



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN **MONDAY 6 MARCH 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive  
Published on 24 February 2023

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. The Committee considers submissions from a range of sources and reaches conclusions based on the weight of evidence – not on party political grounds.

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council’s Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:

<https://youtube.com/live/Xv1WiedRm60?feature=share>

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

<b>Our Vision</b>
<b><i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i></b>
<b>Enriching Lives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.</li> <li>• Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone.</li> <li>• Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of.</li> <li>• Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.</li> </ul>
<b>Providing Safe and Strong Communities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.</li> <li>• Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care.</li> <li>• Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish.</li> <li>• Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.</li> </ul>
<b>Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future.</li> <li>• Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy.</li> <li>• Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity.</li> <li>• Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.</li> </ul>
<b>Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.</li> <li>• Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow.</li> <li>• Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.</li> <li>• Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.</li> </ul>
<b>Keeping the Borough Moving</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.</li> <li>• Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions.</li> <li>• Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure.</li> <li>• Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.</li> </ul>
<b>Changing the Way We Work for You</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be relentlessly customer focussed.</li> <li>• Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers.</li> <li>• Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.</li> <li>• Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Be the Best We Can Be</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice.</li> <li>• Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working.</li> <li>• Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business.</li> <li>• Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient.</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough.</li> <li>• Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.</li> </ul>

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Councillors

Peter Dennis (Chair)  
Norman Jorgensen  
Pauline Jorgensen

David Cornish (Vice-Chair)  
Laura Blumenthal  
Gregor Murray

Shirley Boyt  
Chris Johnson  
Alistair Neal

### Substitutes

Chris Bowring  
Andy Croy  
Adrian Mather

Anne Chadwick  
Michael Firmager  
Beth Rowland

Gary Cowan  
Abdul Loyes  
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
77.		<p><b>APOLOGIES</b> To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
78.		<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023.</p>	5 - 12
79.		<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest.</p>	
80.		<p><b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any public questions</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this committee.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions">www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</a></p>	
81.		<p><b>MEMBER QUESTION TIME</b> To answer any member questions.</p>	
82.	None Specific	<p><b>LOCAL POLICE FORCE PRESENTATION</b> To receive a presentation from the Local Police Force regarding their work over the previous 12 months within the Borough.</p>	13 - 16

- |            |               |   |                |
|------------|---------------|---|----------------|
| <b>83.</b> | None Specific | <p><b>LOCAL FIRE SERVICE PRESENTATION</b></p> <p>To receive a presentation from the Local Fire Service regarding their work over the previous 12 months within the Borough.</p>   | <b>17 - 26</b> |
| <b>84.</b> | None Specific | <p><b>AGREEMENT OF TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORTS</b></p> <p>To agree the reports of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group and the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group, and to agree the formation of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group.</p> | <b>27 - 48</b> |
| <b>85.</b> | None Specific | <p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>To consider the draft scheduled items for the beginning of the 2023/24 municipal year, and to suggest any additional items for inclusion in next year's work programme.</p>   | <b>49 - 52</b> |

**Any other items which the Chair decides are urgent**

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading

**CONTACT OFFICER**

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## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.56 PM

### **Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Peter Dennis (Chair), David Cornish (Vice-Chair), Shirley Boyt, Norman Jorgensen, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Johnson, Pauline Jorgensen, Gregor Murray, Alistair Neal and Michael Firmager (Sub)

### **Executive Members Present**

Councillors: Ian Shenton (Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure) and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey (Executive Member for Finance)

### **Officers Present**

Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist) and Graham Ebers (Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Resources and Assets))

### **67. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Gregor Murray. Michael Firmager attended the meeting as a substitute.

### **68. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Minutes of the extraordinary meetings of the Committee held on 17 October, 26 October and 29 November, and the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### Matters Arising

- Could the action regarding whether WBC was responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers who left care to go to University be chased;
- Could assurances be given that our in-development and planned solar farms would be connected to the grid in good time, as there were reports of other large sites having to wait up to 15 years to be connected.

### **69. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **70. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

### **71. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

### **72. COMBATING DRUGS PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 47 to 50, which provided an update on the work carried out to date in relation to the Combatting Drugs Partnership.

Due to the Lead Officer being unwell, Members raised a number of points which they would like to see included when this item returned.

Ian Shenton, Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points and queries:

- How spread was the drugs problem within the Wokingham Borough Council Area? Executive Member response – Further information would be provided when this item returned to the Committee;
- What actions were being considered to break the cycle of demand? Executive Member response – Further information would be provided when this item returned to the Committee;
- Could further comment be provided regarding the relatively high levels of ‘drug driving’? Executive Member response – Further information would be provided when this item returned to the Committee;
- What was being done to combat the use of Nitrous Oxide, especially amongst school children? Executive Member response – Further information would be provided when this item returned to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Ian Shenton be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The above comments and questions be included within a more detailed report at a future meeting of the Committee.

### **73. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) - UPDATE TO BIDS**

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 51 to 84, which provided an update to Capital and Revenue bids following receipt of the Local Governance Finance Settlement.

The report presented updates to actions raised at previous meetings of the Committee, in addition to updated bids.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey (Executive Member for Finance) and Graham Ebers (Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Resources and Assets)) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points and queries:

- Had the process of budget scrutiny, and associated suggestions, offered any further savings options? Officer response – Whilst suggestions may not have had a direct effect in this year’s budget, many of the suggestions would provide useful insights into future bids and budgets;
- What other options had been considered for the Toutley Depot scheme? Officer response – Other options included everything from partial refurbishments, partial completion, through to full completion. A considerable amount of work had been put into considering what works could be foregone within the capital programme;

