

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 7 MARCH 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), Graham Howe, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro, Wayne Smith and Bill Soane

Other Councillors Present

Rachel Bishop-Firth
Laura Blumenthal
Prue Bray
Gary Cowan
Clive Jones

111. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Parry Bath, John Kaiser and Gregor Murray.

Councillor Laura Blumenthal, Deputy Executive Member for Equalities, Poverty, the Arts and Climate Emergency, attended on behalf of Councillor Murray. In accordance with legislation Councillor Blumenthal could speak on any item but was not allowed to vote.

112. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

113. STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

I have led the Borough and spoken about Covid over the last two years. I would never have believed that we would have emerged from Covid to a potentially greater tragedy.

I am sure I speak for the Council and indeed the whole Borough, when I express shock, sorrow and anger for Russia's antagonistic and gratuitous assault on Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine is tragic. It is bringing and will bring more destruction, maiming and loss of life. The queue of refugees now approximately 1.7 million is the greatest movement of people since the second world war in Europe. It is a catastrophe.

Freedom needs to be dearly protected. And what is freedom? It is the power to live as one wishes, and that is now what is now being challenged. Ukraine is a sovereign and democratic nation pursuing self-determination. Ukrainians must be able to live their lives as they chose.

The Ukrainian flag has been flown over Shute End to underline the whole Council's and I believe the whole Borough's support for the Ukrainian people in this their hour of need. It will stay there until there is some resolution which may be some time. This is a moment when the tectonic plates have moved and will almost certainly not go back to where they were. The human and economic cost will be huge and long lasting.

As Councils we will deal with the ramifications of this war. This will include responding to refugees and displaced persons, issues relating to energy, the cost of living and cyber security.

We must now recognise that this is now our concern, seek to manage those things within our control and encourage Her Majesty's Government to the maximum within its own control.

I have set up an Officer architecture (Gold, Silver and Bronze) across the Council to consider planning what can and should be done. We will be thinking about a range of eventualities and planning for them. This will be managed in the same way as we did Covid – regular meetings to respond to the challenges, as they arise and to be concurrent with Government guidance and national policy. I will reinstate the Leaders' meetings, and Councillor bulletins as appropriate.

I know that there is a frustration to do something and to do it now. Rest assured that demands will be placed on us. We are only at the beginning of a very long process. We will be facing huge challenges. We must meet them organised and planned. We will work with our voluntary sector partners, our health partners and our community safety partners, and we will do this whilst not neglecting our residents' current needs.

We have a Ukrainian community, which we are reaching out to. We must ensure that we are doing all that we can for them. We are currently offering facilities for the collection and distribution of aid to Ukraine and will support local agencies who offer a similar service.

We have also a Russian community within the Borough, who should not be penalised for Vladimir Putin. We do not have an argument with the Russian people but with the Russian Government, its dictator and his acolytes. We need to make this clear in anything we do and say.

We may well see certain commodities rise substantially in price particularly energy, some foodstuffs, and mined materials. This will hit certain sectors of our community particularly hard, particularly after Covid.

I have written to the Prime Minister expressing my support for his six-point plan, which is to:

- **mobilise an international humanitarian coalition.** We must all work together to establish an immediate cease-fire and allow civilians safe passage, food and medical supplies.
- **do more to help Ukraine to defend itself.** More and more nations are willing to provide defensive equipment. We must act quickly to coordinate our efforts to support the government of Ukraine.
- **maximise the economic pressure on Putin's regime.** Going further on economic sanctions, going after the oligarchs including Mr. Putin himself and wean off the Russian oil and gas that bankroll Mr. Putin's war machine.
- **no matter how long it takes, prevent any creeping normalisation of what Russia does in Ukraine.** We cannot allow the Kremlin to bite off chunks of an independent country and inflict immense human suffering and then creep back into the fold.
- **be open to diplomacy and de-escalation,** provided that the government of Ukraine has full agency in any potential settlement.

- **act now to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security.** This includes not only bolstering NATO's eastern flank but also supporting non-NATO European countries that are potentially at risk of Russian aggression, such as Moldova, Georgia and the nations of the western Balkans. And those that participate or enable Russian aggression, such as Belarus, will be subject to maximum sanctions.

As events unfold, we must welcome those seeking sanctuary here in whatever numbers eventually arise. We are a great Borough and we have great residents and we shall have to rise to the challenge as the numbers may be greater than anything we have ever experienced before. This is against a background of the aftermath of Covid and a huge pressure on our housing.

