



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2022 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 19 October 2022

Note: 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://youtu.be/vQww692riVE>

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Clive Jones	Leader of Council and Business and Economic Development
Stephen Conway	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty
Prue Bray	Children's Services
Lindsay Ferris	Planning and Local Plan
Paul Fishwick	Active Travel, Transport and Highways
David Hare	Health and Wellbeing and Adult Services
Sarah Kerr	Climate Emergency and Resident Services
Ian Shenton	Environment, Sport and Leisure
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Finance

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
47.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
48.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2022.	9 - 30
49.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any non-registrable interests relevant to any matters to be considered at the meeting.	
50.		STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER To receive a statement from the Leader of the Council.	
51.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Executive Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
51.1	Maiden Erlegh	Sarah Evershed has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:	

Question:

The proposed football pitch at Maiden Erlegh School will increase pressure on the restricted access to the site. The entrance is through an already congested shopping parade, which includes the only chemist on the estate; and in close proximity to 2 bus stops and a pedestrian crossing. During big school events/parents evenings the queuing traffic already extends out along Silverdale road. Adding into this the traffic from the 3G pitch will create this scenario every evening of the week as parents/people overlap during the change over of sessions on the new pitch. The school have already accepted that congestion occurs in the vicinity. Bearing these facts in mind, and that visiting teams are likely to be coming from outside the Borough, are the Council accepting that this pitch will increase pollution, congestion and increase risk to the community's safety?

51.2 Maiden Erlegh

Sandra Spencer has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

An online petition against the plan for a large manmade 3G pitch to replace most of Maiden Erlegh school's grass field has attracted at least 164 signatures. Almost everyone I have spoken to in Earley is totally opposed to the plan, given the massive negative impact on their quality of life the non-stop renting out will bring. The council claims it wants to enhance the lives and well-being of local people, but this will cause untold misery as residents never get a break from the noise, traffic and parking problems. People also have many other serious concerns about the pitch. Does Wokingham borough council care about the impact on residents at all, and how many signatures do we need for the council take us seriously?

51.3 Maiden Erlegh

Elizabeth Newman has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Environmental and flooding concern.

The proposed 3G pitch will cover yet more ground with plastic, which, over time as the plastic degrades, will shed its load of microplastics into the local environment and in due course water courses, that feed into our rivers.

Rain water that would previously have sunk into the ground, will flow down towards Avalon Road, and we're told be captured. Has there been a risk assessment of precisely how, and where the water will then be directed, and how the micro plastics, large enough to be physically captured, will be dealt with?

Given the severe flooding of Radnor Road after heavy rain, natural drainage would appear already to be a problem in the locality.

51.4 Maiden Erlegh

Michaela Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

I am concerned about the proposal for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh school and the increase of these pitches in the borough. The known environmental and health issues caused by the tyre rubber crumb infill in 3G pitches is a huge concern across the world, and yet the local authority continue to install these at a rapid rate, without seeking other possible alternatives. Have you considered the financially viable long term future of plastic pitches if within the next few years, central government's view changes and they lean towards an alternative non rubber infill or even a complete ban (as is the case in Europe and other parts of the world)?

51.5 Maiden Erlegh

Judith Clark has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

An artificial 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh School has been put forward as an environmentally friendly solution for Earley football teams because it will allow young people to play locally and cut down on car journeys outside the borough. However, Maiden Erlegh school is not in central Earley but on the western side both of Earley and of Wokingham borough, so is also further from London, but your own consultation material admits that players will be making car journeys of up to 45 minutes duration, and Laurel Park football club admits it wants players from as far away as Teddington to travel here. Given this, how can a pitch at this school be the right location to meet the environmental argument of cutting down on motor traffic?

51.6 Maiden Erlegh

Chris Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

How does the installation of 3G pitches fit in with your

commitment to delivering a greener future and your climate emergency action plan? Instead of opting for plastic pitches have you fully investigated other options like simply investing in improving existing Grass Pitches? The Football Foundation run a Grass Pitch Revolution scheme which offers funding to improve existing pitches as an alternative to 3G pitches. Could this be a solution for Laurel Park pitches instead of shoehorning a new plastic pitch into a residential area when nearby residents are opposed to it.

51.7 Maiden Erlegh

Emily Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Regarding the proposal for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh school. The 'grass' blades are made from plastic that is the equivalent of about 1½ million plastic bags, and the rubber crumb comes from about 20 thousand end of life tyres, can I please ask what will happen to the plastic pitches when they reach the end of their very short lifespan of around 10 years? Will the pitches be recycled or do they end up in landfill? In a time of climate emergency, it seems ludicrous that these pitches are seen as a sensible solution just so football matches can play on in wet weather.

51.8 None Specific

Paul Stevens has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

We were repeatedly told by the previous administration that large Strategic Development Locations are the best mechanism for delivery of essential infrastructure. Can the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan confirm or deny that this is still considered to be the case?

52.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice

Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply

53. Arborfield

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

Unlike the previous Conservative administration has the current administration a public view on building housing beyond the Governments Plan period of 15 years.

I refer in particular to the 2200+ houses written into the Local Plan housing Update at Hall Farm or are they content to keep the building of 2200 houses beyond the governments plan period within its evolving plans or will they simply just publicly say now they will not be planning and future building beyond the Governments 15 year plan in the LPU.

Matters for Consideration

54.	None Specific	RENT SETTING POLICY	31 - 50
55.	None Specific	CAPITAL MONITORING 2022/23 - Q2	51 - 60
56.	None Specific	REVENUE MONITORING 2022-23 Q2	61 - 74
57.	Maiden Erlegh	LEASE FOR LEARNING DISABILITY RESPITE CENTRE	75 - 82
58.		MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE To consider any items referred to the Executive.	
59.		TO CONSIDER ANY REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES	
59.1	None Specific	Officers' response to the recommendations from the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task & Finish Group	83 - 88
60.		EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.	

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Executive may exclude the press and public in order to discuss the Part 2 sheets of Agenda Item 57 above and to do so it must pass a resolution in the following terms:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for item 57 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

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

CONTACT OFFICER

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Clive Jones (Chairman), Rachel Bishop-Firth, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, David Hare, Sarah Kerr, Ian Shenton and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Gary Cowan, Laura Blumenthal, Alison Swaddle, Andy Croy and Charles Margetts.

27. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Stephen Conway.

Councillor Prue Bray attended remotely and took part in the discussion of agenda items but did not vote on any item in accordance with legislation.

28. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 July 2022 and the minutes of the 22 March 2022 Extraordinary meeting were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Sarah Kerr declared a non-registrable interest in agenda item 40: Carnival Hib Public Realm Art Installation, as a trustee of Arts4Wokingham. Councillor Sarah Kerr advised that she would leave the room for the entirety of this item and would not participate in the vote.

Councillor David Hare declared a personal interest in agenda item 45: Re-procurement of Berkshire Community Equipment Service, as a Director of Optalis Limited.

Councillor Prue Bray declared a personal interest in agenda item 32: Violence Against Women and Girls, Wokingham Response to National Strategy and Statement of Expectations, as a trustee of Kaleidoscopic.

Councillors Prue Bray, David Hare and Clive Jones declared a personal interest in agenda items 37: Twyford NDP and 38: Finchampstead NDP, as directors of WBC Holdings. Further, Councillor Clive Jones declared a personal interest in these agenda items as a director at Lodden Homes Ltd. Councillor Prue Bray declared a personal interest in these agenda items as a director at Berry Brook Homes.

30. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER

The Leader made the following statement:

“During the first four months of this Administration, we have found some very difficult financial issues that we as an Executive will have to deal with.

The previous Administration used £2.2m of reserves to plug the gap they had in this year’s budget. They chose to raid reserves rather than take tough decisions like increases in car

park charges. Taking £2.2m from reserves for the current financial year meant the general reserve forecast was reduced to £9m at 31st March 2023. Dealing with the revenue shortfall like this means the hole remains for the year 2023-24. This has to be addressed by this Administration.

We can't use general reserves again because this will reduce them to below £7m which is something our finance director would not allow us to do. It is of course something that we would not want to do. We don't want the government to be crawling all over us like they are in Labour controlled Slough and Conservative Thurrock.

As well as these shortfalls left by the previous Administration there are other serious budgeting issues.

- 18 bus services were not properly budgeted for after Sept/Oct
- There was no provision to complete the Winnersh triangle Park & Ride – the previous Administration knew about the overspend of £1.3m for six months but did nothing and certainly didn't budget to finish the project.
- There is no specific provision in the budget for food caddy liners and they thought they could buy the same number of blue bags this year for the same price money they spent on them last year. No thought of inflation and no thought of increases in oil prices, of course the bags are made from oil.
- There is a projected shortfall in the car park revenue budget of up to £800,000

All these issues together with the long term impact of COVID-19, Brexit, rapidly escalating costs and interest rates give us, the new Administration unprecedented challenges to deal with.

We don't want to increase car park charges, but there is no alternative, more of this issue later in the agenda.

I have been in meetings with council leaders from all over the Southeast of England and they are having the same issues that we are having with increased demand for services and dealing with inflation. One Council Leader with years of experience said the current round of budget making was, and I quote, terrible, terrible, terrible. They had not known a year like it when there were so many budget deficits as a result of emerging financial pressures.

Many additional ways of reducing costs or increasing income will need to be considered across all Council services, in addition to raising car parking charges, to ensure our financial viability and enable us to deliver the vital services needed by our residents. These will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny over the coming months, and I need to stress that this work will be extremely challenging.

It's just as well we are running the Administration now. We will not hesitate to take difficult decisions to keep our budgets balanced."

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

31.1 Jan Heard has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the

following question:

Question:

A recent discussion with officials from the University of Reading made clear that the university is still very much focusing on the plan to build 4,500 houses at Hall Farm. At what point will Wokingham Borough Council make clear to the university that this plan is unacceptable to the Council?

Answer

As explained in answers to similar questions in May, June and July, our Administration is working with officers to look carefully at options for how we can best plan for our housing and development needs going forward in ways that ensure that our new local plan will pass as 'sound' at public examination.

I cannot pre-determine this process, however I can assure you that we are going into this process open minded, as we must, and that we will carefully consider all the views that have been expressed by residents alongside those of stakeholders and importantly, the technical evidence that must guide us to the best and most sustainable locations for new development to be located.

I would like to expand on the answer I gave at the Council meeting last week with reference to the new government requirement that flood resilience needs to be taken into account for the full duration of any proposed new development. This is particularly relevant for those proposed developments which include or are close to a major river and its flood plane and go beyond 15 years.

I will be actively pursuing this issue within the Council. I believe it will be difficult if not impossible to know the impacts of climate change could have on future water levels this far ahead. This could put into doubt the sustainability of such developments.

Supplementary question:

Before the coalition was formed, its members had made various public commitments during the election. One example, is the Liberal Democrat statement that they oppose Hall Farm on the grounds of flood risk to Lower Earley. So, I'm very pleased to hear that you are taking that seriously, a subsequent promise to me was in your supplementary answer on 30th June, that you would undertake the role strictly in line with Planning policy. Already, I am aware of an upcoming Planning application where no neighbourhood plan policies are supplied in the officers report despite objectors citing them and this is deeply disappointing, as not only did I raise the issue with the Council, but the Neighbourhood plan should carry more weight and I'm concerned that there is not enough scrutiny. Four months into the coalition, there is a lack of progress in applying polices and fulfilling promises. Is this a sign that voters are getting a raw deal from the coalition?

Supplementary answer:

The Neighbourhood plan needs to fit into the Local Plan and it's a two way process. There are two neighbourhood plan's coming through the process this evening, Twyford and Finchampstead.

In terms of the Aborfield and Barkham neighbourhood plan, I am not fully aware. I will be meeting with Barkham Parish soon and I would like to take up the issue when I see them.

31.2 Paul Stevens has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question:

Can the Executive Leader confirm the determination of where the houses in the Local Plan Update are to go is a political decision - not an officer decision and that the officers are doing what the politicians want them to do?

Answer

Any decisions we make on the Local Plan must be based on evidence and have full regard to the requirements of national planning policy and guidance. Decisions we take should not and cannot, be based on 'politics'.

For clarity, it may also be helpful for me to touch briefly on the roles of councillors and officers within local government.

Councillors and officers have different but complementary roles. Both serve the public, but councillors are accountable to the electorate, whilst officers are responsible to the council as a whole.

Councillors set the policies of the council, taking into account the professional advice of officers. Officers are impartial and politically neutral. It is the role of officers to provide the best professional advice to councillors, and to implement the policies of the council once agreed.

Councillors from time to time may disagree with the best professional advice of officers. When this occurs, appropriate and clear justification must be made.

In the operation of the council, councillors must fully respect the impartiality of officers and cannot pressure or act in anyway which compromises this. In this context, politicians cannot tell officers what to recommend.

In terms of the Local Plan, decisions on the sites to be included in the new local plan will be made by councillors, but they should be made having regard to the best professional advice of officers. Officer recommendations will be evidence driven.

The fact that the Local Plan will be examined by an independent Planning Inspector shows the importance of decisions being taken objectively, being evidence-based and taking account of the best professional advice officers provide to us.

As decision makers, councillors can decide not to follow officer advice if they consider there are clear and compelling reasons not to do so. However, those reasons will be fully tested by the independent Planning Inspector when our plan is at examination, so councillors need to be clear of their basis for making decisions contrary to officer advice if that is what they choose to do.

I am sure you know we are trying to engage with government ministers to get to try to work with them to reduce government housing targets for Wokingham, currently nearly 800 new homes a year. This has been made all the more difficult by having to deal with 3 secretaries of state for levelling up, housing and communities since we took over the Administration of the Council on 19th May this year.

Supplementary question:

I understand that a group calling itself Hall Farm Developments are in negotiations with local landowners in the Hall Farm area. Will the Executive ensure that any discussion with Council officers and developers is publicly disclosed to ensure that the LPU consultation is

fully transparent and can you confirm whether or not the Hall Farm Developers Group are in contact with Wokingham Planning department?

Supplementary answer:

I'm not aware of Hall Farm Development Group but I will find out about them and we will be as open and transparent as we possibly can.

31.3 Robin Cops has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question:

The Arc is being funded by donations collected by the charity Arts4Wokingham as a gift to Wokingham Borough. The charity exists to advance arts and culture for the public benefit. Do you anticipate that the Council will positively support the installation of more public art in the future across the borough and particularly amongst the new housing developments, which will enable more people to have access to free art on their doorstep?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Robin. As you are aware the Borough Council is very supportive of the Arc public art project and has been working closely with Arts4Wokingham to provide a site that is easily accessible, widely visible and at the heart of our community.

The Council has an aspiration to continue to support Public Art in the borough and is keen to work with other organisations in partnership to deliver that vision. To that end the Council are working with Arts4Wokingham to reboot the Cultural Alliance as a true partnership of equals to seek creative ways to deliver public art during this time of unprecedented financial difficulties.

