 2) supports the Involved Tenants as they begin to look at updating the full Tenants Charter to better suit 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).

#### **46. PROPOSED SOLAR FARM - BARKHAM**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 91 to 102, which sought approval for the development of a solar farm on Council-owned land at Barkham.

The report stated that the proposed solar farm would produce enough energy to offset the Council's total carbon emissions. It would also generate a return on investment in excess of 5% which would provide funds for investment in other priorities in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The decision was referred to full Council due to the value of the investment required. It was felt that the development of the solar farm would be a significant statement of intent in the Council's move towards "net zero".

It was proposed by Gregor Murray and seconded by Laura Blumenthal that the recommendations in the report be approved.

It was moved by Sarah Kerr and seconded by Imogen Shepherd-Dubey that Recommendation 4 in the report be amended as follows:

"4) approve commencement of the Solar farm at Barkham subject to the full business case, and Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 being recommended for approval by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee first."

Sarah Kerr stated that the principle of generating renewable energy was accepted. However, the proposals in the report were not supported by a robust business case with transparent financial information.

Gregor Murray stated that the proposed amendment was not acceptable.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost. The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Keith Baker

Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Phil Cunnington	
Peter Dennis	Michael Firmager	
Carl Doran	John Halsall	
Lindsay Ferris	Pauline Helliard-Symons	
Paul Fishwick	Graham Howe	
Maria Gee	Pauline Jorgensen	
David Hare	Norman Jorgensen	
Clive Jones	John Kaiser	
Sarah Kerr	Abdul Loyes	
Morag Malvern	Charles Margetts	
Adrian Mather	Rebecca Margetts	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Stuart Munro	
Ian Shenton	Gregor Murray	
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	Barrie Patman	
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	Jackie Rance	
Caroline Smith	Angus Ross	
	Daniel Sargeant	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Shahid Younis	

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations in the report were approved. The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Rachel Burgess	Rachel Bishop-Firth
Laura Blumenthal	Carl Doran	Prue Bray
Chris Bowring		Stephen Conway
Phil Cunnington		Peter Dennis
Michael Firmager		Lindsay Ferris
John Halsall		Paul Fishwick
Pauline Helliard-Symons		Maria Gee
Graham Howe		David Hare
Pauline Jorgensen		Clive Jones
Norman Jorgensen		Sarah Kerr
John Kaiser		Morag Malvern
Abdul Loyes		Adrian Mather
Charles Margetts		Andrew Mickleburgh
Rebecca Margetts		Ian Shenton
Stuart Munro		Imogen Shepherd-Dubey
Gregor Murray		Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey
Barrie Patman		Caroline Smith
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Chris Smith		

Wayne Smith		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED** That, subject to securing the necessary planning consents, Council:

- 1) approve the Capital expenditure of £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 £12m over 25 years (equal to £480k per year on average) will be introduced into the Council's annual Budget using an equalisation reserve;
- 4) approve commencement of the Solar Farm at Barkham.

#### **47. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2020-21**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 103 to 111, which provided a summary of the Treasury Management operations during the 2020/21 financial year. The report was presented for monitoring and review in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management practices.

Maria Gee stated that the report contained information which should not have been included and did not contain information presented in last year's report (Appendices A and B). Consequently, Councillor Gee felt that the report should not be supported.

Rachel Burgess expressed concern that the net cost of borrowing in the outturn reports kept changing. It was felt that the figures reported to Members should be consistent over time to allow accurate comparison.

It was moved by John Kaiser and seconded by Daniel Sargeant that the recommendations in the report be approved.

The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Keith Baker
Parry Bath	Prue Bray	Shirley Boyt
Laura Blumenthal	Stephen Conway	Rachel Burgess
Chris Bowring	Peter Dennis	
Phil Cunnington	Carl Doran	
Michael Firmager	Lindsay Ferris	
Guy Grandison	Paul Fishwick	
John Halsall	Maria Gee	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	David Hare	
Graham Howe	Clive Jones	
Pauline Jorgensen	Sarah Kerr	

Norman Jorgensen	Morag Malvern	
John Kaiser	Adrian Mather	
Abdul Loyes	Andrew Mickleburgh	
Charles Margetts	Ian Shenton	
Rebecca Margetts	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Stuart Munro	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Gregor Murray	Caroline Smith	
Barrie Patman		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED** That the Council note:

- 1) the Treasury Management Outturn report 2020/21, which was agreed at the Audit Committee on 15 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.

#### **48. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

##### **48.1 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following 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?

### **Answer**

The last academic year has been incredibly challenging for children, parents, guardians and schools, including their staff. Wokingham has had some of the best performance in respect of maintaining school opening and attendance from March 2020 when schools were asked to close to most students.

We have continued to work with schools and academies throughout the pandemic on all aspects of DfE policy, providing advice, guidance and support. This has included daily communication to all school senior leaders and key stakeholders, and bespoke responses where there have been issues or concerns related to outbreaks and all problems for children.

We have worked closely with the Department for Education to inform and fully understand national policy. Yes, the Council will take a proactive stance in adopting policies and support for children in need.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am really glad that you have made that commitment to support families in need throughout the Borough. Can you commit to providing resources and giving Councillors and parents opportunities to input into the discussion about how we can keep the school uniform costs truly affordable?

### **Supplementary Answer**

There are various forums in which input can be made. I would like to point out that where we are joined at the hip with our schools is in SEND and admissions. Nine out of ten of our senior schools are academies and they determine their own rules. Over half of our 54 primary schools are academies and the same applies. So we only have direct control, as such, over the maintained schools. We will do all we can through the Schools Forum and other channels.

### **48.2 Norman Jorgensen asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following 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?

### **Answer**

The Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes report was approved by Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021. The report provides an analysis of fifteen diverse and wide-ranging community deliberative processes, information from industry experts and benchmarking against several other local authority experiences. This analysis aims to inform the deliberative process that will be undertaken to engage the community with our

Climate Emergency agenda.

Within this report, the Council made the commitment to develop a proposal for delivering these processes and to report back to the Executive in October 2021. This proposal will establish the financial implications, timelines and expected outcomes from the delivery of the process.

Once budget is approved by the Executive, our aim is to start running these processes via an independent facilitation partner in early 2022. We hope that the ideas, suggestions and recommendations generated by the participants in these processes will help to improve our Climate Emergency Action Plan, close the gap to Net Zero and endorse the work already undertaken.

The Climate Emergency is an urgent problem that needs to be tackled in a time sensitive manner. Engaging and empowering residents and stakeholders to be part of the solution is a key stage of the way forward. Engagement with residents and stakeholders will continue to be an ongoing process and priority in the climate emergency agenda as set out in the action plan which is a living document and constantly evolving.

### **Supplementary Question**

What process will be used to agree the actions and recommendations arising from these local deliberative processes and how will they be included in the Council's Action Plan going forwards?