The Ukrainian refugees will need housing, schools, jobs, financial help and assistance in integrating into society. In short, they will need all the help the Council and Government can give.

We are required to divest ourselves of all Russian and Belarus contracts and investments. In practice, we have none directly with the Council, or at least so I believe. The pension fund has an immaterial exposure to investments with Russia and Belarus and their economies and has been instructed as we have to divest themselves of any exposure that they may have.

While some rules around Covid have now been relaxed and we are getting underway with living with Covid, the virus is still circulating so we should continue practicing some of the safety measures to ensure that we are protecting ourselves and those around us.

While there is no longer a legal requirement to self-isolate, you are still advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if you test positive.

Following the shift in tone from central Government, we are working towards a future where we learn to live with Covid as an endemic disease. We anticipate a shift in policy and guidance at the end of the month. With that ahead of us, on Friday the ONS survey reminded us that 1 in 30 people living in England currently have Covid, so we must keep in mind that the current guidance continues to encourage people to get a PCR test when they have Covid symptoms and isolate where appropriate.

Our ongoing Covid endemic response will include supporting the vaccination programme, continuing our work with high risk settings, and communication for individual risk management as well as working to minimise impact of endemic Covid on vulnerable individuals and communities. We will be working within even tighter financial means as the majority of the Government's resource for the Covid response is ending this month. In line with Government guidance our self-isolation calls and contact tracing ended last week and the WBC rapid covid testing service will come to a close at the end of the month.

Our vaccination clinic running on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Wokingham Central Library continues to offer 1st, 2nd and booster doses of the vaccine to all residents over the age of 12. Importantly we are reaching residents who have not previously come forward for the Covid vaccine. Please can I encourage all of you to spread the word about this vaccination offer with residents within your wards and engage in vaccination conversations where residents have questions. We are also working with our health colleagues on the vaccination programme for 5 to 11 year olds and on delivery of the Spring booster

programme within the Borough. So the message is please, please, please get everybody to use this facility and get vaccinated.

We remain mindful that different people in our communities are entering this period of transition with different perspectives. We need to continue to work together, to be patient and understanding within our communities, so that we can move forward and begin to recover from the pandemic together.

If I now move to school places, the overall picture for National Offer Day in Wokingham is consistent with last year, despite there being a large increase in the number of young people in the Borough applying for secondary school places.

To put this into the local context, in 2022 93.76%, that is approximately 94%, of pupils received an offer from their preferred list and 76.21% received their first preference. In 2021, it was lower at 93.51% receiving a preferred offer and 71.12% their top choice.

The Council was expecting an increase in applications this year and worked with schools across the Borough to increase the number of places available. We successfully negotiated with Piggott, Emmbrook and St Crispin's to increase the total number of secondary school places available in the Borough by 176.

Despite this success, there is still currently a shortfall in places within Wokingham Borough. The Council is continuing work to address this and expects to have additional places added within the Borough in the coming weeks. My colleague, Graham, will talk about this more in the coming meeting.

School place planning is a complex process, particularly in areas where most of the schools are already over-subscribed. The Council recognises how important it is to get it right and is not only working with local schools on current and future expansion plans but also recognises the need to allocate additional resources to the school place planning process going forward.

The hoped-for return to public transport has not occurred and the patronage of buses is well down on pre pandemic levels. Despite the announcement of a continuation of some form of Government restart grant, some services will be degraded though we are working hard to ensure that they are not discontinued. The message on buses is really that we have to use them or we will lose them.

I would like to remind Members that within our Constitution are the Nolan Principles. We are required to show Honesty, Leadership, Openness, Accountability, Objectivity, Integrity and Selflessness. There is ample opportunity for all Members, town and parish councils and residents to question a decision or proposal; this can be simply by giving me, the Executive Member, Chief Executive or a director a call. This administration is here for one purpose alone and that is to serve the residents. By being open and transparent hopefully if we have got it wrong it will come to light and we can get it right.

The recent debate over the Laurel Park has regrettably shown us wanting. There is ample evidence that the proposal to site a 3G pitch at Laurel Park was in the public domain in and before March 2021, when it was advertised in the Executive Forward Plan. Preliminary discussions were held with Earley Town Council in December 2020. There were no member or public questions on this proposal until February 2022, when residents en masse questioned Council. It was never raised in Overview and Scrutiny nor whilst the

budget was being scrutinised. The Executive's proposal to include it in the budget proposals, and explore and consult subject to planning, was not called in. Indeed, there is ample evidence that Earley Town Council were enthusiastic till recently. Whilst the minutes are sparse, I understand that conversations were being held to improve the pavilion to accommodate this in September 2021.

114. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

115. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

115.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

The Secondary School plan is for an expansion at Piggott School where there is no current or future planned house building in the North of the Borough, while there are currently 3,500 houses being built at Arborfield Garrison, Gorse Ride extension and over 500 ex MOD houses have been added to the private rental market at Arborfield Garrison; but Bohunt is not one of the schools listed. Of course, not forgetting the Council's plans for 4,500 houses at Hall Farm.

The plan delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Resources, acting in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the lead Member for Children's Services, to approve the procurement of the construction works and services etc.

As the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Children's Services both are Members for Remenham, where no houses are scheduled to be built in the foreseeable future, would Bohunt School not have been a more obvious school for expansion?

Answer

Thank you Gary for the question as a Member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe I will answer it as well as the Lead Member for Children's Services.

The additional places at Piggott School directly address an issue in that school's designated area. The rising numbers of older primary and junior school children living in the area around the school means that children living in the south of Twyford would be very unlikely to secure a place at the Piggott School without additional places. These children would therefore need to be transported to an alternative school, many at the Council's expense.

The other agreed additional places are in Wokingham Town, at the Emmbrook and St Crispin's Schools. Both of these schools sit on the edge of areas of major housing growth. Bohunt School was considered, but any growth in Year 7 places would be linked to the school's sixth form proposals and would therefore depend on a funding decision for that project. The report notes that additional capacity may be agreed at other schools. Subject to a future decision on the sixth form proposals, Bohunt School may also be able to offer additional places for children aged 11 to 16, that would both help address immediate

needs and provide additional long-term capacity for the new Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park communities.

Supplementary Question

Moving students to out of catchment areas is something that the School has done before so that is not a new thing.

When one looks at, as I saw, the madness of moving Farley Hill Primary School lock, stock and barrel to Arborfield Garrison so denying children living there actually outside the gates of the new school access meaning they had to travel by cars elsewhere to be educated.

So, my question really is can this Council, with the Leader of Council and Executive Member for Education who would appear to have a vested interest in the proposed decisions, who along with the same people who took the Farley Hill Primary School decision making this decision are they doing the right thing for Wokingham schools' children?

Supplementary Answer

If I may say so I disagree with what you are saying. What we are doing is for the good of all of the children across Wokingham, all 22,000 of them, and you know as well as anybody else, with your maturity on the Council, that it takes time to shift these things. It takes time to shift the designated areas and actually the admission policies are decided by the academies themselves and endorsed by the Schools' Adjudicator, which is outside of the local authority's control or remit.

115.2 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Regarding agenda item 115, Secondary School Places, there were difficulties over the allocation of secondary school places for Year 7 for the current academic year, with insufficient places being available in the locations parents wanted them. The Council determined that additional places would be needed for Year 7 for the next academic year.

However, now that the places for next September have been allocated, it appears that the Council has under-estimated demand, and more additional places are going to have to be provided than the Council had been planning. What caused the number of Year 7s to be under-estimated?

Answer

Thank you Prue for that question and for giving me the opportunity to clarify the situation. Your question actually crossed over with a briefing paper that has been circulated to many Members including your colleagues and I shall ensure it is given to the remaining Members because it outlines the detail on which the following outline explanation is based.

In Rumsfeld speak, there are known knowns and unknown knowns. Whilst some would suggest that school places correlate directly to houses built that is one factor, but not the only factor. Wokingham Borough Council is blessed with having very good schools. It is part of the attraction for people to move into or border with the Wokingham area. We received 783 applications compared to 739 last year. We have no way of tracking those that move into the area to catch a year 7 place as they move into existing properties and not just new builds.

In 2020/2021 we received 36 school place applications from Hong Kong nationals. We put on an extra two year 6 classes and at that time there was an unforeseen demand that now impacts our year 7 numbers. Given that schools determine their own catchment areas, there are a number of cross border applications which are difficult to predict but fall within the catchment areas determined by schools' admissions policies which is beyond the Borough's control. Indeed, Maiden Erlegh's popularity has meant that the last pupil to be allocated lives within 0.74 miles from the School. The same applies to the Holt.