The current planning policy documents have listed art as a key design principle within the Strategic Development Locations and public art is integrated within the design where possible and appropriate. Examples can be found within South Wokingham and Arborfield. South Wokingham has three pieces of public art comprising sculptures within Montague Park, while the next development to the south of the railway will also contain public art. Arborfield has three life size horses by Amy Goodman. New Artworks are planned as part of the Town Centre Regeneration at The Carnival Hub and the new Neighbourhood Centre in Shinfield. There will also be opportunity within the new Arborfield District Centre to contain public art when it is developed.

The emerging Local Plan Update will set out the long-term development strategy for the borough. The preparation of the Local Plan Update will include a review of existing planning policies, which will be updated as appropriate. Public consultation of the emerging Local Plan has included policies relating to the design of new development, which encourages the provision of Public Art, particularly integration into the design of large development.

Wokingham Borough Council want to help organisations such as Arts4Wokingham as much as we can. Want arts and culture to be vibrant in the borough. I hope you will not hesitate to contact myself or Sarah if you feel you are not getting the support you need.

Supplementary question:

Will Wokingham Borough Council be able to fulfil the aspirations of its own arts and culture strategy in these challenging financial times?

Supplementary answer:

I really hope that we will, we might not be able to do as much as we would want to in the short term but definitely in the medium and long term. We want to develop a strong arts and culture policy for the borough and then implement it over the next few years.

31.4 Charlotte Haitham Taylor has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**Question:**

The landmark sculpture entitled, The Arc will capture and depict stories from the current community of Wokingham borough and share them with the future people of Wokingham borough and beyond. It is a custom work that will embed the essence of Wokingham through words and audible stories. Do you think that there is anything that Wokingham Borough Council can do, in partnership with Arts4Wokingham, who are commissioning this work, to continue to engage the public locally, and specifically to understand the impact of The Arc on communities within the borough?

Answer

Thank you for your question – Charlotte. Two of the priorities of this administration is to develop partnership working, both within the council and with external organisations and communities and enhancing the borough's arts and cultural offering.

Therefore, the council, subject to the costs and resources required, would be in favour of continuing to work in partnership with Arts4Wokingham to understand the impact of the Arc on communities in the borough, and to continue to engage the public.

We would hope that this engagement will evidence some of the documented benefits of public art elsewhere. Including, having the ability to define the individuality of a place and increase a sense of identity for its residents. As well as helping to promote the borough to attract visitors, new employees in and encourage business to invest in an area.

Demonstrating that public art can be an emblem of optimism, renewal and progress. The Borough Council under this Administration really does want to work with Arts4Wokingham and other organisations in the borough.

Supplementary Question

How could the Council use this landmark sculpture to raise the profile of Wokingham borough, bring further investment and economic prosperity into the area and do you think that there is scope for the library service and its users to be able to take advantage of this project, its location and its text to further their objectives?

Supplementary Answer

Yes, definitely scope for the library service to do that and we would be keen for you to do that. I'm sure you will have a fruitful conversation with Sarah Kerr, Executive Member for Arts. Your sculpture, designed by Nicola Anthony, is going to create an identity for Wokingham. We are very committed to creating a wider culture of encouraging arts and culture in our borough. It would be nice to see people in the south of England talking of coming to see this piece of art in the same way as Anthony Gormley's Angel of the North. We will support as much as we can.

31.5 Tony Johnson asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**Question:**

Wokingham is proposing to provide two Special Education Needs schools, one at Rooks Nest Farm near California Crossroads and one at Garys Farm near Holme Green - both of which are in pleasant rural locations.

I note that the Borough has submitted an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the proposal to be considered by this Executive Meeting.

However, neither location is mentioned in that EqlA, and so their rural nature and the corresponding lack of Noise or Air Pollution has not been factored into the assessment.

Rather than make any assumptions as to where the two schools might end up after the Executive makes its decision tonight, would the Executive Member for Children's Services please explain why the locations were left out of the EqlA and what that means for the actual place(s) the schools might end up being located?

Answer

An Equalities Impact Assessment assesses the likely impact of a proposal on different groups of people. Detailed assessment of the environmental impact of a proposal would normally be done as part of the preparation for submission of a planning application.

While it is indeed true that that we need to look at issues like noise and air quality when deciding whether a site is suitable for a special school, the equalities impact assessment is more about how the principle would impact on particular characteristics (such as religious belief, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age) – in other words whether there would be beneficial or negative impact on such by having more special school capacity in the borough. And it shows there would be a beneficial impact.

We don't know whether our expressions of interest will result in two special schools, one or none. We are confident that there are no environmental show-stoppers in our choice of sites, but the detailed environmental work will happen if and when we get the go-ahead for the schools.

So to answer your question directly, the reason the locations were left out is that the equalities impact assessment was assessing the impact of having more special schools on people with protected characteristics, and it doesn't have any implications with regard to the locations of the schools.

Supplementary question:

I understand your point, but I hoped for consideration of the impact of noise/chemical pollution such as would be experienced by the SEND school by the M4. If this Executive meeting, approves the schools, is there still a need to locate a SEND school by the M4 or can these two schools be adjusted in size to get an economy of scale and benefit the children through not exposing them to a locked environment or excessive levels of noise and pollution?

Supplementary answer:

The first point to note is that the process for bidding for schools, does not assure that these schools will arrive. I would like to be optimistic and hope that we will at least get one school from this process. At this point we haven't yet put in a full bid. I would prefer that we do not get ahead of ourselves.

My second point, there are lots of considerations around the size of schools and the type of SEND provision that a school will cater for. Having larger schools doesn't necessarily mean that you cater for the right needs arising from our children with SEND. The SEND school that is currently under construction is due to open next September, funded by the DfE. The DfE was satisfied that this was the right site for it. It has passed all Planning processes, whilst I know there are people who are uncomfortable because of the location, the school is funded by the DfE and run by the Maiden Erlegh Trust and not under the control of the Council.

31.6 Darren Richardson asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question

Question

The benchmarking provided in Agenda Item 39 only addresses short-term parking tariffs and not season ticket pricing. I note that the annual season ticket (parking 5 days a week) at the Bracknell Forest Council car park near Bracknell railway station is only £1,090, whereas Wokingham Borough Council is proposing to charge £2,026 for the same level of service. Has the Council done any benchmarking of the season ticket prices relative to other local councils, and is the Council willing to defer the decision on increasing season ticket pricing until such benchmarking has been published?

Answer

Thank you Darren for your question. Benchmarking has been undertaken and is set out within the report. This shows that general car parking charges are considerably lower than neighbouring local Authorities and other similar local Authorities.

As for season ticket charges you raise a good point and I have reassessed this which has resulted in a revised proposal of £1200 (Wokingham Town) and £1100 (outside of Wokingham Town. You will see this is very consistent with the benchmark figure you have referenced. Today Bracknell Forest Council have actually increased their car parking prices.

31.7 Richard Skegg asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question

Question

Question relating to Agenda Item 39.

What analysis & consultation relating to the impact on individual parishes & towns of Wokingham borough has been made when applying blanket parking charges across borough's car parks, specifically relating to the differing community uses of each car park, the variation of the communities and businesses that they serve?

Answer

Thank you Richard for your question you raise a good point. Following feedback received from the initial proposals set out in the agenda I will be making a revised proposal that addresses this very point. I will be proposing a two-tier charging system, one for Wokingham Town car parks, and a lower rate for outside of Wokingham Town.