### **Supplementary Answer**

The process that we have been discussing is that the results and recommendations from each of the local deliberative processes will be brought to Council. All Members will vote on whether or not Officers should move to budget them and carbon budget them, i.e. to go away and do the analysis, understand what the impact is likely to be on our carbon footprint and what the impact is likely to be on our finances. At this point recommendations will come back to Council to be approved by a vote of all Members as to whether those actions should be adopted and included in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, whether they should be delayed for a later date or whether they should be rejected based on the recommendations of the officers.

I want to be completely clear here. I want to make sure that all the recommendations are put into the public domain to be openly discussed. I want us to be able to agree going forwards which actions we are going to take and include in the best interests of our community and which ones we will be passing on and why.

### **48.3 Jackie Rance asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following 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?

### **Answer**

I agree that the planning permission granted for the studios in July is an exciting step in establishing Wokingham Borough as a prime location for the dynamic and growing film and television sector with the prospect of significant further investment to come. As I'm sure you are aware given your question, what is particularly exciting about the sector is the

huge range of potential professions and trades that feature in the supply chain that offers significant scope to connect residents to employment and skills development opportunities. It is also anticipated that this will be a long-term feature of the local economy and a major stimulus of economic growth so that the creation of opportunities for local people could be sustained for many years.

In this context the Council is in current discussions with the Studios, the University and Resource Productions to develop a model for maximising access to employment and skills opportunities for local people. Work has started on the concept of developing a 'Cine-Link' hub to facilitate productive relationships between Cine Valley companies, the University, the Council and a variety of stakeholders in the local community. The Cine-Link hub would aim to remove barriers to entry to film and television industry jobs, diversify the workforce and respond to the demand for talent which, I have heard, could be in the 1,000s, will enable the development of a unique talent pipeline that can respond quickly to the incoming production companies utilising the studio space – noting that there isn't a single end user but a number of production companies who will book chunks of studio time according to their needs.

This proposal is for a pilot partnership project led by Resource Productions, in conjunction with the University of Reading and Wokingham Borough Council. The project aims to trial approaches for raising career aspirations, delivering skills and training opportunities for Wokingham Borough residents, and assisting participants to get a foot on the ladder of film and television careers. The pilot will run from October this year to June 2022 with the aim of equipping residents with knowledge, skills and contacts to access work in film and television.

**48.4 Sam Akhtar asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following 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?

**Answer**

As you rightly point out the pandemic has created multiple challenges including for businesses, the wider economy and employment. The Council has already tried to mitigate this impact where possible through providing business rates relief and grants to enable businesses to survive and in the process protect the jobs of their employees. I am particularly pleased that this Council, unlike some, has managed to disburse all the available grant funding directly to businesses, especially those hit hardest by the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

Nevertheless, we know that the claimant count in the Borough has increased significantly, albeit from very low numbers prior to the pandemic, and the Executive has approved in principle the need to provide additional employment and skills support. In planning how to best deliver this we have been seeking to better understand local need in a national context where employment impacts are not as severe as some initial forecasts suggested and where there is increasing evidence of labour shortages in a number of sectors, as we have seen in the news recently, that are providing additional job opportunities and mitigating against sustained high levels of unemployment.

When we break down levels of unemployment by ward it is clear that it is widespread

across the Borough. Of course there are differences, with some localities having higher levels than others but there is no one 'hotspot' or concentration but rather a dispersed pattern of need. Our plans are, therefore, to maximise accessibility to additional support through developing an outreach model that can deliver out in our communities utilising community or public venues to provide high quality advice and guidance. This will involve a number of Council services working together as well as with partner agencies and organisations such as Optalis, CAB and Wokingham Job Support Club. We will also invest in additional capacity to employ a qualified careers advisor/job coach to ensure a high quality service that can meet additional demand.

With regard to new jobs, it is worth noting that the Borough has a strong economic base that has made it one of the most resilient in the country. The underlying attractiveness of the Borough in terms of location, quality of life and a highly skilled workforce remain powerful drivers for future investment and job creation.

**48.5 Anne Chadwick asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

What is the Council doing to close the gap in the Climate Emergency Action Plan?

**Answer**

As you know, Wokingham Borough Council made a commitment to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. The Council has demonstrated this commitment through developing a clear and ambitious Climate Emergency Action Plan.

In that action plan we set out a number of major commitments such as the construction of solar farms, planting 250,000 trees, developing a net-zero local plan and becoming a net zero carbon organisation. These will significantly reduce the Borough's carbon emissions, but we accept that currently there is a gap in our plan to achieving our ambition.

The Council's powers to reduce carbon emissions are limited; we cannot force anyone to do anything. As a result, we need to look at the wider picture and to our role as a community leader and influencer, which will be equally, if not more, critical. To reach net-zero across the suite of sectors and activities that we cannot directly control will require partnerships and collaboration as vital ingredients for success.

More than half of the emissions cuts needed will rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions - decisions that are made at a local and individual level. While we can provide the supporting infrastructure, we also require businesses, individuals and other organisations to choose to take action.

With this in mind, we are proposing an extensive and ongoing dialogue with residents, with businesses and with fellow Councillors. We have already started this process, by introducing the ongoing series of 'Climate Conversations' with our business community and via the newly established Youth Council focused on the climate emergency as the key topic for its first meeting and as an ongoing area of focus. I spoke with this group on Monday afternoon and have already received a number of great ideas from them.

We have also committed to an extensive deliberative engagement process with a wide range of stakeholder groups and workshops that will be independently facilitated to develop ideas and proposals for further action that address the climate emergency. This

process will not only generate a series of community led propositions; it will also act as a 'call for action', galvanising active participation and positive behaviour change.

### **Supplementary Question**

You mentioned an ongoing dialogue with fellow Councillors. Can you tell me how you think that will work?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I know that a lot of the Councillors in the Chamber and elsewhere have a lot of ideas. I have repeatedly asked for those ideas to be forthcoming. When we first declared a Climate Emergency a lot of those ideas were put forward. But, recently, there has been a shift from ideas to political posturing. This has been played out in public and, frankly, we need to end that. Our residents deserve better. The Task and Finish Group facilitated and run excellently by Councillor Swaddle have shown that when we do get together, cross party, some great recommendations come out that can be added to the Climate Emergency Action Plan and benefit everybody.

So, what I am proposing is a series of independently facilitated workshops, similar to the local deliberative processes, to be held for Councillors. They will be focussed on specific topics where ideas can be worked through with the officers and approved in Council, in the same way as recommendations from the local deliberative processes.

I believe that all parties have a duty to their residents to come forward with suggestions and to share their ideas, not just their criticisms.

### **48.6 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following 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?