- Were the effects on increasing our insurance excesses worthwhile when considering changes to premiums? Officer response – Specific details would be included within individual tenders;
- It was noted that the £1.8m additional funding via the Local Government Finance Settlement or the additional £2m in expenditure regarding national living wage increases to Adult Social Care staff was not included within the original assumptions presented to the Committee, which had been based off of the best estimates available at the time;
- How were negotiations related to additional grant income from the better Care Fund progressing? Officer response – Both the nature of the calculation and improving the calculation were important issues. This was not a straightforward issue, and further detail would be provided as a written answer;
- It was noted that Council Tax did not cover all expenditure, and other income streams including retained business rates and grants were used to fund the revenue budget;
- It was noted that a chart, which broke down the income sources available to the Council, was contained within the Chief Finance Officer's report;
- It was noted that the proposals before the Committee represented a balanced budget, which was a statutory requirement;
- How much did the DSG recovery (plus 1%) represent? Officer response – The regulations relating to this expenditure had changed, and would now represent an approximate £1.25m spend in year 1, an approximate £2.25m spend in year 2, and an approximate £3.86m spend in year 3. We had limited control over this spend as this was about early intervention, support, partner working and complex needs;
- The Committee had been previously advised that reserves could not be used this year. Why was reserve utilisation of £1.4m being proposed? Executive Member and officer response – The £1.4m was being taken from the re3 equalisation fund rather than the General Fund, and the re3 fund had no obvious use at this time. The critical reserve was the General Fund, and the narrative given to Local Authorities within the Local Government Finance Settlement was that Council's should make use of reserves where possible;
- It was requested that additional detail be provided in relation to the additional special item proposed for demand management within the Adult's Services Directorate;
- It was noted that the changes to the bid relating to communities running smaller libraries represented an accounting change rather than an actual change to the bid value;
- With regards to the social care system, was there no expected growth during the life of the contract? Officer response – A written answer would be provided;
- In relation to the previously proposed £900 charge for a second resident car parking permit, was this still planned to go ahead, and if so, could this increase be justified? Officer response – This had not been decided upon, however, such a change would not be implemented until at least 2024/25;

- Was the savings bid of £250k in relation to waste and recycling as a result of increased recycling rates? Officer response – No, this was a growth bid which had been reduced as the assumptions behind it had been challenged and the Service now felt that they could make do with less growth;
- It was noted that the bid relating to Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services had been changed from a growth bid to a one-year special item to allow arrangements to be reviewed;
- A range of comments were made with regards to the additional Coroners Court expenditure. It was noted that this Service was operated by Reading Borough Council, whilst the Service itself was a statutory requirement and was funded by each Berkshire local authority. It was agreed that a paper be presented to Overview and Scrutiny to understand the works carried out and the associated costs;
- In relation to the identified risks, was there a scale or percentage chance of such risks occurring? Officer response – These were still of relatively high risk, however they were just below the threshold to require inclusion within the proposed budget. There was no doubt that inflation pressures would increase budget lines across the Council;
- What inflation figure had been included within the proposals? Officer response – The inflation figure was broken down into three areas. Officer pay award was budgeted for four-percent (23/24), four-percent (24/25) and three-percent (25/26). Adult Social Care was budgeted for a six-percent increase during the next financial year, which would be challenging. Contract inflation was budgeted at three-percent. Officers and Members would need to work very hard to keep all inflationary pressures down;
- In relation to the new California Lakeside refurbishment bid, totalling £600k, did this take into consideration that the project would be half funded by the Parish Council? Officer response – Whilst a written response would be provided for clarity, it was understood that the £600k figure included contributions from all parties, and credit lines would be shown elsewhere;
- How were savings of £6m to the California Crossroads project proposed to be realised? Officer response - Whilst a written response would be provided for clarity, it was understood that the scheme had been significantly reprofiled to future years, whilst it was possible that some of this spend had been carried out during the current financial year;
- As the Earley footbridge was now proposed to be repaired rather than rebuilt, was there a risk that this could lead to increased long-term costs? Officer response – The bridge had not yet reached its operational lifespan, and no firm decision had been made on whether it was to be repaired or replaced. Further investigations needed to be carried out on the best way forwards, and any decision would be based on a detailed business case;
- Was there any update with regards to the proposed Arborfield pool? Officer response – This scheme had been moved to 2025/26 as it had yet to be proved in terms of a business case. This had been an aspiration for some time, and had featured in a number of Medium Term Financial Plans;



- Did the reduction in funding for public rights of way indicate a reduction in future schemes? Officer response – It had been imperative to produce a balanced budget, and as such all Services had been challenged to provide savings wherever possible;
- Were public rights of way schemes which were part funded by Town and Parish Councils, for example in Shinfield, at risk? Executive Member response – A number of schemes were still proposed to go ahead, and details on specific schemes could be provided by the Service or Executive Member;
- It was suggested that it may be prudent for the Committee to spend additional time reviewing the Capital Programme in future years, as these represented very large spends which impacted on the infrastructure delivered for residents;
- How were savings associated with land acquisitions for major road schemes to be achieved? Officer response – The Council held a contingency fund to compulsory purchases relating to major highways development schemes. As the Core Strategy was now coming to an end, there was only one further property to be purchased at this time. As such, the remaining contingencies could be released which was very helpful when producing a balanced capital programme;
- Assuming there was to be a move to fortnightly bin collections, would wheelie bins be purchased via capital funds? Officer response – The business case was based on utilisation of the re3 equalisation fund to fund the cost of purchasing the wheelie bins. These funds would be replenished via the revenue provided within the ongoing business case, which would provide savings overall. A net position would be realised after year two of the changes being implemented;
- If the re3 reserve was being utilised, what would happen if savings were not achieved and if so what were the risks of the reserve being held at a lower level? Officer response – The risks were the same as any other savings proposal, and savings which were not realised would be reported as a pressure within ongoing revenue monitoring. There was always the potential to need to use the re3 reserve, as towards the end of the contract there would be costs, and using such reserves did increase the risk should something unexpected happen outside of the contracted spend. The Council currently held over £100m in earmarked reserves;
- Was there budget for provision of extra green recycling bags should collections move to fortnightly? Officer response – There were over 54,000 bags in storage should residents need extra bags, and the existing budget was deemed sufficient;
- Was the re3 equalisation fund used for refurbishment of refuse vehicles? Officer response – No, the fund could be used to cover costs associated with the end of the contract;
- How much interest would be lost as a result of utilisation of £3m of the re3 equalisation fund for purchasing wheelie bins and balancing the revenue budget? Officer response – A written answer would be provided to the Committee;
- It was noted that specific details regarding the proposed changes to waste collection would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at an upcoming meeting;