Analysis was done by looking at other local authorities around the area. Consultation wise, we are in a situation where we have to make decisions very quickly. We did not have time to go out to consultation and the feedback that we've had since the agenda was published, we have taken that into account and therefore made revised changes which I am putting in an amended paper tonight.

Supplementary question

Having received revised proposals 33 minutes before the meeting I will confess that I am bitterly disappointed and I had hoped that sense would prevail. What support will you offer businesses/organisations affected by the new charging schedule should they be detrimental to their operation.

Supplementary answer

We unfortunately have a situation where we have up to £800,000 hole in our budget which we need to try and fill this financial year. This totals a £2.2 million budget gap overall, that increases to £4m next year. We are in a financial emergency and we need to increase car parking charges, unfortunately for the first time in five years. If they had been increased on an annual basis, such as Bracknell Forest Council tend to do, the step change would not have been so great.

31.8 Susan Dillon asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question

Question

I am a pensioner with a very tight budget living on my State Pension. I'm also a member of Woodley Photo Club that meets every Monday at 8pm in the Oakwood Centre. At the moment we can park in the Lidl car park just across the street FOC. If the Council implement evening parking fees it will cost me at the very least £4.50 for parking plus £3.00 entry fee to the club on each occasion. Where am I to find this extra money and can the Council therefore please reconsider implementing its plan for parking fees in the evening for Woodley? I would hate to give up a much-loved social (and learning) activity because I can no longer afford to go. Thank you.

Answer

Thank you Susan for your question, and have reflected on the points you and others have made. Later this evening I will be putting forward a revised proposal that reduces the proposed charge set out within this agenda to £1 for up to 1 hour and £2 for more than 1 hour between the hours of 6pm to 10pm.

I hope that you appreciate that the imperative for the Council to find ways of generating additional income from its universal services so that it can respond to the stark financial pressure, and its need to target support to the most vulnerable. I have however tried to accommodate your issue as best as possible.

31.9 Mary Nash asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question

Question

Our Photographic club meets weekly at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley, from 7:45-10pm. We are a not-for-profit organisation which offers a service for the whole community. We have kept our running costs down so members pay £30 a year plus £3 for any meeting they attend. The proposed car parking charges for evenings will significantly increase the cost to our members. Is there a way that either there could be an evening rate from 6pm - 10pm for a lower cost please, or a way that members could get a car parking pass which allowed them to park in the evening at a reduced cost? The proposed charges will affect not only our club, but many more clubs which meet at the Oakwood Centre, and the eating establishments in the Woodley Precinct. I believe people will take to parking in the streets around the centre to avoid the charges, thus congesting and making the roads more hazardous.

Answer

Thank you Mary for your question. As previously stated I have reflected on the points you and others have made. Later this evening I will be putting forward a revised proposal that reduces the proposed charge set out within this agenda to £1 for up to 1 hour and £2 for more than 1 hour between the hours of 6pm to 10pm.

I hope that you appreciate that the imperative for the Council to find ways of generating additional income from its universal services so that it can respond to the stark financial pressure, and its need to target support to the most vulnerable. I have however tried to accommodate your issue as best as possible.

31.10 Brian Fennelly asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question**Question**

Woodley Town Centre Partnership are extremely concerned about the proposed increase in Car Park charges in Woodley Town Centre. The increases, for two and four hour stays together with the introduction of charges for Evenings and Sundays are of particular concern.

You will be aware that many businesses' have had a very challenging period over the past two years and that the current cost of living crisis has meant that the hoped-for post covid bounce hasn't materialised. These proposals will undoubtedly put intolerable additional pressures on many businesses in Woodley Town Centre.

We are mindful of the financial challenges that Wokingham Borough Council are facing and understand the need to look at all areas to address these challenges effectively.

I would therefore like to know what non statutory services or projects have been reviewed with a view raising extra finance or reducing expenditure and why were they discounted instead of this proposal?

Answer

Thank you Brian for your question, which I have reflected on and will be proposing later in this meeting a revision that introduces a two-tier charging system, one for Wokingham Town car parks, and a lower rate for outside of Wokingham Town.

In addition, I have reviewed the evening charges and a change to the evening charges has been amended between the hours of 6pm to 10pm, resulting in a charge of £1 for up to 1 hour and £2 for more than 1 hour. However, I consider Sunday to be similar to a normal shopping day and the introduction of charges on these days is likely to mean that there will be a greater turn over within the car park bringing in additional footfall with more people spending money within our town centres. I believe this will be a boost to the local economy rather than long stays taking up spaces.

As you rightly point out we face unprecedented financial challenges as a result of the impact of Covid, Brexit/ a War in Europe and the general severe increase in costs on goods and services. The identified increases for our car parks will only assist with a portion of this challenge. Our Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented with a whole host of cost reductions and other saving options that have been worked up over many months and these will be considered in October and November. These cover all Council services including statutory and non statutory. However, I must stress that even these options

currently leave us at least £4m short of setting a balanced budget. This I hope illustrates the importance of the increased car parking proposals I have put forward.

Supplementary question

In the original proposal there was reference to car park usage increasing in 2023-34, what evidence do you have for that assertion?

Supplementary answer

Car parking has gradually increased post pandemic, we have that data from the number of car parking tickets sold. We can only forecast that there will be a gradual continued increase based on the information we currently have.

31.11 Matthew Burdett asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question

Question

As a resident now facing a 125pc increase to park my car to commute to work (around £200-£250 per year extra per working day - and at £9 now more expensive than a full days' parking at Twyford railway station) and an increase of c£50 per year to park on Sundays in Woodley town centre, please could you confirm that councillors voting for the increased parking charges at this meeting will pay for their own parking (and not expense it to the public purse) when attending council meetings in future?

Answer

Thank you Matthew for your question. As stated before I have reflected on the proposed season ticket charge set out within the agenda and will be proposing a revision. This revision will result in an annual season ticket of £1200 (Wokingham Town) and £1100 (outside of Wokingham Town).

Therefore, based on the outside Wokingham Town rate, should you travel 5 days a week and have purchased a 12-month season ticket this would only equate to a rise of £0.58 per day.

In relation to Councillors, who attend Council meetings at Shute End. They are able to apply for a parking permit, at their cost. These permits are only valid for Shute End related car parks where Council meetings are held and therefore are not valid for use outside of Shute End, such as Woodley.

32. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

32.1 Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

A question about the Councils Planning Enforcement Service was asked some years ago and as a direct result of the question Cllr John Kaiser authorised an independent investigation into Planning enforcement.

This was carried out by John Silvester Associates and their 43 page report, dated 4th September 2013 and can be found online.

As part of the consultation the Council carried out a public consultation and the comments from Officers, Public, Ward Members, and Parish Councillors are included in a separate

sheet which is available upon request to Democratic Services. It included a lengthy comment from the Leader of the Council.

The outcome was that Enforcement became a much improved service thanks to Cllr. John Kaisers initiative.

My question is would the Planning Department, if subjected to a similar independent public inquiry offer a better service to our residents?

Answer:

Thank you, Gary for your question. Since I have taken on this role, I have seen a professional and active planning department in operation.

Any department, however it is working, can always find a review of their services helpful. In this regard, I have asked the Director of Place & Growth to commission the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to carry out a peer review of the service. Members will be involved in this process and I am happy to suggest that you participate if you wish to do so.

32.2 Laura Blumenthal has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

Question:

How will you measure the success of White Ribbon accreditation?