There has been a steep rise in pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. If a school is named in the pupil's plan, then the Department for Education's direction is that that pupil must go to that designated school. That reduces places for pupils without EHCPs. Some pupils use the admissions system as a 'holding station' until they are accepted into private school which was 115 pupils last year and is fairly consistent across previous years. Whilst arrangements have been agreed with Piggott, St Crispin's and Emmbrook in collaboration with their Trusts, subject to approval on agenda item 115 being agreed. We are still working with other schools to make the accommodation where we can.

We still have a situation where 53 girls are being offered places at Reading schools. Last year there were 947 places for girls and 859 in 2020. The requirement for girls this year is 1,001. Children's Services is working closely with those families to work on the best outcomes for those girls.

If Members have specific problems, please copy me on the correspondence, as then, if I know about it I can do something about it.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for that explanation. So, the Council allocates school places every year and most of the factors that you mention recur every year, the exception being the influx of Hong Kong pupils. This particular shortage in school places has hit the Council whilst the Council is working on the new secondary school strategy.

So, my question is are you confident that there will be no more surprises that might knock that strategy off course?

Supplementary Answer

Well I hope that what I have been able to explain there is that we have got the known knowns and the we have got some variables that we have to work with and they are the parameters that we have to cope with. It is partly systemic, and it is beyond our control. The schools make their own admissions policies and I must emphasise that it is our job to administer those as best we can.

Gathering information is not always easy and often ends up incomplete because people are unwilling to give it. But we have to administer it and deal with what we have in our hands and that is the way that it is.

115.3 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Deputy Executive Member for Equalities, Poverty, the Arts and Climate Emergency the following question:

Question

As a member of the Anti-Poverty Working Group, I am pleased to see this position statement on the Anti-Poverty Strategy come to this meeting. I would also like to

acknowledge and thank the enormous contribution made by the Officers and the voluntary sector to supporting residents with the challenges that they have faced since the pandemic started.

We want to see an Anti-Poverty Strategy with a clear and ambitious vision for Wokingham and a commitment to our residents to bring about real change. This Council can't on its own end poverty in the Borough – that would take decisive action at a national level - but we need to make a commitment to doing what we can as a Council to end the problem, both through direct action in areas which we control, and also through using our influence.

As we move towards the finalisation of the Strategy, will the Council be ensuring that the final version explicitly commits to doing all that we can, to prevent and to end poverty within Wokingham?

Answer

In short we will. The Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out the key challenges faced and will present a clear ambition, for the lifetime of the Strategy and for the future.

The Strategy needs to be ambitious and yet realistic and we need to focus on what we can do as a local council working with the local voluntary sector. Prevention and breaking the cycle is key, so of course we will do all we can within our power to prevent and eliminate poverty in our Borough.

Supplementary Question

Low income families with school age children are under enormous pressure in Wokingham and many struggle with some of the uniform and other essential school costs at our local schools. As part of the implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy will the Council commit to doing all that it can to work with our maintained and academy schools and their governing bodies to influence and support them to keep school costs affordable for low income parents in a way that some other councils are already doing?

Supplementary Answer

Yes, we do plan to do this.

I mentioned at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee a couple of weeks ago that we need to galvanise the Council's influence with schools, whether that be through Officers or Councillors to continuously raise the issue of affordability within school policy so that is higher up the agenda to benefit children and parents. Of course, good communication with parents on the issue of affordability will be key.

115.4 Clive Jones asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

I was concerned to read on page 16 of the feedback report that it was felt there was capacity for Improvement to ensure that the Finance, HR and Change functions have appropriate resource and capacity to deliver what the Council needs. And that there was also a need to articulate and accelerate an ambitious Organisational Development Strategy including creating a clear employer brand.

Will the necessary resources be made available to these departments in the very near future, so that these much-needed improvements can be made?

Answer

The simple answer is yes. We are a culture of continuous improvement or that is what we are trying to be and the additional resource requirements needed to address this have been incorporated into the MTFP as agreed at Council in February. If any further budget approvals are needed, they will be sought through the Executive as a Supplementary Estimate or as part of the following year's MTFP.

Supplementary Question

I certainly welcome that you have got a continuous improvement plan and that I think you have said there that funds are going to be made available but clearly the Corporate Peer Challenge Team did not think that you were doing enough at the time of their inspection. What has changed since they visited us?

Supplementary Answer

When the Peer Review Team came you will recall Bob Watson, who has been a solid part of our Finance Team, was leaving and we were uncertain as to how we would replace him, and they were concerned at the time whether we could replace him with a person of that stature. I think we have overcome that problem and we will be hopefully looking to make a permanent appointment in that position.