### **Answer**

The Climate Emergency is one of the biggest issues facing us globally and it's important that we all do our bit. As a Council, we want to take an active role in tackling our properties and carbon footprint. That's why we are continuing to look at ways to improve our own properties and make them more energy efficient.

Part of this work has included undertaking extensive energy performance assessments on all of the Council's operational properties. By understanding how individual buildings are performing we can target a range of improvements including low energy LED lighting and high levels of insulation.

The Council is working towards introducing more smaller sustainable energy schemes, such as installing solar panels on a range of its properties including schools, offices, and community sites to help generate sustainable renewable energy and renewables on our own sites. To date, the Council has installed solar arrays on multiple properties, including three quarters of all their schools and half of the corporate outreach buildings which include libraries, youth and community centres and offices.

Making new buildings as energy efficient as possible is also a priority. The new Dinton

Pastures Activity Centre is the Council's first net carbon zero building and joins a range of fantastic green initiatives across the Dinton site such as the solar powered water aerator in the fishing lake which was installed in 2019.

To obtain a greater impact on reducing carbon emissions, the Council is continually working to align and implement different initiatives such as introducing new EV charging points, supporting our green spaces, and engaging the community with this agenda.

Nevertheless, we cannot hope to reach carbon neutral within ten years without implementing some significant actions. Our plan to build solar farms across the Borough will help us to generate more renewable energy while reducing carbon emissions in the Borough.

### **Supplementary Question**

Everyone would agree that this is a major issue. If there are community buildings or assets in, say, my ward, Council-owned or not, what would be the best way to ensure that they are considered as part of these Climate retrofit plans?

### **Supplementary Answer**

If it is a Council-owned asset, then an energy assessment should have already been done and there should be plans in place to make the energy efficiency upgrades that are possible at the site. If it is not a Council-owned asset then we can still conduct the energy efficiency surveys. If you can let me know the sites, I can try to make sure that they happen.

For community sites we have launched the Local Community Energy Fund. It hasn't done its first fundraising yet. It is planned for later in the year. For community buildings that aren't Council assets, that is a fantastic way to get things like solar initiatives or air source heat pumps and other environmental initiatives added to the building at next to no charge to the property owners or the organisation or clubs that are running it.

### **48.7 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following 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?

### **Answer**

The Council has a duty under section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 to 'cause to be buried or cremate the body of any person who has died or found to be dead' within the Borough. This excludes deaths in settings such as hospitals. This is often referred to by many as 'Public Funerals, Assisted Funerals or Paupers Funerals'.

In carrying out this duty, the Council ensures it does so respectfully and works with the funeral director and other relevant partners to assist in the process of burial or cremations. Normally, the service would attempt to locate any next of kin. Where there are none to be found, the service would default to a cremation in the absence of any other instruction.

Ashes are scattered in the local crematorium garden of remembrance in the absence of any other wishes the service is made aware of. If a will exists that specifies a wish for a

burial, or other means of disposal, then the authority would do what it can to honour those wishes.

### **Supplementary Question**

The reason why I have asked this question is quite simple. During lockdown, my brother allowed a homeless friend to sleep on his sofa. His friend had just sold his mother's house and had not had the chance to sort out where he was going to live. Unfortunately, after living with my brother for several months, he died whilst asleep on the sofa. The body was taken away and given a public funeral. Because he had no family to bury him, it was done by Wokingham Borough Council. My brother and his many friends were not invited to the funeral and were not told about what happened to him. This is despite the deceased living with my brother and having a substantial amount of money in his bank account. My brother was given no advice on how to handle the deceased's belongings and they were left in his home. I had to get permission from WBC to allow him to dispose of these. While no one expects a public funeral to be lavish, Government guidelines indicate that WBC is required to liaise with his family members, etc. through the public funeral. So, why has this not happened in this case?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am sorry to hear that. I don't know the full extent of the story, but I can find out and get back to you.

### **48.8 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

When will the examination in public occur for the Local Plan; if that is not yet available when will the Local Plan come to the Borough Council for approval?

### **Answer**

The Local Development Scheme (LDS), available on our website, sets out the local plans that will be prepared and key milestones for their preparation.

The Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which has been prepared in partnership with Bracknell, Reading, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, is currently at examination, having been submitted to the Government in February 2021. The hearing sessions are being held in Maidenhead on 28-30 September 2021.

Consultation on a revised growth strategy for the Local Plan Update will take place this autumn. The subsequent programme set out in the LDS is that consultation on the pre-submission Local Plan Update will take place in the summer 2022 followed by submission to the Government during November-December 2022. The plan would be at examination from that point with the detailed timing being set by the Government appointed Planning Inspector. Adoption of the plan is anticipated by the end of 2023.

### **Supplementary Question**

Since the Local Plan is out of date, according to some inspectors at this point, why were so many meetings cancelled – there were no meetings at all for the Local Plan Update Committee for six months. In the last six months we probably had a few, but not many. What is being done to make progress quicker, not taking our time so that developers can build wherever they want?

### **Supplementary Answer**

As you know, as you have been at the meetings, which are cross-party, we have had meetings. There have been some meetings we haven't been able to hold because we didn't have the information. We have had to go back around the Borough looking at all these brownfield sites that people keep telling me about – but nobody comes up with any. Looking at alternative sites that we keep asking for, but nobody comes up with any. So it has taken time. That is why it has taken so long. To your point about developers building everywhere, can you point me to the last appeal that we lost?

### **48.9 Jim Frewin asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following 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?

### **Answer**

WBC provides Home to School transport to approximately 320 SEND pupils as a statutory service. Ahead of the academic year 2021/22 the Council had to re-tender the contracts to provide this service to ensure it meets legal procurement and tender requirements. As part of the re-tendering, WBC has sought to optimise transport routes in order to reduce journey times and, improve the service for pupils and families.

Separate to this process, the Council has also undertaken a review of Home to School requirements for those eligible SEND pupils to make sure that what is being provided matches what is needed for all pupils. In future, such reviews will take place annually. That is something we have learned. The review was carried out with the active involvement of SEND Voices (the forum for parent carers of children and young people with SEND).

We do recognise the impact that this has had on families, and especially those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and apologise for any frustration that this has caused.

I was approached by a number of Councillors and a briefing was held on Friday 17 September (Councillor Frewin was present) and, if there are other Councillors who want the same thing (it is difficult to understand) I will happily put something on if you email me.

### **Supplementary Question**

I understand that the issues this year are almost like a perfect storm. I would like to recognise the fact that the officers worked extremely hard to rectify the situation. The issue is that it should not have happened. I appreciate the briefing we had but would like to ask

the Executive Member whether he would be willing to come back and provide some details once we have had some time for things to settle down, with an action plan to ensure that this never happens again.

### **Supplementary Answer**

In any situation where we have had this sort of thing, we need to learn the lessons and communicate them.