Answer:

As part of the wider Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy, we will put together a comprehensive action plan to help deliver our key objectives including White Ribbon accreditation. The action plan will include SMART outcomes, based on measures of success formulated from local discussions with local victims.

Supplementary Question:

Will this work be considered by the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Supplementary Answer:

Yes, it will be considered by the Community & Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November. This will enable cross-party Members to get involved in the shaping of this work at an early stage.

32.3 Alison Swaddle has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question

Have you analysed the impact on Woodley town centre businesses, and on use of the library, before making the decision to increase parking charges and what did you conclude?

Answer

Travel habits post covid, are very different from travel pre covid, which continues to fluctuate, therefore any analysis would be very difficult to calculate.

I have however reconsidered the proposals as set out in the agenda based on considerable feedback and can confirm that the revisions, I will be presenting later in this meeting introduce a two tier system which will reduce the initial proposals for Woodley car

parks and other car parks outside of Wokingham Town, whilst still generating vital additional income for the Council in such stark financial challenging times.

Car parking charges have not been raised for nearly five years and therefore residents have benefited from these low costs over this period. As shown by the benchmarking, even the proposed increases leave us with lower charges than surrounding authorities. And it is likely that some of our neighbouring Authorities' charges will increase even higher.

The council finds itself under the severest of financial pressures as do most other local authorities and must look at all aspects to balance its books. Without these increases, essential services would need to be cut, and we are trying to find ways to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

Supplementary Question:

How can increased car parking charges lead to increased footfall. There would also be an impact of the patients of GP surgeries?

Supplementary Answer:

Sundays are currently free, so people will park there currently all day and won't move. With charges being put into place, there is then a turnover of vehicles and therefore increased footfall coming into the area.

In terms of GP surgeries, in these particular locations the same charging period remains in place. I've retained the 30 minute stay in Woodley.

32.4 Andy Croy has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question

The proposed changes to the off-street charging fees adopt a 'one-size fits all' approach to the new fees.

Woodley and Wokingham town centres are very different centres and the proposed fees will have very different impacts on local residents and the local community. Will the Executive Member meet with me so I can explain these differences and to discuss how a more bespoke approach would be more suitable?

Answer

Thank you for your question Andy you raise a good point. Following feedback received from the initial proposals set out in the agenda I will be making a revised proposal that addresses this very point. I will be proposing a two-tier charging system, one for Wokingham Town car parks, and a lower rate for outside of Wokingham Town.

In addition, I have reviewed the evening charges and propose to change the evening charges to introduce a reduced charge from the original proposal of £1 for up to 1 hour and £2 for more than 1 hour between the hours of 6pm to 10pm.

Supplementary Question:

Will the decision contain flexibility to contain further revisions should they be needed?

Supplementary Answer:

Subject to agreement, these proposals will be implemented in January 2023, There would be an opportunity to further review after that date.

32.5 Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

The Council is proposing to increase car parking charges across the borough, to charge for parking in the evenings, Sundays and bank holidays in an attempt to close a budget gap. Officers have advised me the reason for the budget gap is use of car parks has still not returned to pre covid levels. Can you advise if any other options were considered to close this budget gap instead of raising car park charges and what the other options were?

Answer:

Thank you for your question Charles, although the car parking budget as a whole is considerably short of its income target this is not representative of a stark decline in patronage of our general off street car parks as it includes other factors such as Park and Rides and staff car parking. The current estimate of upturn in off street car parking, not including Park and Rides, has improved since the pandemic and is currently in the region of 90%.

Park and Rides continue to suffer, with only Mere oak operational which is around 25% of pre-pandemic levels and Winnersh Triangle currently under construction. Coppid Beech is not yet open but all have business rates and other running costs.

Car parking charges have not been raised for nearly 5 years and therefore residents have benefited from these low costs over this period. As shown by the benchmarking, even the proposed increases leave us with lower charges than surrounding authorities.

And it is likely that some of our neighbouring Authorities' charges will increase even higher, Bracknell Forest have done that today. The council now finds itself in time of financial pressure and is looking at all aspects on how to recover from this situation. Without these increases, essential services would need to be cut, and we are trying to find ways to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

The identified increases for our car parks will only assist with a portion of this deficit and we are continuing to look for additional savings across all non statutory areas. Overview and Scrutiny will be presented with a whole host of cost reductions and other saving options that have been worked up over many months and these will be considered in October and November.

These cover all Council services including statutory and non statutory. However, I must stress that even these options currently leave us at least £4m short of setting a balanced budget.

This I hope illustrates the importance of the increased car parking proposals I have put forward. Any ideas you have to help resolve our budget challenges will be gratefully appreciated and please can you feed these into the budget scrutiny process.

Supplementary Question:

Will you commit to publishing the figures behind this, the business case?

Supplementary Answer:

I am happy to provide you with a summary of the workings.

32.6 Jackie Rance has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

If, as your leader suggested in the Woodley and Earley chronicle, food recycling may be adversely impacted by the drop of free caddy liners how do you intend to deliver on the £350k increase in the food recycling target which is in the budget?

Answer

As a point of clarification, the £350k saving target includes both food waste and dry recycling material. In order to realise these savings this year there have been a number of targeted communications to boost food waste and dry recycling and minimise overall waste across the borough. Current forecasts indicate these savings are likely to be made.

33. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

The Executive noted that a large number of complaints had been made to the Council about anti-social vehicle use in Council owned car parks, and also on privately owned land, such as supermarket car parks. The activity featured engine revving, wheel spinning, aggressive driving, noise from horns and music equipment. It was noted that expenditure was needed for signage.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) authorised the Corporate Director for Place and Growth to proceed with the implementation of the PSPO as detailed in Appendix 1 of the agenda papers and delegate authorised officers to enforce the conditions of the PSPO including issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches of these in appropriate cases; and
- 2) authorised the Head of Legal Services to commence prosecution proceedings in relation to breaches of conditions in the PSPO in appropriate cases.

34. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, WOKINGHAM RESPONSE TO NATIONAL STRATEGY AND STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS (NSE)

The Executive considered a report which sought approval for the development of a borough wide Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services reported that this preventative work was crucial. She stated that it had been just over a year since the murder of Sabina Nessa. Violence outside the home was far too prevalent. The white ribbon work provided a vehicle for engaging men and promoting the message that preventing violence and misogyny was everyone's responsibility.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for her work and her personal commitment to this work. The Executive agreed that everyone had a responsibility to support this work.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved:

1. the development of a borough wide Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy outlining the Council's commitment to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls.

2. development of an action plan and all the necessary requirements to become an accredited White Ribbon organisation.
3. the in-year supplementary estimate of £600 required to fund White Ribbon Accreditation this financial year.

35. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 21-22

RESOLVED that the Executive noted the internal health and safety performance for 2021-22; and noted and agreed the priorities in the report described under Corporate Health and Safety Priorities for 2021-22 which will inform the current municipal year 2022-23.

36. LOCAL BUS SERVICES

The Executive noted that existing bus contracts had come to their natural end. The contracts had to be retendered if local bus services, which were not commercially sustainable, were to continue to be provided, financially supported by the Council.

It was confirmed that route 129 would be included in this retendering work.

It was noted that an Equality Impact assessment would be included in a future report.

The Executive noted that one million bus journeys took place each year, this presented a significant number of residents using the bus services, this was an significant service that should be retained.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) gave approval for officers to go out to tender for local bus services, serving Wokingham Town and the surrounding villages, to the villages which lie to the South of the M4, for additional evening and Sunday journeys to Arborfield and for services to the Woodley and Earley areas.
- 2) gave approval to delegate the award of the winning tender to the Director of Place and Growth assuming the winning tender meets the allocated budget and service specification.

37. PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NUMBER OF SUPPLIED BLUE REFUSE BAGS TO PROPERTIES IN THE BOROUGH FROM FEBRUARY 2023

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that the budget provision made by the previous Administration for blue refuse bags had assumed that costs would not increase. As costs had risen, this left no alternative but to reduce the number of bags provided.

It was noted that 57% of waste could be recycled elsewhere and this change would encourage residents to utilise other recycling facilities offered by the Council.

It was reported that a £2.2million deficit had been inherited from the previous Administration and as a result, services needed to fit within this reduced expenditure.

The Executive agreed that provision for larger families needed to be kept under review.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the proposed change of policy from supplying 80 blue bags for refuse to 54 blue bags for refuse per annum to all properties (to include the provision to keep larger households under review).

38. CEASING THE SUPPLY OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC FOOD CADDY LINERS

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that in 2019, the food waste service was implemented with a starter pack of 100 caddy liners for one year. Although no budget was set aside, this supply continued in 2020, 2021 and 2022 as income generated by the wider service was able to accommodate this spend, however due to financial pressures this was no longer financially viable.

In June 2022, the Executive had been briefed that caddy liners had been depleted and there was no budget provision made to continue to purchase these.

Food waste recycling rates would continue to be monitored.

The Executive noted that the Council had declared a climate emergency and ceasing the use of these single plastic use caddy liners was another step towards working towards being carbon free.

RESOLVED that the Executive agreed to cease the supply of caddy liners, given that alternatives were available.

39. TWYFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN - REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION AND FUTURE EXAMINATION

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) approved a 6-week consultation on the draft Twyford Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix A of the agenda papers); and
- 2) agreed to appoint an examiner to independently examine the draft Twyford Neighbourhood Plan, delegating the appointment and submission of the examination documentation to the Director of Place and Growth in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning and Local Plan.

40. FINCHAMPSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION AND FUTURE EXAMINATION

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) approved a 6 week consultation on the draft Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan; and
- 2) agreed to appoint an examiner to independently examine the draft Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan, delegating the appointment and submission of the examination documentation to the Director of Place and Growth in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning and Local Plan.

41. OFF STREET CAR PARK CHARGES

The Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways reported that councils across the Country were facing the worst economic pressures that had ever been faced, with some facing the prospect of bankruptcy. As examples, Slough and Thurrock were

facing severe pressures across all their services, with government intervention looming large.

The Council was keen to protect the most vulnerable in the community, but at the same time ensure the future financial viability of the Council. Currently, a £2.2m deficit was forecast. Taking funding from reserves was not an option, as reserves were now low.

The Executive noted that a number of other local authorities were currently considering changes to their car parking charges, with Bracknell Forest increasing their charges year on year. Wokingham Borough Council had not increased off street car parking charges since 2018, unlike many other local authorities locally.

Several options had been modelled, the lower charging model had been chosen. Given the crisis that councils faced in terms of their financial situation, this action was necessary and difficult decisions like this one, lay ahead.

The Executive Member for Finance agreed that the Council faced a very difficult financial future and difficult decisions would need to be taken to protect vulnerable people. She noted that extra funding to support low income families over the summer months in the form of free school meals had already been committed.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways for the tremendous work he had committed to bring forward these proposals. He also thanked the residents who had written to Councillors to make their views very clear. The Council had taken these on board and listened carefully to resident's views.

The Chair asked the Executive to consider the recommendations in the amended report which has been circulated as a supplementary paper.

RESOLVED that the Executive agreed to increase the parking charges as detailed in the amended report, (which included a schedule of revisions on page 11) circulated and published as a supplementary paper.

42. CARNIVAL HUB PUBLIC REALM ART INSTALLATION

Councillor Sarah Kerr declared a non-registrable interest, as a trustee of Arts4Wokingham. She left the room for the entirety of the item and did not participate in the vote.

The Chair expressed a special thank you to Nicola Anthony who was responsible for the design of the sculptural artwork. He also thanked Arts4Wokingham for their work on this project. The artwork would support mental health and wellbeing and would provide a huge source of civic pride.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) approved the Council taking a loan of the public artwork, known as 'the Arc', on the terms detailed within the report.
- 2) noted the termination and reinstatement provisions within the terms detailed in the report.

- 3) noted the financial implications for the Council of the agreement, and that the costs for insurance and maintenance will be included in the Carnival Hub estates management budget.
- 4) delegated authority to the Director of Assets and Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development, to implement the agreement.

43. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the Council's Risk Management Policy and Guidance with the changes described in the Executive Summary of the report as recommended by the Audit Committee.

44. ENERGY CONTRACT PROCUREMENT

This report was withdrawn. The Chair communicated a statement prepared by officers which provided reasons for the withdrawal of this report.

'Last week the Government announced a package of measures through the Energy Bill including a freeze cap on energy costs which includes local authority buildings. This package covers a period from 1st October 2022 through to 1st April 2023. We are assessing the impact of these measures on our energy costs, which we will hope will be positive in generating savings on our ever increasing costs.

In light of this policy announcement, and with uncertainty as to what aid the Government may offer after this time frame, we need further time to consider the right course of action regarding procurement of our future energy supplies. We have therefore withdrawn the paper due to be considered by Executive tonight on energy contract procurement and subsequently from consideration by Council in October.

Our contract with our existing supplier remains in place and consideration of future energy supplies will be brought back to Executive and Council in due course next year.'

45. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY SUFFICIENCY AND SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMMES

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that currently children were having to travel outside of the local area for special school places. Further, action was required to reduce spend on the High Needs Block budget and on home to school transport. This bid for funding would address all of these issues, by delivery of high quality, local, cost effective specialist provision. She thanked Children's Services officers for all their work on this.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) approved the submission of a proposal by the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the lead member for Children's Services to the DfE for two new Special Free Schools in the borough in October 2022;
- 2) supported the recommendation to utilise two sites (part of Rooks Nest Farm, Barkham and part of Grays Farm, south of Wokingham) owned by the Council for the provision of two new Special Free Schools and note that the disposal of these sites would be subject to a further Executive decision;

- 3) noted the ongoing preparatory work for participation in the national “Safety Valve” intervention programme from September 2022.
- 4) noted the development work in progress for further projects to increase special needs provision in the borough.

46. COMMISSIONED SERVICES FOR THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF CARERS

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services reported that carers were incredibly important, it was crucial that the Council supported them and recognised the valuable work they carried out each day.

The Executive noted that often carers were women and/or on low incomes and as a result this work to support carers was much needed.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) noted and approved the planned procurement of the carers service at a total value of £234,000 per annum for a period of up to 4 years, and
- 2) delegates award post-procurement to the Director of Adult Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services.

47. REPROCUREMENT OF BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services reported that it was key to keep people safe and to help them to stay safe.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- 1) approved the attached Business Case to undertake a joint procurement exercise of Berkshire Community Equipment Service for Wokingham in partnership with West Berkshire, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Slough, the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead Local Authorities and the NHS CCGs in Berkshire East and Berkshire West. West Berkshire Council will be the lead authority.

Details of the current spend and available budget can be found in Part 2 of the Executive Report (Financial Information).

- 2) delegated authority to the Directors of Adult Services and Children Services in consultation with the Lead Members for Adults and Children’s Services to utilise the budget for this service and to award the contract in conjunction with the other authorities to the preferred supplier.

.....