- It was requested that an item be considered by the Committee in the summer of 2023, detailing the different earmarked reserves held by the Council in addition to what they were safeguarding against;
- It was noted that the Personnel Board had considered a more detailed (part 2) report regarding specific agency staff, and a further update would be taken to the Board in future.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Imogen Shepherd-DuBey and Graham Ebers be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) A written response be provided as to the effects on increasing our insurance excesses when considering the associated changes to premiums;
- 3) Additional detail be provided as to how the negotiations related to additional grant income from the better Care Fund were progressing;
- 4) Additional detail be provided in relation to the additional special item proposed for demand management within the Adult's Services Directorate;
- 5) A written answer be provided as to whether there was any expected growth over the life of the social care system contract;
- 6) A paper be presented to Overview and Scrutiny to understand the works carried out by the Coroners Court and associated costs;
- 7) In relation to California Lakeside, a written answer be provided as to whether this bid took into consideration that the project would be half funded by the Parish Council;
- 8) A written response be provided as to how savings of £6m relating to the California Crossroads project were to be realised;
- 9) The Committee consider spending additional time reviewing the Capital Programme in future years, as these represented very large spends which impacted on the infrastructure delivered for residents;
- 10) A written response be provided as to how much interest would be lost as a result of utilisation of £3m of the re3 equalisation fund for purchasing wheelie bins and balancing the revenue budget;
- 11) An item be considered by the Committee in the summer of 2023, detailing the different earmarked reserves held by the Council in addition to what they were safeguarding against.

**74. LCWIP TASK AND FINISH GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for the LCWIP Task and Finish Group, set out on agenda page 85.

It was noted that the Group would be considering the high-level LCWIP document, which would be used to facilitate future bids to Active Travel England for Future Schemes. It was likely that the Group would meet on two occasions, prior to producing a short summary

report for consideration by the Committee in early March and subsequently the Executive later in March.

It was requested that plans and other documents submitted to the Group for consideration be well formatted and of a good resolution, as these were issues during the consultation.

It was suggested that expert groups including SusTrans be considered as witnesses by the Group.

**RESOLVED** That the Terms of Reference be agreed, subject to the addition of expert groups including SusTrans to be considered as witnesses by the Group.

## **75. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered their work programme for the remainder of the municipal year, set out in agenda pages 87 to 90.

The Committee received an update on the work of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group, who had come to the end of their review and would be submitting their report to the Committee and the Executive in March. In response to queries, it was requested that officers ascertain how a Preferred Registered Provider might be removed from the list, and whether Loddon Homes was selected for many developments.

**RESOLVED** That

- 1) Callum Wernham be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The work programme be noted;
- 3) Officers ascertain how a Preferred Registered Provider might be removed from the preferred list, and whether Loddon Homes was selected for many developments.

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# Bracknell & Wokingham LPA

## Wokingham Area

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### Crime

Total – 7332

Percentage change of 12%

22% resulted in FAT

### Domestic Abuse

Total - 2289

Percentage change of 12%

### Residential Burglary

Total – 223

Percentage change of 2%

8% resulted in FAT

### Violence with Injury

Total - 599

Percentage change of -5%

35% resulted in FAT

### Knife Enabled Crime

Total – 40

Percentage change of -31%

### Sexual Offences

Total - 212

Percentage change of 2%

### Rape

Total - 64

Percentage change of -17%

# Bracknell & Wokingham LPA

## Wokingham Area

### LPA Priorities:

- **Op Kremlin** – sexual offences meeting: Review and case management
- **Op Kinetic** – domestic abuse meeting: Review all DA offences link to MATAC & MARAC
- **Op Kosh** – knife crime meeting: Review all knife enabled offences, habitual knife carriers, hot spots
- **Op Kryptonite** – crime meeting: Burglary, Robbery, Vehicle crime, Drugs
- **On Scene Referral Scheme** – working with Involve, officers can refer cases to access support services through [JoyApp](#)

### Neighbourhood Policing:

- **Op Sceptre** – knife crime: targeting habitual knife carriers and hot spot locations
- **Op Kosh** – joint operation with Reading over Christmas. Dedicated resources through VRU funding enforcing bail checks, welfare checks and action arrests. 1 x offence during this 3 week period.
- **EMRAC** – partnership review & management for cases of missing and exploited children
- **Multi Agency Problem Solving Group** – partnership meeting who collectively tackle long term problems across the area
- **Civil Orders** – Closure Orders - 3 / ASB Injunctions 5 / Public Space PO - 1 / CPN/W -3

# Bracknell & Wokingham LPA

## Bracknell Area

### Priority Crime & Tasking Team:

- PCT & Tasking Team deal with neighbourhood crimes - focused upon robbery, house burglary, vehicle crime, drug crime. They also support arrest of high risk offenders especially domestic abuse.

### 🦘 Operation Kangaroo

- Series of over 50 keyless vehicle thefts
- Initially limited enquiries with no forensic opportunities
- As an emerging crime trend PCT reviewed new and previously filed offences
  - Obtained CCTV showing the same 2 offenders
  - Intelligence teams analysed data to identify the vehicle the offenders were using
  - Used a range of overt & covert tactics to identifying the two main offenders
- Offenders arrested & pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit theft of 54 vehicles and possession with intent to supply class A & B drugs following related drug warrant – recovered drugs to a street value of circa £100k

# Bracknell & Wokingham LPA

## Bracknell Area

### Neighbourhood Policing Partnership's

#### Civil Order

- **Closure Order, Ashridge Road, Wokingham** – occupant vulnerable being exploited by drug dealers
- WNHPT & WBC granted emergency closure notice
- Then applied for closure order at RMC who granted a partial closure order
- Prevent further exploitation as he has been left alone with no breaches identified
- WBC are supporting the occupant with potential move from the estate

#### Crime

- **Wokingham Shop Watch** – suggested by the businesses on the town
- Town PSCO worked closely with businesses, Town Council and WBC
- Funded for 2 years by CSP
- Use system to record ASB/offences & message each other and share information
- Lead to better reporting and earlier arrests of offenders



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PRESENTATION

Group Manager Dave Crease

 [rbfrs.co.uk](http://rbfrs.co.uk)

 [@RBFRSOfficial](https://twitter.com/RBFRSOfficial)

 [RoyalBerksFRS](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalBerksFRS)

 [RoyalBerkshireFire](https://www.instagram.com/RoyalBerkshireFire)

 [Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Royal-Berkshire-Fire-&-Rescue-Service)

Agenda Item 83.