#### **48.10 Carl Doran asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided.**

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?

### **Answer**

As you are aware, the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the associated Action Plan established a series of commitments to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030 (accepting that the Council was only one of a wide range of stakeholders who would also need to take action). One of those significant commitments was to develop largescale solar PV farms throughout the Borough.

The broad targets set within the Climate Emergency Action Plan allow us to understand the level of commitment that is required by all sectors and partners and provides a clear path for the scale of the approach that is needed. However, as was made clear in the plan, these targets are best estimates based on the information we had at the time. The assumptions made with regard to carbon reductions achievable with solar farms were informed by Ofgem (Typical Domestic Consumption Values for gas and electricity, 2020) and the UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting (June 2020). The analysis of anticipated carbon reductions was therefore informed but indicative and was always expected to vary following detailed studies and feasibility assessments.

The initial plans for the solar farm in Barkham aimed to generate in-excess of 36 MWp of energy (CEAP second progress report July 2021), however, as the planning application progressed the size of the solar farm was reduced to address various issues raised. The planning application that went before planning committee on 8<sup>th</sup> September was for a 29.63 MWp facility that inevitably would deliver a lower carbon reduction.

Using the UK Government Green House Gas (GHG) Conversion Factors for electricity

generated, it is estimated that the energy generated by a 29.63 MWp solar farm would save some 7,573 tCO<sub>2</sub> in year one of operation when compared to using traditional fossil fuels. The estimated energy generation of the scheme therefore does fall short of the 7,970 tCO<sub>2</sub> set out in the CEAP. However, the adjustments to the scheme in response to the site-specific planning constraints were necessary to secure planning consent. The CEAP will be updated in the next reporting to reflect the change in the anticipated carbon reduction to be achieved. In addition, the Council will also look at the potential for additional capacity at the other solar farms as detailed plans are developed to maximise the overall contribution to carbon reduction that can be achieved.

The referenced figure in the planning committee report related to savings over a 25 year period. The figure takes into account both a reduction in energy generation as the equipment ages and that the level of carbon saving will reduce over time because the wider energy supply market will de-carbonise. The energy generation and carbon savings per year will not be fixed over the 25 year period as has been applied in the calculations used in your question. The 25-year figure in the planning report is not therefore directly comparable to the 7,970 tCO<sub>2</sub> target set out in the CEAP.

As the Council progresses the detailed development of the other solar farms, we will have better understanding of the potential carbon savings that can be achieved, however, this will depend on their feasibility, size, and other market variations.

Overall, the development of solar farms remains a major and very positive commitment by the Council. Not only will they increase the production of renewable energy but also have the potential to generate an income which will then be reinvested into delivering other carbon reduction projects.

**48.11 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided.**

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?

**Answer**

Officers have checked traffic speed data available for Woodlands Avenue and added the site to the programme of mobile VAS signs that we move from site to site across the Borough. The VAS programme is managed on an 'as requested' priority basis and subject to availability of equipment. The Council has a limited number of mobile, battery powered VAS signs for this type of use and there are a number of sites across the Borough where this has been requested. For clarity the traffic speed data for Woodlands Avenue does not indicate that there is a significant speeding issue with both average and 85<sup>th</sup> percentiles speeds below the police enforcement level across the day.

At this stage, officers are unable to provide a precise date, but it is estimated that a device would be likely to be available for installation in Woodlands Avenue in Q4 of the 2021/22 programme which is approximately 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

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

**49.1 Shirley Boyt asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

In Woodlands Avenue we have public laybys which are used extensively by people who park to take recreation on the Bulmershe field, walking their dogs and the like. Recently, we have had a spate of people parking there long-term – commercial vehicles, minibuses, a car transporter and even, on one occasion, a heavy goods vehicle. These vehicles park there for a long time, depriving residents of the opportunity to park there. Now, knowing how long it takes to get some sort of traffic regulation and timed parking set up, I was wondering if you could commit to helping me to fast-track something through with Traffic Management?

**Answer**

Yes. Any resident can request TROs on line through the Council website. But I will be very happy to work with you to help with that particular problem.

**49.2 Stephen Conway asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

I wanted to thank the Leader of the Council for his comments in the press on the inappropriate behaviour of Councillors in other local authorities who have been lobbying to promote large-scale building in the Green Belt, near Twyford. Such large-scale development, should it take place, would have a profound impact for the people he and I represent. May I ask him, therefore, to confirm that the ruling Group on this Council will not be including Green Belt sites in Ruscombe in the new version of the Draft Local Plan?

**Answer**

I don't believe that I am capable of answering that because it would be predetermination, even if I knew it.

**49.3 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

In the village of Sonning there are many instances of speeding, especially on Pound Lane, Charvil Lane, Pearson Road and Sonning Lane. I know that this happens elsewhere, but Sonning is an historic village with narrow roads. Sonning Parish Council and myself have been pressing for road calming measures and an upgraded crossing outside Sonning School, which is on Pound Lane. In fact, Sonning Parish Council have been doing this for a number of years. Sonning Parish Council has also sent speeding data to Wokingham Borough Council for some time and nothing has ever happened.

There is a strength of feeling in the village and the residents feel let down and forgotten. This was shown by a packed Sonning Parish Council meeting, which is absolutely odd to say the least, on Tuesday 14 September 2021. Is there anything you can suggest in order for me to do something about this?

**Answer**

The Borough Council has undertaken investigations into traffic speeds in Pound Lane, Charvil Lane, Pearson Road and Sonning Lane and is aware of the concerns raised by residents and the Parish Council. We are aware of some instances of excess speeds on these roads and have referred residents and the Parish Council to the police for enforcement, as we have no ability to enforce speed limits in this Council.

These roads, generally, have a good safety record, despite carrying frequent traffic. The Borough Council's engineers have been liaising with the Parish Council prior to and throughout the Covid pandemic and have undertaken studies to determine the need for a change of speed limits in all these roads. These investigations have shown that average vehicle speeds, upon which speed limits are required to be based, are all below existing speed limits and, therefore, there are no grounds for changing them. Despite this, the Council continues to explore the possibility of extending the existing 20mph limit in Pound Lane and has proposed measures to the Parish Council and received feedback. Further discussion about the proposals is being undertaken with Thames Valley Police as the enforcement authority as, generally, they have to agree with any speed limit changes.

The form and location of the existing raised Zebra crossing in Pound Lane is considered appropriate for the requirements of pedestrians using it, both for the school and access to the open space and bus stop. The measures proposed for Pound Lane include some changes to the existing crossing, but there are no grounds for changing the type of crossing. It is suggested that residents speak with the Parish Council and are aware of all the proposals being developed by the Borough Council.

I would be very happy to meet you to explain in more detail and also talk to you about what we may be able to do.