The other aspects of the Peer Review were that they regarded us as a very, very ambitious Council. A very well performing Council, which we are. In my view we are one of the best in the land, if not the best and I am very proud to be the Leader of it. But also, that we have huge ambitions to make it better. We want to be the best that we can possibly be and so the Peer Group identified those ambitions and have shared with us our need in various areas for extra resources which we will do as appropriate and when. The HR function we have enormous ambitions for. We are conscious of the fact that we are aspiring to be the best and we need to be providing the best working environment and best training and support for our staff and we are a long way from that at the moment.

116. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

The Executive considered a report relating to the outcome of the Corporate Peer Challenge, undertaken by a Local Government Association team in November 2021, and a proposed action plan to address the recommendations set out in their report.

The Leader of Council provided information about the Peer Challenge Review Team and highlighted some of their findings which included that the Council: delivered valued, well performing services that provided a high quality of life for residents; and achieved good outcomes for its residents, despite receiving no central Government grant funding and notwithstanding the recent pressures of Covid was financially stable.

It was also recognised by the Team that over the last three years the Council had made significant improvements in key areas including: developing a clear vision for the Borough and a recognised Corporate Plan; development of meaningful partnership relationships, including in the health and voluntary sectors; a commitment to enhance and improve the customer experience; and significant service improvements in adult and children's service directorates.

Councillor Halsall went through the review report in more detail and highlighted the many achievements that had been recognised by the Team during the review. He also highlighted the recommendations of the review as set out in Annex 1 to the report and the action plan to address these.

In summary Councillor Halsall advised that he was very pleased with the results of the review and confirmed that a six-month check-in meeting would be held with the Peer Team in May 2022 to discuss progress against the action plan and next steps.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the final report of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2021, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- 2) the Action Plan attached at Appendix 2 that addresses the recommendations set out in the Corporate Peer Challenge report, be approved;
- 3) it be noted that the Local Government Association will be undertaking a “six month check-in” later in 2022 to allow the Council’s senior leadership to update on the Council’s progress against the action plan.

117. COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH 2022/23

The Executive considered a report relating to a revised Council Plan and also the Annual Review document setting out the Council’s achievements throughout 2020/21 and to date for 2021/22.

During his introduction the Leader of Council explained that since the Council Plan was launched, which included key objectives and a clear vision there had been made many changes eg Covid-19 and Brexit and therefore it was felt important that the Council Plan be refreshed to take account of these changes.

Councillor Halsall advised that the objective was that the Council Plan, coupled with the Medium Term Financial Plan, should give every employee and partner an understanding of what was expected of them and what success looked like. The Council’s Key Performance Indicators were also being reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate areas were being measured.

Councillor Halsall drew Members’ attention to the Annual Review documents, set out in Appendix 2 and 3 of the report, and how much had been achieved over the last two years against the backdrop of Covid. He then went on to highlight a large number of the achievements under each objective which included: during Covid providing £53m in support to local businesses and the large number of volunteers who had worked in various areas including rapid testing centres and vaccination clinics. In addition, there was increased spending on domestic abuse, mental health support, various services relating to improving adult and children wellbeing, brought some of the services from the Public Protection Partnership back under Wokingham control, the building of four new roads etc. Of special note was the large amount of work that had been undertaken to improve the customer experience and the various elements of this work.

Councillor Halsall wished to commend Officers, particularly the Chief Executive and Directors, for the catalogue of achievements over the last two years.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the slight change in articulation of the strategic priorities as proposed be noted;

- 2) the proposed changes to the Council Plan, as summarised within the report and set out in Appendix 1, be agreed;
- 3) Council be recommended that the proposed changes to the Council Plan and updates to strategic themes are approved;
- 4) the Annual Review for 2020/21 as contained in Appendix 2 and highlights for 2021/22 as contained in Appendix 3 be adopted.

118. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY - POSITION STATEMENT

The Executive considered a report setting out an update on the Anti-Poverty Strategy, including an overview of many of the initiatives that had supported residents in poverty across the Borough.

The Deputy Executive Member with responsibility for Poverty advised that the report contained a statement of where the Council was with the Strategy and highlighted the recent support offered to people who had been struggling delivered by the Council and the local voluntary sector. Councillor Blumenthal confirmed that the final Anti-Poverty Strategy and action plan was due to be presented to the Executive in May.