## » PREVENTION 2022-23

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 we have

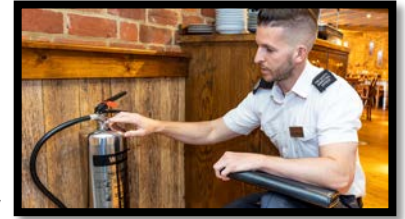
- 1073 Safe & Well visits in Wokingham Borough
- 12 Threat of Arson visits. 100% completed within 48 hours
- Introduced an evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness Safe & Well activities
- Implemented a quality assurance process for Prevention activities
- Introduced an equality monitoring survey for Safe & Well visits
- Increased attendance at partnership meetings such as Wokingham Community Safety Partnership, Problem Solving Task Group, Community Futures working group



## » PROTECTION 2022-23

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 we have

- Inspected all premises deemed Very High on our Risk Based Inspection Programme
- Implemented a quality assurance process for Protection activities
- Moved all buildings from the High Rise Residential Building Project in to business as usual for the Hub teams
- Introduced a reporting tool in response to the Fire Safety Regulations 2022.
- Completed 120 Planning consultations for Wokingham Borough



## » RESPONSE 2022-23

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 we have

- Attended 1019 incidents in Wokingham Borough, achieving an appliance within 10 minutes 64% of occasions
- Successfully inducted 18 apprentices in to the service.
- Created a community garden space at Wokingham Fire Station
- Implemented an operational training schedule to enhance operational preparedness
- Completed all outstanding operational visits to High Risk premises



# » WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PRESENTATION

## Financial Position

(2023/2024 Budget - £41.975 million)



- Between 2010 and March 2016 we saved £4.96million from budget
- Between April 2016 – March 2022 we have delivered a further £2.401 million
- Savings target for 2023/24 is £774,000
- Additional income to be generated is £487,000



## » WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PRESENTATION

### Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023- 2026

- Efficiencies and additional income in 2023/24 is £1.261 million

#### Invest-to-Save Projects

- Installation of LED lighting will generate savings of £84,000 annually from 2024/25
- Installation of solar PV systems will generate savings of £46,000 annually from 2025/26



## » CRMP 2023 - 27

Within the CRMP, a number of priorities have been identified for the next four years:

- **Priority 1.** We will develop our Integrated Service Delivery Strategy
- **Priority 2.** We will develop a Risk Based Prevention
- **Priority 3.** We will develop our response model to ensure that we are providing the most effective response to incidents within Berkshire
- **Priority 4.** We will review non-statutory incidents, to determine our requirement for attending these incidents.
- **Priority 5.** We will develop our Service to reduce the impact of fire safety issues in commercial buildings.
- **Priority 6.** We will provide a minimum of 14 frontline fire appliances utilising our Wholetime and On-call staff as effectively as possible.

<https://www.rbfrs.co.uk/latest-news/2023/have-your-say-on-the-future-of-your-fire-and-rescue-service/>

# Questions





» Thank you

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**ROYAL BERKSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

 [rbfrs.co.uk](http://rbfrs.co.uk)

 @RBFROfficial

 RoyalBerksFRS

 RoyalBerkshireFire

 Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Agreement of Task and Finish Group Reports</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2023
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Overview and Scrutiny provides an independent “critical friend” challenge to the Executive, whilst working with the Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. Submission of recommendations for improvement to the Executive, on issues of particular importance, is an example of good governance.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Consider and agree the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group report, set out as Appendix 1 to this report;
- 2) Consider and agree the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group report, set out as Appendix 2 to this report;
- 3) Confirm the formation of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation;
- 4) Notes that the Active Travel Task and Finish Group will provide periodic updates to the Committee, on the work undertaken since the last update.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The report seeks approval of two task and Finish Group reports and associated sets of recommendations to the Executive. The two Task and Finish Groups are the Preferred Registered Providers (PRP) Task and Finish Group, and the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Task and Finish Group. The reports are scheduled for submission to the Executive at their meeting on 21 March 2023, where a list of officer responses will be provided for each recommendation.

Agreement is sought for the formation of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation.

## Background

### PRP Task and Finish Group

- 1.1 The Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group consisted of Councillors Shirley Boyt (Chair), Chris Johnson (Vice-Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Andy Croy and Rebecca Margetts.
- 1.2 The Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 25 May 2022. The Group has met on 7 occasions, and has engaged with a range of stakeholders including the Executive Member for Housing, tenants of social housing, the Association of Retained Council Housing, and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel. The Group surveyed tenants of Preferred Registered Providers (PRPs), and received over 165 responses which helped to provide a snapshot of the concerns and issues of our residents.
- 1.3 WBC's new set of preferred partners were agreed by the Executive at their meeting in February 2023. The Group's recommendations seek to add to and amend the draft partnership agreement, which is to be finalised and signed by each PRP prior to commencement in April 2023.
- 1.4 The Group agreed the following Terms of reference:
  - To look at the service provided by each of the Council's preferred registered providers (PRPs) and to compare performance with WBC's housing service, WBC housing companies and industry best practice.
  - To recommend minimum service levels which tenants will expect of PRPs and WBC housing.
  - To consider the Council's current approach to appointing and monitoring Preferred Registered Providers.
  - To consider the legal framework underpinning this process.
  - To consider the views of local stakeholders.
  - To consider the views of Housing Associations and WBC's own social housing stakeholders.
  - To consider examples of best practice.
  - To consider how tenant satisfaction, housing provider performance and other KPIs are measured by PRPs, WBC and other social housing providers.
  - To consider how appointment of Preferred Registered Providers could be improved to create a single excellent level of service, regardless of whether a resident uses a housing association or WBC provision.
  - To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with recommendations for improvement.
- 1.5 The Group considered evidence from the following stakeholders:
  - Steve Bowers (Chair of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel)
  - Councillor Stephen Conway (Executive Member for Housing)
  - Jonathan Cox (Director of Data and Business Intelligence at Housemark)

- Paul Price (CEO of the Association of Retained Council Housing)
- Rhian Hayes (WBC - Assistant Director Economic Development and Growth)
- Frances Haywood (WBC - Head of Strategic Housing)
- Zulfiqar Mulak (WBC - Interim Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Communities)
- Simon Price (WBC - Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Communities)
- Tenants of PRPs within the Borough via survey
- Snapshot information from WBC Councillors via email.