**49.4 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**

I believe that the Council has CCTV equipment that can be deployed to fly tipping hotspots and have suggested to officers that it be used in a notorious fly tipping hotspot in my ward. I do not believe that this has happened yet. Would you be able to follow this up if I email you the details of the location?

**Answer**

As you know, there is a cross-party fly tipping working group. I think that the most appropriate channel would be via your reps on that working group, Paul Fishwick and Clive Jones. Certainly, that is what the cameras are there for and I will be happy to work with you through the working group in order to help.

**49.5 Rebecca Margetts asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Residents of Finchampstead have raised concerns about proposed parking charges at Avery Corner car park and California Crossroads. These car parks are currently free which is essential for local businesses and residents in Finchampstead who use local amenities. Please can you confirm that there are no plans to impose parking charges there?

**Answer**

The proposals you have seen were not intended to change car parking charges, except for 15 minutes free parking at Dinton Pastures and 30 minutes free parking in the visitors' bays at the Borough Council offices. The shops in the California Crossroads area had a new one hour maximum stay restriction. That will be introduced to ensure that spaces are used by local shoppers rather than long-stay visitors. That might be something we could use in response to Shirley's earlier question.

**49.6 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Environment and**

**Leisure the following question:**

Last year the Council, without consultation with residents, imposed restrictions and very high fees on fitness trainers using Borough parks. After a public outcry there was a U turn against fees of up to £1,500. A trainer wishing to use a Borough park now has to have public liability insurance of £10m, a DBS check and a personal training certificate. As a result, most fitness trainers have stopped using the Barkham Rec. It looks like they helped to keep troublemakers away because they have been replaced by drug dealers and vandals. There was a recent arson attack on the playground in broad daylight.

Will the Council look into the unintended consequences that the outdoor fitness trainer permits have had and give us a date for replacing the vandalised play equipment?

**Answer**

I will look into that and get back to you.

**49.7 Lindsay Ferris asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Residents in Twyford would like to know what the Council knows about any proposed Council changes within the authorities in Berkshire.

**Answer**

There are no changes proposed for the local authorities in Berkshire. The article in the press is extremely misleading. We became unitaries in 1997. Some people here would have been there at the time. At that time various legacy institutions continued and the LEP became a new institution serving the Berkshire authorities. With the devolution agenda the Government has indicated that it would like to do County deals. "County" is just a word. We don't need County deals. It could be "Ferris" deals or "Jones" deals with larger combinations of authorities.

The proposal is from the Berkshire Leaders (who meet every month, as do the Chief Executives and Finance officers) The proposal is that we look and explore with Government what benefit there is in going in a combination rather than just going as unitaries. The funding which the Government used to put through the LEP is intended to be paid directly to local authorities.

So, in answer to your question, there is no proposal for a combination of unitaries into a new Berkshire County Council. If you have seen my track record over the past three years, we have been walking away from joint arrangements as if they were going out of fashion. The last two are now in my sights. I wouldn't welcome it. Neither would the other authorities.

**49.8 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

What will be done to make the Hatchwood Mill Country Park adoptable by Wokingham Borough Council, since there is no bond and planning enforcement is not very effective. The developers closed their local subsidiary, as they normally do, when they finished the estate. How can we be reassured that the park will be taken over, or is it going to be left to rot?

**Answer**

I will look into it tomorrow and get back to you.

**49.9 Sarah Kerr asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

On Evendons Lane there is a 60mph section. In Spring 2019 I reported a safety defect affecting the road which was unsafe for cyclists. After six months of chasing Highways came back and said it wasn't a safety concern. Two weeks ago a very confident regular cyclist had a nasty accident in that exact spot. If another car had been coming in the opposite direction he would be dead now. Two broken bones, fractured hand, stitches in his arm, stitches in his leg. He is in a very bad way.

They are now saying that it is a safety defect. It has not deteriorated. It has not been picked up in any highway inspections. This is not the only case where we are having these safety defects reported in the Borough. The defects not being fixed and cyclists being hurt. When are we going to take cyclist safety seriously?

**Answer**

I can assure you that I do take cyclist safety seriously, especially as I came off my own bike yesterday. If you have any particular questions or you think that people are not taking safety seriously, please do get in touch with me urgently. I will be very happy to look into it.

**49.10 Angus Ross asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Recently, there has been an announcement that the Nine Mile Ride in Crowthorne (we used to call it Finchampstead – in fact it is in Wokingham Without) is going to be closed for a considerable period of time – likely to be for sewer connections. My questions are – one, it was not helpful that it didn't really explain what that meant in terms of road closures. Two, there is a rumour that, at the same time, Bracknell are closing Dukes Ride which would be the alternative route. Before this rumour gets stronger, I wonder if it could be investigated to make sure that Wokingham and Bracknell have got their eggs in the same basket.

**Answer**

Absolutely, definitely, in a few minutes.

**49.11 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

We have had an enormous number of overnight road closures in Winnersh. In some of them residents have not been allowed access to their properties. One lady had to wait 45 minutes and was late for work. Next week, we have road closures overnight in Robin Hood Lane and I believe there is still some overnight work on the Reading Road and now we have daytime closures on the Reading Road.

Can you look into the traffic management that accompanies these works and do something to ensure that traffic gets through as smoothly as possible, or that, when diversion routes are signposted, they are actually available and people don't go up to the diversion and be told by the workmen to go a particular way, go that way and find it doesn't work either.

**Answer**

Certainly Prue.

**49.12 Paul Fishwick asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

The A329 Reading Road Winnersh Relief project has had a series of overnight closures up to the 4<sup>th</sup> of September. Recently one resident leaving for work at 3.30am was made to wait 45 minutes and was late for a shift. However, and without warning to residents and the local Borough ward Councillors, the road was closed again to complete unfinished planned works on the night of 6/7 September. Even an ambulance with blue lights was witnessed having to turn around due to the sudden closure. This caused significant frustration for the travelling public who were unable to gain access to Woodward Close. For example, in the Reading direction they were told by operatives on site to use the Winnersh Relief Road. On reaching the closure point they were told by operatives to use the diversion route through Wokingham, a five mile detour. Arriving at the closure point by Saddlers Lane they were told to follow the diversion route and approach from the Reading direction.

This is an unsatisfactory way to treat our residents and the travelling public, with frustration shown on social media, of which you are a member. With a further three nights of closures planned next week, will the Executive Member ensure that her department controls access for residents properly and local ward Members and residents are informed ahead of these types of works in future.

**Answer**

I would recommend to every resident that they keep an eye on a site called Roadworks.org which gives the absolute diversions and diversion routes and times for closures. Things do change. The closure on the Reading Road which was down to the connection of the new bypass was certainly delayed due to other engineering works and it is important that this data is out in real time rather than waiting for press releases and that sort of thing.