It was noted that the current Strategy was a work in progress and Councillor Blumenthal thanked the members of the Hardship Alliance, the wider voluntary sector, Officers and Councillors on the cross-party working group for their hard work informing the Strategy. There was still work to be done and it was important that all these bodies continued to work closely together to deliver the Strategy and develop the action plan over the years. It was acknowledged that working to break the cycle of poverty and doing all that could be done to prevent poverty was a challenge but the Council was resolute in doing all that it could to get as close as possible to achieving this.

Councillor Blumenthal confirmed that it was proposed to use the £500k from the Local Council Tax Support Scheme to go towards employing a number of roles, including among others a Project Officer to work directly with the voluntary sector and a debt officer based at the Citizens Advice Bureau. Building stronger links between the Council and the voluntary sector was crucial to co-delivering the Strategy.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) progress in development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy be recognised;
- 2) the extensive work completed since Covid-19 to support those in poverty across the Borough, much of which has been done by, or in partnership with the voluntary and community sector be acknowledged; and
- 3) the provision of £500k from the Local Council Tax Support Schemes Grant be agreed with immediate effect to support further development and delivery of the initiatives being developed as part of the Strategy. Any future funding that is required to deliver the Strategy will be taken back to a future meeting of the Executive.

119. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES (11 TO 16) STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report setting out a Wokingham Borough Secondary School Places (11 to 16) Strategy which would ensure that there were sufficient secondary school places to meet the Borough's needs until 2027/28.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Children's Services confirmed that the Council had a statutory duty to carry out school admission arrangements at Year 3, junior level and Year 7, entry to secondary school. This service was also offered to other year groups.

Councillor Howe advised that the report only related to entry to secondary school and the Strategy aimed to avoid the problems experienced in the past where numbers of pupils had exceeded the number of places that were available. It was expected that just under 500 additional Year 7 places were expected to be required between 2022 and 2027/28. It was noted that 9 out of the 10 Wokingham Borough secondary schools were academies and therefore could not be compelled to change their admission arrangements and changes could only be made on a partnership basis.

Following consultation with schools and their trust boards it was proposed that three schools, Piggott Secondary, St Crispin's and Emmbrook be grown to be able (in the long term) to offer in the order of 200 (11 to 18) places each. These proposals were in line with public responses to the 11 to 16 Secondary Strategy consultation in Autumn 2021 and was supported by the Borough Education Partnership.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Wokingham Secondary School (11 to 16) Places Strategy 2022 be adopted;
- 2) the Strategy be adopted and a multi-year programme of secondary expansion at Piggott, St Crispin's and Emmbrook Schools, with other schools to be identified be approved, with authority delegated to the Director of Children's Services and the Executive Member for Children's Services to finalise agreements and the programme of works;
- 3) any necessary authority be delegated to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Resources, acting in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the lead Member for Children's Services, to approve the procurement of the construction works and services as relevant to the secondary expansion strategy, with post 16 strategy and works programmes to be the subject of a later report to the Council's Executive.

120. DELIVERING THE GORSE RIDE REGENERATION PROJECT - PROCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION WORKS AND SERVICES

The Executive considered a report setting out the business case for the construction works and services associated with the Gorse Ride Regeneration project.

The Leader of Council reminded Members that Gorse Ride was a residential area in Finchampstead comprising of 178 properties of which 133 were Council owned and 45 privately owned. The homes were built in the 1970s for the purpose of providing accommodation for a limited period of time which was reflected in the build quality. Over the years there had been a number of issues relating to the non-traditional construction of

the homes including poor thermal insulation, some structural defects and above and below ground drainage issues. These issues had led to poor living conditions and high maintenance liabilities.

Councillor Halsall advised that the proposed regeneration would transform Gorse Ride with provision of new high quality social, rented and shared ownership homes, private market replacement homes and well designed open space. It was noted that in March 2017 the Executive agreed the intent to regenerate Gorse Ride and in March 2018 the Executive approved the progression of the redevelopment scheme. The Executive were now being asked to the procurement business case for construction works and services as relevant to the project.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended to:

- 1) approve the procurement business case of the construction works and services as relevant to the Gorse Ride Regeneration project;
- 2) give delegated authority to the Director of Resources and Assets and Director of Place and Growth to approve the awarding and execution of the construction works and services as relevant to Gorse Ride Regeneration within the funding envelope and the over-arching business case, as presented to the Executive on 17th February 2022.