## **LCWIP Task and Finish Group**

- 2.1 The LCWIP Task and Finish Group consisted of Councillors Al Neal (Chair), Peter Dennis (Vice-Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Chris Johnson and Pauline Jorgensen.
- 2.2 The LCWIP Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 November 2022, whilst their Terms of Reference were agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2023. The Group has met on 2 occasions, and has engaged with Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, a WSP consultant and the Transport Planning Team Manager. Due to time constraints, the Group were only able to review the main LCWIP report, whilst the related appendices were not considered by the Group, such as early outline maps and designs.
- 2.3 The Group agreed the following Terms of reference:
- To consider the latest draft and information relating to the LCWIP, and to formulate any recommendations for improvement to the Executive;
  - To consider the summary of results from the latest consultation, to inform any potential recommendations to the Executive;
  - To consider how the plan may be shaped to help encourage more residents to use sustainable transport methods, for example improving and promoting cycleways;
  - To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with any recommendations for improvement.
- 2.4 Due to time constraints, the Group were unable to review the detailed appendices to the LCWIP report. As such, their Recommendations focus solely on the LCWIP report and not the detailed appendices, which include maps and consultation responses.
- 2.5 The Group considered evidence from the following stakeholders:
- Robert Curtis (WBC – Transport Planning Team Manager)
  - Councillor Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways)
  - Andy Winmill (Associate Director, WSP)

## Analysis of Issues

The LCWIP Task and Finish Group is recommending that an Active Travel Task and Finish Group is formed, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation. It is recommended that this Group initially consists of the same membership as the LCWIP Task and Finish Group, and subsequent membership is agreed annually at the first meeting of the municipal year of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Active Travel Task and Finish Group will likely be required to meet periodically for a number of years, assessing developments to the LCWIP and scrutinising detailed design proposals for specific projects as and when bids were submitted. Whilst the core Group will assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis, relevant Ward Members and Town and Parish Council representatives will be included in meetings relating to detailed design of specific schemes prior to public consultation.

Periodic updates from the Group will be presented to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, detailing their review of any changes to the LCWIP in addition to their overview and scrutiny of specific proposed schemes. Any specific recommendations to the Executive which require a report will be agreed by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Suggestions and alterations relating to specific schemes, where the Group (including Ward Members and Town and Parish Council representatives) were fully supportive in addition to highways officers and the Executive Member are proposed to amend scheme proposals directly for expediency purposes, with a summary update provided to the Committee at a later date.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

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

#### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

The formation of the Active Travel task and Finish Group would necessitate officer time, which can be delivered via existing resourcing.

#### **Cross-Council Implications**

The Active Travel Task and Finish Group will allow for scrutiny input into design proposals for major Active Travel schemes alongside local Ward Members and representatives from relevant Town and Parish Councils, prior to public consultation.

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
The LCWIP seeks to promote and improve active travel throughout the Borough, which facilitate considerable improvements to the Borough's net zero ambitions. The Recommendations of the LCWIP Task and Finish Group seek to make improvements to the LCWIP report and facilitate ongoing Overview and Scrutiny of the document and schemes as they develop. There are no negative impacts associated with the recommendations of either Task and Finish Group with regards to WBC's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
N/A

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Preferred Partners Report, February 2023 Executive; LCWIP Executive Report, March 2023 Executive.

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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDERS TASK & FINISH GROUP**

### **REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**MARCH 2023**

#### **Task & Finish Group Members:**

Councillor Shirley Boyt (Chair)

Councillors Chris Johnson (Vice Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Andy Croy and Rebecca Margetts

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## **PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDERS**

### **Foreword by Councillor Shirley Boyt**

Each resident offered social housing from the WBC social housing register should be treated fairly and equitably, regardless of their housing provider. This is the principle that drove the formation and work of this Task and Finish Group. There has been a general hypothesis amongst some Members, based on feedback from residents, that tenants of WBC retained social housing were often receiving a better service than those who were housed with Housing Associations. As WBC were about to enter into a new agreement with Preferred Registered Providers (PRPs), a set of Housing Associations who were preferred by WBC to deliver the majority of social housing in the Borough, this appeared the ideal time to look at how we work with our preferred partners to deliver a great service for all residents using social housing.

Whilst retained housing tenants in the Borough have access to a tenants' forum and have developed a tenants' charter, our evidence gathering showed that this was either not publicised by many PRPs or simply not offered. Ensuring that tenants have a voice and say in their housing and community is fundamental in improving conditions and service delivery. In addition, many tenants found it difficult to reliably contact local PRP neighbourhood officers to get issues resolved expediently. We hope that our report and recommendations will encourage our partners to make positive changes to improve their communications with tenants.

The primary objective of the Task and Finish Group was to produce recommendations for improvement which resulted in improved conditions for social housing tenants of PRPs across the Borough. In so doing, Members were impressed by the commitment and drive of our WBC housing officers, their willingness to get involved in this Scrutiny process and provide ideas for improvement.

The Task and Finish Group received evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including tenants of PRPs, Borough Council Officers and Members, the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP), the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH), and Housemark (a data and analytics company focussing on social housing).

In preparing the report, the Task and Finish Group sought to understand the main concerns of tenants and potential omissions in current service delivery. The recommendations aim to seek commitment from PRPs to deliver improved services for tenants, including enhanced tenant involvement and more local communications channels between PRPs, tenants and WBC.

Finally, I would like to thank the residents, Officers, Members and outside bodies who gave up their time and contributed to the Task and Finish Group's work in such a positive and constructive manner.