I will do my best to ensure that the signage is up to date. As you know, I have been very active on social media getting people the right answers. If you would like to tell me about issues email me, don't wait 20 days after the event. That would be helpful.

**49.13 Chris Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Recently, during the resurfacing of the Wokingham Road, I witnessed a member of the public harassing the workmen and trying to force her way through the roadworks on a Sunday. Please can you pass on my thanks for the way they handled that member of the public and the threat to safety she posed?

**Answer**

Thank you. I certainly will.

**50. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

**Charles Margetts, Executive Member for Health and Social Care**

I wanted to take this opportunity to update Members on the situation locally with primary care. Our GPs have experienced a 40% increase in demand over the past three to four months which has been very challenging. We believe that every resident who needs it should have a face-to-face appointment. However, it is perfectly possible to get what you need without a face-to-face meeting and we would encourage all residents to do this wherever possible, to get the quickest response and to enable our GPs to deal with this demand. To support our GPs and help our residents with correct advice we will be launching a PR campaign over the coming weeks to advise residents on the best way to access Primary Care health services and what can be achieved and there are many things without a face-to-face appointment with a GP.

As Members will know, GPs are commissioned and contracted to the Berkshire West CCG. WBC has no control over their performance. In the past few weeks the nationwide GP patient survey has been published which ranks GPs across the country based on several measures relating to the quality of service. Surveys are always a slightly blunt instrument to judge anything but there were some key trends that came out. We have some GPs in Wokingham who are doing a very good job despite this situation. The Finchampstead, Wargrave, Wilderness, Burma Hills and New Wokingham Road surgeries all scored in the top 10% in the UK. I wanted to thank them and commend them for this achievement. However, we also have four surgeries in the bottom 10% based on the survey. They are also GPs which residents and Members have raised concerns and questions with me in the past. These four are the Wokingham Medical Centre, Loddon Vale, Woosehill and Twyford. The Wokingham Medical Centre has been in the bottom 10%, according to the survey, since 2017.

As I mentioned earlier, GPs are commissioned by the CCG which is 100% responsible for their performance. However, it is the duty and responsibility of WBC to raise residents' concerns with the CCG when it is appropriate. I believe that our residents deserve better than this and last week I wrote to the Head of the ICS and the Commissioning Lead at the CCG raising this issue with them over these four surgeries, asking them to provide more active support to resolve the problems with them and to implement improvement plans and to report back to us without delay. I will be happy to keep Members informed of progress.

### **Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure**

I will take a few minutes to update you all on a few salient features within my portfolio.

Waste collections have continued on a weekly basis despite the staff shortage challenges thrown at us by the Covid Pandemic. Whilst the neighbouring authorities have stopped collecting their garden waste, we have continued collecting everything. We are not out of the woods yet but we are doing all we can to provide a valuable weekly collection of waste. There are a lot of issues with drivers which are causing problems. I will keep Members updated if we have any problems but, so far, we are doing okay. I would, therefore, like to thank and congratulate our officers and contractors for delivering a valuable service to our residents during these difficult times.

Mr Mayor, thank you for joining me in opening the Dinton Activity Centre yesterday. The climbing wall you saw was hand painted and the murals carefully selected to reflect the flora and fauna at Dinton in both a woodland scene and a lake scene. Physical education, environmental education and fun all rolled into one! As you saw, wind catchers on the roof allow for natural ventilation. Air conditioning to assist active cooling where needed. The by-

product of the warm air is converted into energy to heat the water for our under floor heating in the hall. Solar panels and air source heat pumps are used to generate the rest of the electricity for heating and lighting. The Activity Centre will be the first carbon neutral facility that Wokingham Borough Council owns.

Mr Mayor, I have initiated a Waste Strategy that will comprise of short and longer term measures to help manage the Borough's waste. In the short term we will be encouraging the public to reduce waste and increase recycling to reduce costs and deliver savings for the Council. In the longer term we will be consulting the public on their views of how we should develop waste services in the light of the Climate Emergency. The development process has begun with involvement from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel who will oversee this project and it is expected a draft waste strategy will be formulated by late Spring next year.

### **Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions**

I would like to give a brief update to Council on three topics within my areas of responsibility.

The first is to say that there has been a Motion put forward to this Council for many months relating to the Local Electricity Bill. Having looked into this in some detail I have come to the conclusion that the passing of this bill could benefit our climate emergency and our efforts to both reduce our carbon footprint and to increase the financial viability of localised energy generation. With that in mind I have done as the Motion requires and written to each of the four MP's that represent residents in Wokingham, and also to the Minister of State for Energy, calling on all of them to put their support behind the bill and to work with others within their parties to ensure that this legislation passes and is enacted.

If you will indulge me, I would like to take a moment to read out part of the response I received from the Rt. Hon Theresa May. She said "Community energy is a key part of clean growth and can decarbonise energy in local areas while bringing other economic or social benefits." However, she added "there are other considerations which must be taken into account. For example, the Bill seeks to alter the licensing provisions. Ministers have expressed their concern that changing the licensing framework would create wider distortions elsewhere in the energy system. I understand that, instead, the Government is encouraging stakeholders to engage with the ongoing work that the Government is undertaking with Ofgem to support flexibility and innovation more generally. This can help identify how a local element can play a part in the solution."

Finally, her response also told me that "With increased electrification of heat and transport, I am encouraged that the Government and Ofgem continue to work to ensure that the systems and markets that will support this remain flexible, secure, competitive and that they meet the needs of consumers."

Mr Mayor, from this response I take it that, whether the Local Energy Bill passes or not, work is being done to achieve its fundamental intent and objectives, which, as I already said, could benefit our Climate Emergency and our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint.

Staying on an energy theme Mr Mayor, I would like to provide an update on two schemes that I launched at the tail end of last year, the EcoFlex Help to Heat scheme and the Green Homes Grants scheme. As with the scheme nationally, the Green Home Grants scheme,

known as L.A.D. 1A, which we entered into in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council has not been the success we had hoped. We ourselves found this scheme to be difficult to navigate and it was not clear what could and could not be included. Couple that to a national skills shortage meant that we were only able to help five household out of those who applied locally. All of us involved in this project are disappointed by this.

Conversely, the scheme that we created locally however, the Eco Flex Help to Heat scheme was substantially more successful for us, and significantly more successful than we had anticipated. You will remember Mr Mayor that, when I launched this scheme our intention was to retrofit approximately 400 homes across Wokingham Borough using this scheme. To date Mr Mayor I am delighted to inform council that 877 homes have been assessed and have benefitted from either cavity wall insulation, loft insulation or both installed, at little or no cost to the resident. In doing so, fuel bills have been reduced for some of the most at risk of fuel poverty households across our borough, a move which, considering the recent fluctuations in fuel prices, shows great foresight on behalf of us and Council officers and will benefit the families in these properties greatly.