Sarah Kerr, Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services made the following statement:

“I wanted to make a public statement in this meeting, when I left the meeting earlier as I had to be absent for an item on the agenda for which I had a conflict of interest. You may have heard a man shout some verbal abuse at me, which was actually quite nasty. I first want to thank publicly Councillor Jim Frewin for calling it out, who subsequently stormed off. It made me quite upset and the irony being that I had presented this evening a report

about abuse. I think it is unacceptable, we are carrying out our role and we should be able to come to our place of work and do our job without abuse. It is completely unacceptable, we are making some very tough decisions and we do not take this lightly. If we only made populist, easy decisions, we would be bankrupt as a Council and we would not be able to deliver anything other than statutory services. I hope this Council takes action against members of the public who abuse officers and Members in this way, it is unacceptable.”

The Chair thanked Sarah Kerr and expressed his sadness that this had taken place this evening, it was wholly unacceptable for someone who had attended an open public meeting to abuse one of the councillors in this way, particularly a female councillor. It was disgraceful and action would be taken.

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TITLE	Rent Setting Policy
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 October 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
LEAD MEMBER	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing - Stephen Conway

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The 'Rent Setting Policy' ensures we are regularising the current annual rent setting process, the re-confirms the rent setting is part of the annual Housing Revenue Account budget setting process.

The policy requires the council to adhere to the Rent Standard 2020 that in practice means our approach to rent setting continues without any changes to our historical approach.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve the Rent Setting Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, for which the 'Rent Setting Policy' primarily relates to the Housing Revenue Account (2567 properties) plus includes a small number (18 properties) of General Fund properties.

Note the economic challenges that many of our tenants face and that The Lead Member for Housing in consultation with The Director of Place & Growth, is exploring all opportunities to minimise any increase between now and the budget setting process in February/ March 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why has a 'Rent Setting Policy' been produced?

The Rent Standard 2020 now applies to councils (previously this applied to Housing Associations) with the standard being regulated by 'The Regulator of Social Housing'. The policy applies to the circa 2,570 homes owned/managed by the council.

At present, the Council sets rents as set out in the government's 'Policy statement on rents for social housing' and 'Rent Standard 2020'. The 'Rent Setting Policy' ensures we are regularising the process, the re-confirms the rent setting is part of the annual Housing Revenue Account budget setting process.

Does the policy show any changes to our current and previous approach?

The attached policy does not involve any changes to the approach to how the council charges rents.

This policy is reviewed each year and be included as part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget setting papers.

The key messages in the attached Rent Setting Policy are the council will continue the existing approach to rent setting.

BACKGROUND

The amount of rent charged is worked out using a government formula that has been in place since 2001. This works out formula rents for each of our properties (a maximum rent is calculated for each individual property that is known as the 'formula rent'), and councils can increase rents in April each year by 1% plus the Consumer Price Index (CPI) figure at the end of the previous September.

This policy seeks to strike a balance between the need to keep rents affordable whilst providing sufficient funds to support the Council's need to maintain its housing stock. The Council is aware that many tenants have low incomes and aims to provide housing that remains affordable.

What are the key aspects within the policy?

Since the rents could be increased again from April 2020 (rents reduced by 1% for each of the previous four years), councils have applied the 1% plus CPI increase (to support the long-term HRA Business Plan) albeit occasional exceptions are reported in the housing press.

If the September CPI figure is unusually high, the council can if it feels it is financially viable to do so (that includes taking into account of for example, financial resilience, commitment to the tackling-poverty initiative and affordability) make a decision about capping the CPI figure to a lower amount. The council can consider whether to apply this to all tenants rent charges, or whether to apply this cap to just the rents that have already reached formula rent. Any such capping of rents will be included as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account budget setting report.

The current government policy for the 1% plus CPI increase is a five-year policy with the final year being 2024/25 inclusive.

While a council could choose to not apply the 1% increase, could freeze rents, or even reduce rents, the Rent Setting Policy is equally about formally recording four key aspects, being the council:

- will continue to charge social rents so wont charge higher Affordable Rents
- will not charge a higher market rent to tenants with an annual household income of £60k+
- will continue to let new properties at the formula rent (social rent) that means when a property becomes empty, if the rent charged to the previous tenant hasn't yet reached formula rent (maximum rent), the new tenant will be charged formula rent, and
- will not seek 'rent flexibility' where the council could increase formula rent by 5% for general needs properties, and 10% for sheltered housing (the council has 241 sheltered housing properties).

BUSINESS CASE

The council is regularising the current process by having a 'Rent Setting Policy' that is approved by Executive each year. The policy confirms our approach to rent setting continues without any changes to our historical approach.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

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

Other Financial Information

The Rent Setting Policy primarily relates to the Housing Revenue Account (2567 properties) rather than General Fund (18 properties). The financial implications in the Table above show a £0 impact, and this applies to both General Fund and Housing Revenue account properties.

The 'Rent Setting Policy' relates to the annual budget setting process for which rents are set in the context of affordability and financial resilience.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Prior to Executive approval, the council will have consulted our Tenant & Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP).

The Rent Setting Policy will be included as part of the annual HRA budget setting papers that are approved by council each year. The HRA budget setting papers are presented to TLIP each year that in effect will provide an annual opportunity to provide comment and challenge regarding the Rent Setting Policy.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and an equalities assessment has been completed.

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

There isn't a positive or negative impact of the decision being made on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A
List of Background Papers
N/A

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WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Rent Setting Policy – TBC

Rent Setting Policy

1. Introduction

Rent is the main source of revenue for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), paying for the management, maintenance, and modernisation of our existing homes. It is also the primary source of funds for repaying the loans that enabled councils to leave the centralised subsidy system, and for the HRA to build or acquire new council properties.

From April 2020, the '[Rent Standard](#)' was introduced. This required councils to set rents from 1 April 2020 in accordance with the Government's [Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing](#).

The Rent Standard (subject to some exceptions) does not change the way rents are calculated. The reason for this policy is from April 2020, the Rent Standard now applies to councils with the standard being regulated by 'The Regulator of Social Housing'.

While this policy primarily relates to the council owned HRA homes, this policy also applies to the small number of council owned homes that are part of the General Fund, such as our hostels. The reason for this is the Rent Standard applies (subject to some exceptions) to 'low-cost rental' accommodation as defined by section 69 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

Accommodation is low-cost rental accommodation if:

(a) it is made available for rent, (b) the rent is below the market rate, and (c) the accommodation is made available in accordance with rules designed to ensure that it is made available to people whose needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market.

The Council's 30-year business plan is being reviewed and updated. The [Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23](#) had already taken account of this policy. The future years Housing Revenue Account Budget that goes to full council for approval will continue to take account of this policy.

This policy will be approved by the [Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel](#) and The Executive.

This Rent Setting Policy will be reviewed each year and be included as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget report to full council. As the HRA budget report is presented to the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel, this will ensure there is the opportunity for our involved tenants to provide scrutiny and challenge each year regarding the Rent Setting Policy.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods and Communities is ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance for this policy document. This includes ensuring the council's Finance and Housing Teams set and maintain records of our rents, and that compliance is monitored including ensuring this work is part of testing for the annual internal audit programme.

This policy was adopted by the Executive on TBC.