Shirley Boyt,  
March 2023

## Section 1 - Executive Summary

- 1.1 When residents reach the top of the WBC social housing register, they are offered accommodation which could be either retained WBC social housing or housing operated by a registered provider. WBC maintains a set of preferred registered providers (PRPs), meaning that they deliver the majority of social housing in the Borough. WBC promotes these providers to developers and asks that they be considered to deliver social housing as a priority.
- 1.2 Whilst a tenant might be placed with a PRP, it is important to note that they are still our residents and deserve a proper and fair service. WBC has an agreement in place with our PRPs, which is not intended to be a legally binding document. It is a statement of intent by the parties to it, who undertake to use all reasonable endeavours to meet the agreement principles through a partnership approach. This agreement will be signed at the end of March by our new set of PRPs to be ready for operation in April 2023.
- 1.3 The recommendations of this Group seek to add to and strengthen the agreement between WBC and our partners, to deliver a service more akin to that received by tenants of our retained housing. Whilst this agreement is not legally binding, it is anticipated that significant improvements for tenants can be realised through a partnership approach.
- 1.4 In order to look at how tenants of PRPs might receive an improved service, the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee established the Task and Finish Group. The primary objective of the Group was to make recommendations for improvement of the service received by tenants, and to increase their overall satisfaction in future.
- 1.5 In order to understand the complexities of the issues, the Task and Finish Group received evidence from tenants of PRPs, Borough Council Officers and Members, TLIP, ARCH, and Housemark. The evidence highlighted a number of themes including:
  - Could PRPs facilitate better, meaningful, tenant engagement where tenants are at the centre of the process?
  - Were there opportunities for tenants to be provided with up-to-date contact information on local neighbourhood housing officers employed by their PRP?
  - Could PRPs provide more local, Borough-based, performance data to officers on a regular basis?
  - Were there opportunities to work with PRPs to achieve additional provision of social housing for priority groups, over and above the level required in legal agreements?

- Was it possible for PRPs to provide more regular details of their forthcoming development schedule to WBC, to allow officers to better ensure that the needs of the Borough were being met?
  - How could tenants be better informed about the complaints process for issues occurring with their homes – how could local Ward Members act as advocates for tenants in particularly complex cases?
  - What could be done to ensure that management fees and charges were fair, proportionate and delivered the promised services, whilst ensuring that refunds were issued where credit had been built up?
- 1.6 The Task and Finish Group carried out a survey of tenants of current PRPs and a selection of the other largest registered providers in the Borough. This was distributed directly via providers, and shared via WBC and Member social media channels. In total, approximately 165 responses were received, which gave a snapshot of some of the issues faced by tenants of PRPs. This data was used to inform this report and the recommendations therein.
- 1.7 Discussions with the Executive Member for Housing, TLIP, ARCH, and Housemark provided insights into industry best practice, upcoming changes related to the Social Housing White Paper and associated upcoming Social Housing Regulations Bill, and innovative ideas for improved partnership working with PRPs. Discussions highlighted that the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper and associated upcoming Social Housing Regulations Bill would require PRPs to increase their standards in many areas, including standardising how they engaged tenants for satisfaction feedback. Whilst these changes should lead to improvement for tenants, this will not be in place immediately. As such, the Group hopes that their recommendations will help PRPs prepare for the upcoming requirements and build upon them to deliver better results for tenants in the Borough.
- 1.8 Overall, the Group was impressed by the commitment of Council officers to seek improvements for tenants of PRPs, to deliver a single standard of social housing for tenants. It was recognised that WBC had no direct control over PRPs, other than taking them off the preferred list. However, officers showed commitment to deliver partnership working to encourage PRPs to improve the service offered to tenants over the life of the partnership agreement.
- 1.9 We hope that the recommendations in the report will help to drive improved partnership working, deliver better outcomes for tenants, and enable the voice of the tenant to be at the front and centre of service delivery. The report will be submitted to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval and will then be submitted to the Council's Executive for consideration of the recommendations.

## **Section 2 - Recommendations**

- 2.1 WBC assist PRPs to facilitate a tenant support forum within the Borough, made up of tenants from each registered provider, using TLIP as a model. The tenants will draw up the terms of reference for the panel.
- 2.2 Any existing PRP operated tenants' forum should broadly align with the terms of reference as agreed via recommendation 1, and PRPs should be encouraged to ensure that they have a tenant representative on the wider tenants' forum.
- 2.3 PRPs support tenants to develop a tenants' charter that builds on the Government's social housing charter during the first three years of the partnership agreement.
- 2.4 PRPs maintain up to date named operational contacts within the Borough, with details provided to tenants.
- 2.5 PRPs provide and maintain up to date details (email and phone) for a minimum of one named person who will be the point of contact for officers and Ward Councillors in the event of problems arising.
- 2.6 PRPs provide Borough specific performance data to WBC on a regular basis. The specifics of the data required will be determined by WBC.
- 2.7 PRPs work constructively with WBC to secure affordable provision from developers, over and above Section 106 provision, to meet the needs of WBC's priority groups.
- 2.8 PRPs provide details including address, type of property and type of tenure of all the properties they hold in the Borough. These details will be updated annually.
- 2.9 PRPs provide full details to housing officers of their forthcoming development programmes on a quarterly basis.
- 2.10 PRPs provide details of the tenants' charter, tenants' forum and contact details of local operational contacts within the welcome packs that they provide to new tenants.
- 2.11 PRPs resolve complaints and disputes in a timely and satisfactory manner. Where the tenant remains unsatisfied, details of the Ombudsman escalation process should be provided, and tenants should be informed that their local Ward Councillor(s) may be able to support and advocate for them in this process.
- 2.12 PRPs ensure that service charges are proportionate and transparent; they represent good value for money; the service being charged for is being delivered. Estimated charges should be avoided but where they are unavoidable any over-payments will be refunded promptly.

### **3. Section 3 – Background to Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

3.1 Over 88 percent of survey respondents either did not know or commented that their PRP did not have a tenants' forum. Worryingly, of the remainder who stated that they had such a forum, only 16 percent felt satisfied that their views were listened to. The Group felt it crucial that tenants had the opportunity to raise issues and highlight areas where things were going well. The Group considered TLIP, the tenants' forum for our retained social housing, to be a model of best practice. Officers commented that a similar forum for PRPs was in operation at other local authorities, including London Boroughs. Such a forum would allow individual PRPs to learn about and work on common local issues, whilst ensuring that tenants had a voice and could raise local issues to their housing providers, who may operate in a much larger area than just the Wokingham Borough.

#### **Recommendation 2**

3.2 The Task and Finish Group strongly believe that each PRP should encourage their tenants to have a representative on the wider tenants' forum, as set out in recommendation 1. Where a PRP wishes to continue to operate their own forum in addition to the wider tenant's forum, the Group feel that the terms of reference should broadly align with those agreed for the wider forum, to keep discussions consistent.