The final matter I would like to discuss is Area DD. For the benefit of Councillors who are unaware of Area DD, this is a piece of land near Asda in Earley that is owned and maintained by Wokingham Borough Council. It is a mixture of woodland and scrubland and, with minimal routine management has been allowed to develop naturally, to support a variety of wildlife species and biodiversity.

In June, Councillor Pauline Jorgensen and I met with the Council's Ecology Officer at the request of representatives of the Earley Environmental Group to discuss options for protecting and preserving this area of wood and grass land now that it no longer considered a site for future residential or commercial property development. As a result of this meeting, we have agreed that a Climate Emergency-based management and maintenance strategy will be drafted and consulted upon. This strategy will then be used as a basis for increasing biodiversity, enhancing the woodland and scrubland space and for tidying up the remaining debris and dumped waste from the area. I will update Council on the relevant timings of this strategy and any related works in due course.

### **Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Highways and Transport**

Work continues on our congestion management programme, as part of this we have been successful in our bid for £250k of Government funding – this will enable us to improve traffic signals with queue detection and journey time calculation to smooth out traffic and reduce queues; upgrade equipment to low energy technology providing more reliability and reduced maintenance and energy costs and will also introduce new technology to improve pedestrian crossings.

We are installing car park management equipment in several of our car parks, the first set of detectors at Carnival and Denmark Street are up and running, these detectors will feed information on vacant spaces into user apps and also strategic VMS signs guiding people to car parks with spaces available.

I have just approved an amendment to our traffic regulation orders which takes steps to deal with dangerous parking identified by local residents by introducing new parking restrictions in some of our parking hotspots, for example around Loddon school. These restrictions will be implemented over the next few weeks.

We continue to work on our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). All Transport authorities are required to develop a plan in partnership with the transport providers in the area with the aim of improving joint working on bus service development. It is also required to enable us to qualify for 'bus recovery funding' on 1st September, the BSIP must be published by the 31st October, so it is quite urgent.

Having delivered cycleways and greenways along the new Winnersh relief road, California way, Observer way, Barkham Bridge, and London Road cycling and walking improvements in the Borough continue to gather momentum. The first stage of Public consultation on the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan has completed and we are talking to local bodies such as WATCH, Town and Parish Councils and Councillors to help prioritise the improvement work.

Future cycleroute schemes planned include a 19km route from North to South of the Borough between the Thames Path at Wargrave and the Blackwater Valley path at Swallowfield, cycleway links between Woodley and Winnersh Triangle, a cycle route between Woodley Town Centre and Palmer Park and finally a cycleway linking Winnersh and North Wokingham.

We have received a further £94k from the Government to progress our cycle infrastructure planning and to deliver training and promote active travel initiatives. The recent Beat the Street initiative award scheme, at which the Mayor gave the awards, shows how popular cycling and walking to school has become. More than 6,000 residents took part travelling an astonishing 151,000 miles during the game.

Finally, our road resurfacing programme is progressing with more than 50 roads being fully resurfaced, another 30 plus are being surface dressed or micro-asphalted this year as part of our maintenance programme. Over the summer, since June, 528 potholes were also repaired keeping our pledge to continue to improve the state of our roads.

### **John Halsall, Leader of the Council**

I wanted to discuss three important matters: the Health and Social Care changes, the plight of Afghan families and some of the latest information about Covid.

The current rate of Covid cases within the Borough is 211 per 100,000. This has fallen back in line with the South East and England after a period of higher rates resulting from the increased (asymptomatic) testing amongst young people for attendance at the Reading Festival and return to school testing. Most of the cases within the Borough now fall within our school age population, in line with the rest of the country. Whilst the rate remains stable, it remains high. We must remain cautious and continue to work to reduce transmission of the virus within our Borough.

Following the announcement of the Government's Winter Plan, vaccination remains at the heart of our response to Covid. Wokingham is doing well with 86% of residents having received the first vaccine and 81% having received the second dose. There is, however, still work to be done. There are over 60,000 residents who are due their booster vaccines in the coming weeks and months. We are working closely with the CCG and primary care colleagues to support delivery of the booster programme. We continue to work to increase uptake, particularly of second vaccinations in those under the age of 40 and have launched a vaccine helpline to provide advice and information to residents. We are also working, through our Children's Services Taskforce, with all the schools within

Wokingham, both in their management of Covid and also providing support for the vaccine rollout within schools.

If I turn to the recent announcements on Health and Social Care changes. I am delighted that the Government is taking some action here. It has been 10 years since the Dilnot report. What is proposed doesn't solve all Adult Social Care (ASC) problems. Most of the money is going to the NHS with the risk that, rather than a fair proportion of this money going to Social Care, a further burden will fall on local taxpayers.

Regarding the funding, of the £12bn a year this will raise only £1.8bn is proposed to come to councils for Adult Social Care. £1.8bn will not solve the problems in adult social care. It has big risks for WBC, as we have a lot of private funders. Many people must pay for care. The worry here is that the £1.8bn will not cover this impact and the more burden will fall on Councils particularly like in Wokingham where we have a high proportion of private funders. I am lobbying the Government, using every channel that I have, to ensure that we do not end up with a burden that could be very substantial.

On the matter of Afghan refugees, officers from the Council have been in continuous liaison with MHCLG and the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration who are leading on the settlement programme. It is clear to say that this is a significant undertaking as some 15,000 refugees have recently arrived in the UK with 1,500 in the South East region. We are keen to ensure Wokingham Borough plays its part in assisting these families and through our conversations with MHCLG and partners we have agreed to take 3 families. Of course, it is not as simple as identifying and supplying housing requirements, but the overall support required to ensure the families can successfully relocate to the Borough and become a welcome part of our inclusive community.

As a first step, officers from our Housing Services team are busily looking to access suitable properties and then will liaise with the Strategic Partnership for Migration who will carry out a matching exercise to assess suitability. Once assessed, the process can commence for relocation ensuring we have the necessary support in place to meet the individual needs of the families.

## **51. EXTENSION OF THE MEETING**

At 10.05pm it was moved by Adrian Mather and seconded by Stephen Conway that, in line with Rule 4.2.8, the meeting be extended by an extra 30 minutes, up to 11.00pm.

Upon being to the vote, the proposal was lost.

## **52. STATEMENTS FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES**

### **Shahid Younis, Loddon Homes**

I would like to make a statement as Chairman of Loddon Homes. In May, UllaKarin Clark stepped down as Chairman of Loddon Homes and Lindsay Ferris resigned his post as Non-Executive Director. Myself and Norman Jorgensen were nominated to the Board by WBC. I am pleased to say that I was elected as Chairman at a meeting earlier this week. I want to convey my thanks to UllaKarin and Councillor Ferris for their valuable time served. I look forward to working closely with the other Non-Executive Directors who will bring with them a wealth of knowledge and will collectively provide appropriate commercial challenge and operational scrutiny whilst ensuring that Loddon Homes maintains its independence as a registered provider.