#### **Recommendation 3**

3.3 A tenants' charter is a document, developed by tenants, which is designed to ensure all residents know what they can expect from their housing association landlord. The Social Housing White Paper and associated upcoming Social Housing Regulations Bill will provide a minimum framework for PRPs to work with. The Group asks that PRPs begin the process of developing their charters for properties within the Borough, prior to the requirement for them to do so. In addition, the Group hopes that PRPs will see the Government requirements as a starting point, and will encourage their tenants to build on and enhance these requirements.

#### **Recommendation 4**

3.4 Many Members had experience of residents contacting them as they were struggling to contact a local employee of their PRP. This was confirmed by the survey, as there were many comments from residents who stated that it could be difficult to contact their PRP about issues including repairs and maintenance, which led to delays and situations worsening. The Group feel that all tenants should have the contact details of a local community neighbourhood officer from their PRP, who could facilitate repairs and other works as they should have good knowledge and understanding of issues in the locality.

#### **Recommendation 5**

3.5 Following on from Recommendation 4, Ward Councillors often found it frustrating to get in direct contact with PRPs operating within their Ward. This was particularly difficult as residents would usually come to Councillors following

a period of issues and difficulty communicating with their PRP, expecting Members to be able to escalate their issue directly. Provision of a central contact for each PRP, for both officers and Members, would ensure that issues were received by PRPs in a timely manner and did not get lost within the wider organisation.

### **Recommendation 6**

3.6 The Task and Finish Group felt that Borough specific performance data should be provided to WBC. As many PRPs were quite large organisations, it was not uncommon for officers to receive data that included large swathes of a PRP's housing stock, including properties within London and other areas. This approach presents datasets which did not reflect the Borough. The Group therefore find it reasonable to expect PRPs to provide officers with Borough specific data, which can be used to monitor the performance of PRPs in the Borough more effectively in future.

### **Recommendation 7**

3.7 The Group considered a range of evidence regarding the delivery of social housing to meet the needs of the Borough from industry experts, officers and the Executive Member for Housing. Housing developers are required to deliver (or provide a commuted sum in lieu of delivery, where appropriate) forty-percent of housing as affordable provision. Housing officers assess the proposed delivery, and work with developers to ensure that these units meet the needs of priority groups within the borough. The Group request that PRPs work with our housing officers to identify opportunities for over delivery of affordable and social housing provision, over and above the number required by S106 agreements, to meet the needs of priority groups within the Borough. Any over delivery will help ensure that WBC can meet the needs of priority groups within the Borough, enabling residents to live locally to friends and family.

### **Recommendation 8**

3.8 Towards the outset of this Task and Finish Group, the Group were made aware that there was not an actively maintained list of PRP properties within the Borough. Officers are actively working with housing associations to address this issue. The maintenance of this list is key, as it provides officers and Members with information as to where social housing is located and which PRP is responsible for each property. The Group feels that the onus should be on the PRPs to provide this information on an annual basis, which can then be made available to Ward Members.

### **Recommendation 9**

3.9 In order to allow housing officers to plan for provision of social housing for priority groups, it is essential that they are provided with forthcoming development programmes by each PRP. The Group feels it appropriate for this to be carried out quarterly, which will allow officers to accurately assess upcoming development to ensure the right type of social housing is being provided.



### **Recommendation 10**

3.10 PRPs ordinarily provide a 'welcome pack' of information to new tenants of social housing, providing the with key information about their property and local services. The Group feel that this is an excellent opportunity to inform new tenants about how to get involved in the tenants' forum, information about the tenants' charter, and to provide the most up to date local contact information for a neighbourhood officer within the PRP to help resolve any issues. Whilst some PRPs may already provide some of this information to new tenants, the Group hopes that a consistent approach across PRPs will allow residents to be better informed of local support available to them from day one.

### **Recommendation 11**

3.11 Approximately sixty-percent of survey respondents felt either neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with their housing association overall. Unfortunately, this means that complaints about issues and service failures are very likely. The Group considered a range of cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman involving some of our current PRPs. This highlighted that there were examples of service failures and communication break-downs for PRP operated social housing stock within the Borough. The Group asks that PRPs make every effort to resolve issues and complaints in a timely manner. Where tenants remained unsatisfied, PRPs should provide details of the Ombudsman process, whilst informing tenants that their local Ward Member(s) may be able to help advocate for them in this process. Many tenants may not be used going through such processes, and may find it helpful and reassuring to know that their local Ward Member(s) may be able to assist them.

### **Recommendation 12**

3.12 Members regularly received complaints from residents regarding high levels of service charges, and under delivery of services promised by such charges. Whilst officers had very limited recourse to query these charges, it should be incumbent on each PRP to ensure that any such charges represented value for money, were transparent, and enabled the delivery of said services. The Group were made aware of cases where PRPs had used estimated charges, resulting in a credit surplus for tenants which had not been refunded promptly. Whilst estimated charges should be avoided wherever possible, any credit balances need to be refunded directly to tenants promptly, rather than being put towards future credit.

## **WBC Overview and Scrutiny**

### **Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group**

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. To look at the service provided by each of the Council's preferred registered providers (PRPs) and to compare performance with WBC's housing service, WBC housing companies and industry best practice.
2. To recommend minimum service levels which tenants will expect of PRPs and WBC housing.
3. To consider the Council's current approach to appointing and monitoring Preferred Registered Providers.
4. To consider the legal framework underpinning this process.
5. To consider the views of local stakeholders.
6. To consider the views of Housing Associations and WBC's own social housing stakeholders.
7. To consider examples of best practice.
8. To consider how tenant satisfaction, housing provider performance and other KPIs are measured by PRPs, WBC and other social housing providers.
9. To consider how appointment of Preferred Registered Providers could be improved to create a single excellent level of service, regardless of whether a resident uses a housing association or WBC provision.
10. To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with recommendations for improvement.

#### **Witnesses**

- WBC Members and Officers;
- Residents, stakeholders and community groups;
- Experts/representatives from other local authorities;
- A variety of Housing Associations and Preferred Registered Providers;
- Any other witnesses approved by the Task and Finish Group.



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **LOCAL CYCLING, WALKING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN TASK & FINISH GROUP**

#### **SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**MARCH 2023**

**Task & Finish Group Members:**

Councillor Al Neal (Chair)

Councillors Peter Dennis (Vice Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Chris Johnson and Pauline Jorgensen

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## Section 1 – Background and Summary

- 1.1 The Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered updates on the development of the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) at their meetings on 4 July 2022 and 29 November 2022. Following the latter meeting, the Committee resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group to consider the final draft of the LCWIP document prior to consideration by the Executive.
- 1.2 The Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group at their meeting on 23 January 2023, appended as Annex A to this report.
- 1.3 The Task and Finish Group met on two occasions, 25 January 2023 and 6 February 2023. Due to time constraints, the Group were unable to review the appendices to the main LCWIP report in detail. As such, the Group's Recommendations focus on the main LCWIP report.
- 1.4 The Group considered representations from the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, the Transport Planning Team Manager, and an Associate Director at WSP.
- 1.5 An LCWIP sets out the strategic, high-level approach to identifying long-term cycling and walking improvements, to make the case for future investment through funding bids and by informing discussions with developers.
- 1.6 The Recommendations of the Group seek to ensure that data used within the report is consistent and up to date throughout. Other Recommendations seek the inclusion of an additional paragraph in relation to safe bicycle storage, and the provision of a process chart which outlines how potential schemes would progress from concept stage, through to design, engagement, consultation, and delivery. The final two Recommendations suggest how the live LCWIP document and individual schemes might be scrutinised going forward.
- 1.7 Whilst ongoing review of the live LCWIP document can be successfully executed as a sole Overview and Scrutiny function, the Group sought to ensure that scrutiny of individual schemes included local Ward Members and representatives of the relevant Town and Parish Councils. The Group hopes that this process will lead to robust schemes that will deliver the infrastructure needed by local communities.
- 1.8 The Group wishes to thank officers and the Executive Member for organising the Task and Finish Group and providing the documentation within short timescales.

## **Section 2 - Recommendations to the Executive**

- 2.1 Confirm what data in relation to the 2021 Census was available, and incorporate any updated data. 2011 Census data should only be used where WBC were still awaiting the detailed breakdown of the 2021 Census data.
- 2.2 Remove reference to data related to trunk roads, for example the M4, which were outside of WBC's control.
- 2.3 Confirm if WBC had access to the data relating to how many households in the Borough had access to a car, and amend the report appropriately if available.
- 2.4 In relation to employment centres, make use of datasets used within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, and amend the report appropriately.
- 2.5 To ensure consistency between strategic plans, confirm if cross boundary commuting data was consistent with that being applied to the Local Transport Plan.
- 2.6 If available, data held by WBC regarding speeding vehicle clusters be added to the report.
- 2.7 Verify if accident data was up to date and complete, and amend as appropriate.
- 2.8 Amend reference from 'Road Transport' to 'Road, Rail and Shipping Transport' within the report.
- 2.9 Ensure consistency throughout the report when referencing 'short car journeys', for example to state that 'approximately 30% of car journeys within the Borough were relatively short'.
- 2.10 Confirm if schemes relating to Earley could be better defined and detailed, as with other areas.
- 2.11 Consider an additional paragraph within the report relating to bicycle parking in convenient areas, including town centres and public transport hubs.
- 2.12 A process flow chart be produced to allow greater understanding of how schemes move from concept stage, through to design, engagement, consultation, and delivery.
- 2.13 The Active Travel Task and Finish Group, formed of Overview and Scrutiny Members, review the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis.
- 2.14 The Active Travel Task and Finish Group, formed of Overview and Scrutiny Members, with relevant Ward Members and relevant Town and Parish Council representatives, review proposed schemes a minimum of 6 months (wherever possible) prior to public consultation.

## **WBC Overview and Scrutiny**

### **Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Task and Finish Group**

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. To consider the latest draft and information relating to the LCWIP, and to formulate any recommendations for improvement to the Executive;
2. To consider the summary of results from the latest consultation, to inform any potential recommendations to the Executive;
3. To consider how the plan may be shaped to help encourage more residents to use sustainable transport methods, for example improving and promoting cycleways;
4. To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with any recommendations for improvement.

#### **Witnesses**

- WBC Members and Officers;
- Expert groups – e.g. SusTrans
- Any other witnesses approved by the Task and Finish Group.

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## COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
22 May 2023	<b>Flood Risk Management Update</b>	To receive an update on flood risk management within the Borough.	Work programme	Boniface Ngu
	<b>Drug and Alcohol Misuse Strategy</b>	To consider an update on the Drug and Alcohol Misuse Strategy	Committee request	Narinder Brar
	<b>Directorate Priorities</b>	To receive the priorities for the Place & Growth and Resources and Assets Directorates	Committee Request	Simon Dale/Graham Ebers
	<b>Work Programme</b>	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b>	<b>REASON FOR CONSIDERATION</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER</b>
<b>3 July 2023</b>	<b>Community Safety Partnership Update</b>	To receive the annual update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.	Work programme	Narinder Brar
	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Update</b>	To consider an update on the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.	Committee request	Narinder Brar
	<b>Anti-Abuse Charter Update</b>	To receive an update on the implementation of the Anti-Abuse Charter.	Council Request	Narinder Brar
	<b>Arts and Culture Strategy Update</b>	To receive an update on the Arts and Culture Strategy.	Work programme	Rhian Hayes
	<b>Work Programme</b>	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

**Task & Finish Groups – Active Travel Task and Finish Group**

## Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.	Scrutinising the development of the Council's Budget for 2023/24
2.	Reviewing the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the effectiveness of local policing and fire and rescue services
3.	Exercising the Council's flood risk management responsibilities by monitoring flood risk activities and partnership working with Towns and Parishes
4.	Reviewing the Assets Review Programme
5.	Scrutinising the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Strategy
6.	Scrutinising burial capacity across the Borough and the Council's plans to ensure adequate future capacity
7.	Scrutinising the Council's Localities service and measures to develop closer working relationships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector
8.	Scrutinising service and policy developments relating to the Council's public facing services and its in-house support services
9.	Reviewing highways and transport issues including highways contracts, customer service, car parking, Bus Strategy and cycling infrastructure
10.	Scrutinising the Council's Arts and Culture Strategy
11.	Scrutinising the implementation of the in-house enforcement and safety service
12.	Scrutinising the Council's Housing Services to ensure that the needs of local residents and communities are being met
13.	Scrutinising the operation and performance of the Council-owned companies and shared service arrangements
14.	Scrutinising the footpath network, including plans to make them more accessible
15.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate

### ***Other Items for consideration***

Borough Wide Parking Management Strategy

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