For the benefit of our new Members, Loddon Homes is a “for profit” registered provider of social and affordable housing. We currently hold 112 properties in our portfolio with a further 40 under construction. This week the Loddon Homes Board signed off the end of year financial accounts for 2020/21 and recorded a small profit of £3k. Whilst the recorded profit may not appear to be significant, Loddon Homes continues to make a positive financial return to the Council through the strategic payment of interest charges associated with the development bill. This is in addition to the payment of services across the Council such as finance and legal support as well as well as the housing management function provided via tenant services.

Despite delays associated with Covid-19, Brexit and industry-wide construction material shortages, Arnott Avenue and the first phase of the Gorse Ride regeneration programme is progressing well. 26 properties have now been handed over and the quality of the finished homes is excellent. The residents are very happy with the new homes. The final 30 shared ownership properties at this site are due to be handed over in late October with 19 of the 20 flats already reserved.

Loddon Homes has taken its first steps into the S106 market and has been selected as a registered provider of choice by two developers. We are purchasing four houses from Hicks Development for shared ownership in Earley and Hurst. This market has remained robust despite Covid-19 and all the shared ownership properties are selling well. We are also purchasing 16 supported living properties within the Hatch Farm Dairies estate in Winnersh.

Loddon Homes has also received funding from the Ministry for Housing and Local Government to buy five one bedroom properties on the open market for rough sleepers in the Borough. Loddon Homes were able to secure four of the five properties and we are now beginning to offer those residents a new start in the Borough in safe and secure homes.

### **Stuart Munro, Wokingham Holdings Ltd**

This is a good time to give this speech, straight after Councillor Younis. It gives me great pleasure to talk about the results of the Council companies, all the Housing companies. As Members may recall, this is to invest then get a return, like most businesses. I have the figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The presentation of 2020/21 will be finalised fairly soon. It is important to reiterate these numbers as they clearly show the progress made so far. So I will go through each one.

Wokingham Borough Holdings Ltd., the overall holding company which invests in the other companies has moved from 2018/19 at £212,000 investment to £62,000 investment, an improvement of £150,000.

Wokingham Housing Ltd. showed a profit in 2018/19 of £153,000. In 2019/20 that moved to £650,000, an improvement of £497,000.

Loddon Homes moved from a loss of £218,000 in 2018/19 to a profit of £54,000, an improvement of £164,000.

Berry Brook Homes moved from an investment of £231,000 to a profit of £15,000, an improvement of £256,000.

So, overall, an investment in the early years of £508,000 to a profit of £650,000. That is an improvement of £1.165m. This is turnaround of over £1m, as I have just said. I am also happy to say that, despite Covid-19 issues, we are on course to continue to deliver not only much needed affordable homes, as you heard from Councillor Younis, but also to deliver profits to be used for the Borough's residents. Operationally and financially all the company projects remain on course as originally planned.

### **Charles Margetts, Optalis**

Optalis celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. It is now more closely aligned and delivering more value to WBC than ever before. Recent years have seen a real focus on service improvements and also financial efficiency which has led to the following highlights.

The Supported Employment Service remains No 1 in the south east for the last two years and No 3 in the UK for learning disability employment outcomes. Optalis continues to redesign and improve key services, a recent example being the Community Lives Programme which is about day servicers, building on the best of what we currently offer and enabling customers to take a more active part in the community.

The Short Term Reablement Team has recently had a CQC inspection and was rated Good, which demonstrates the support people receive to enable them to reach their full potential of independence. Optalis staff have worked very hard through the pandemic to keep all of their customers safe. I would like to commend David Birch and his team, everyone who works there who have worked really well for our Care Homes Task Force.

Optalis is now completely aligned from a strategic perspective with WBC. WBC services within Optalis have been financially ring-fenced so there is no question of any cross-subsidy between WBC and RBWM. The Council now has complete visibility and input into everything the company does. Transparency has been key to building trust in what Optalis does for the Council and residents.

In terms of financial efficiencies these changes have led to a £1m one-off saving over the last two years. Optalis is on course to deliver a further £1.4m ongoing saving over the life of the MTFP.

Changes coming in the future including streamlining of governance and management which will, I think, give more control over what we are doing and where we are going and will see further improvements. I hope to say more about this in coming meetings.

### **Norman Jorgensen, Loddon Homes**

I was pleased to join the Board of Loddon Homes recently, as Councillor Younis has stated. It is great to see the progress the companies have made over the past few years. I was last involved in the Holding Company about five years ago. A lot of really good schemes have gone through since then, which is great, including the first phase of the Gorse Ride scheme. So we are now getting quality homes built for our residents, affordable social housing and shared equity schemes.

So it is great to be able to help so many of our residents. The many projects being completed already and the many more in the pipeline, which is very encouraging. If we can do that and make a return to the Council, I commend the work that the company is doing.

## **53. MOTIONS**

### 53.1 Motion 462 submitted by Shirley Boyt

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Shirley Boyt and seconded by Rachel Burgess.

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 in 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.

Gregor Murray stated that he could not support the Motion as the proposals were not costed and did not provide an assessment of the amount of carbon to be saved. Councillor Murray felt that such proposals should be considered for inclusion in the Climate Emergency Action Plan based on a robust assessment of the costs and benefits.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey, Stephen Conway and Lindsay Ferris stated that other Climate Emergency measures, such as the Barkham solar farm (considered earlier), had been approved without detailed business cases and risk assessments.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was lost. The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Keith Baker
Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Phil Cunnington	
Peter Dennis	Michael Firmager	
Carl Doran	Guy Grandison	
Lindsay Ferris	John Halsall	
Paul Fishwick	Pauline Helliard-Symons	
Maria Gee	Graham Howe	
David Hare	Pauline Jorgensen	
Clive Jones	Norman Jorgensen	
Sarah Kerr	John Kaiser	
Morag Malvern	Abdul Loyes	
Adrian Mather	Charles Margetts	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Rebecca Margetts	
Ian Shenton	Stuart Munro	
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	Gregor Murray	
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	Barrie Patman	
Caroline Smith	Jackie Rance	
	Angus Ross	
	Daniel Sargeant	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Shahid Younis	

**53.2 Motion 463 Submitted by Gregor Murray**

Due to time constraints, this Motion was not considered.

**53.3 Motion 464 Submitted by Chris Bowring**

Due to time constraints, this Motion was not considered.

**53.4 Motion 465 Submitted by Ian Shenton**

Due to time constraints, this Motion was not considered.

**53.5 Motion 466 Submitted by Clive Jones**

Due to time constraints, this Motion was not considered.