2. Purpose of this policy

This policy explains how the council will calculate and charge rent for all the residential properties in its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and its General Fund low-cost rental accommodation, and the factors involved with this decision.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that the council adheres to government legislation and regulation when setting rents.
- Provide a clear and consistent framework for setting and reviewing the rents of all properties accounted for in the HRA and General Fund low-cost rental accommodation.
- Provide as much financial certainty for the HRA as possible.
- Maximise the income available to maintain our existing housing stock and to construct or acquire new homes.
- Support the delivery of the HRA Business Plan.
- While financial certainty is required such as to maintain the existing homes for our tenants, the policy includes the ability for the council to cap rents such as if the September CPI figure is unusually high meaning the full CPI increase gets capped.
- Ensure there is a rent setting policy in place approved by Executive and the council has the appropriate governance and assurance mechanisms in place.
- Ensure that the council takes into consideration the cost-of-living increase when setting the rent, so as not to adversely contribute to increased resident hardship

3. Scope

This policy applies to all properties and assets that are accounted for in the HRA and General Fund low-cost rental accommodation, including:

- Rented residential accommodation
- Service charges for HRA and General Fund low-cost rental accommodation.

It does not cover:

- Ground rents and service charges for leasehold residential accommodation (HRA properties originally purchased through the Right to Buy)
- Shared Ownership accommodation (the council has 79 shared ownership properties) that is exempt from the Rent Standard

- Pitches we rent at Grovelands Park, Carters Hill Park and Twyford Orchards where the pitch holders provide their own mobile home
- Garages owned by both the HRA and General Fund
- Seven guest rooms within our HRA sheltered housing schemes
- The Local Housing Company properties being Loddon Homes Limited and Berry Brook Homes
- Properties we lease from Private Landlords and let to people supported by Adult Social Services
- Shops and commercial premises.

4. Rent policy background

Since 2001, rents for properties let at Social Rent (being all of the rented homes in the HRA at 31 March 2020) have been based on a formula set by the government.

This creates a 'Formula Rent' for each property that is exclusive of any service charges, which takes account of factors such as the relative value of the property at January 1999, relative local income levels, and the size of the property. A principal aim of this formula based approach is to ensure that similar rents are charged for similar properties. The operational detail for these calculations can be found in Appendix. B (page 24) at the [link here](#).

For all newly built or newly acquired dwellings, the council will obtain a January 1999 valuation through a desktop review. If comparable rents are not readily available, the council will commission a valuation that will be completed as per the requirements stated in the 'Policy statement on rents for social housing'. All existing January 1999 valuations are loaded to our rent accounting computer system.

Formula Rent is subject to a rent cap based on the number of bedrooms in a property. If Formula Rent would be higher than the rent cap for a particular property, the rent cap is used instead. The rent cap is expected to increase by CPI + 1.5% each year.

In 2011, the government introduced Affordable Rent, which permits rents to be set at up to 80% of market rent (inclusive of service charges). The introduction of Affordable Rent was intended to fund the construction of more new homes at a sub-market rent. Landlords can only let new properties at Affordable Rent where certain conditions apply (that would require a supply delivery agreement between the council and Homes England). Existing vacant properties may be converted from Formula Rent to Affordable Rent in certain circumstances.

From April 2015, the government made it possible for social landlords to charge a full market rent where a social tenant household has an annual income of at least £60,000.

Government policy has limited maximum annual changes to Formula Rent and Affordable Rent levels.

From April 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 required social landlords to reduce rents by 1% each year for four years, which had a significant negative impact on HRA Business Planning.

In October 2017, the government announced its intention to set a rent policy for local authority landlords and housing associations that permits annual increases of Formula Rents of up to CPI + 1%, starting from 1 April 2020, for a period of at least five years.

It did not override landlords' statutory obligation to complete the four-year rent reduction required by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

The new policy from April 2020 recognised the need for a stable financial environment to support the delivery of new homes. It provides a degree of reassurance for financial planning in the short term. The increases from 1 April 2020 of 1% plus CPI (at September of the previous year) is a ceiling and councils could apply a lower increase or freeze or lower rents if they wished to do so.

If the September CPI figure is unusually high, the council can if it feels it is financially viable to do so, make a decision about capping the CPI figure to a lower amount. Any such capping of rents will be included as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account budget setting report.

To control this new settlement, rather than legislate, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government required the Regulator of Social Housing to prepare a new Rent Standard to apply from 2020 to all Registered Providers of social housing, including councils.

From 1 April 2020, Registered Providers must comply in full with all the requirements and expectations set out in the Rent Standard. They must also comply with the Rent Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2019 on the setting, increase and decrease of rents and service charges.

5. Legislation and Guidance

- Housing Act 1985 Section 24
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (a) Section 197
- Guidance on rents for social housing - Department for Communities and Local Government, May 2014
- Rent Standard Guidance - Homes and Communities Agency, April 2015
- Social Housing Rents (Exceptions and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2016
- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Direction on the Rent Standard 2019
- Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing issued by the Secretary of State on 26 February 2019
- Rent Standard 2020 - Regulator of Social Housing, 1 April 2020

6. Relevant council documents

- [The Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23.](#)

7. The Policy

The council sets rents for its residential accommodation in the HRA and General Fund low-cost rental accommodation in accordance with the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing issued by the Secretary of State on 26 February 2019 and the Rent Standard 2020 issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, on 1 April 2020 and any subsequent amendments in legislation regulation or guidance.

The key points of this policy are:

- a. All properties let under existing tenancies continue to have rent calculated using Formula Rent and maximum rent amounts charged will be a Formula Rent. Where property rental amounts have not yet reached their Formula Rent amount, the 1% increase plus CPI (from the previous September) will continue to be applied until and including 2024/25. Therefore, where a tenant's rent is below formula rent, the council (that is a requirement of the Rent Standard) will continue with annual increases of up to 1% plus CPI (from the previous September).
- b. All existing supported housing, including sheltered housing and other accommodation designated for older people, that becomes vacant and available for re-let will be let at Formula Rent. Our computer system will have formula rent already calculated and loaded for each property, so when a property becomes void, the formula rent is already known and will be re-let at the formula rent. Each year, new formula rents will be loaded to the computer system for the next rent charging year.
- c. The council will not convert existing general needs properties from Formula Rent to Affordable Rent.
- d. This council can after consulting with tenants, set rents at up to 5% above Formula Rent for general needs properties and up to 10% above Formula Rent for supported housing (the council has 241 sheltered housing units that for the purpose of the Rent Standard, are categorised as supported housing). This is known as 'rent flexibility'. The council will not apply 'rent flexibility'.
- e. All other existing general needs dwellings (that are part of the HRA) and general fund accommodation that becomes vacant and available for re-let, and all newly built or acquired general needs dwellings will be let at Formula Rent. The exception is where an existing social tenant completes a mutual exchange.
- f. Formula Rents will continue to increase by CPI + 1% each year from 2020/21 for a period of five years up to and including 2024/25. If the September CPI figure is unusually high, the council can if it feels it is financially viable to do so, (that includes taking into account for example, financial resilience, commitment to the tackling-poverty initiative and affordability) make a decision about capping the CPI figure to a lower amount. The council can consider whether to apply this to all tenants rent charges, or whether to apply this cap to just the rents that have already reached formula rent, or in another way that has taken

account of for example, financial resilience, commitment to the tackling-poverty initiative and affordability. Any such capping of rents will be included as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account budget setting report.

g. The council will not charge higher rents for social tenants with a household income of above £60,000. The council does not have access to information relating to the income of its secure tenants, who have tenancies for their lifetimes rather than a fixed term and cannot insist that this is provided. No cost-efficient or effective system currently exists for councils to ascertain the true household income of existing tenants.

h. Service charges are separate to rent, and examples are grounds maintenance and block lighting for communal areas. The council has already unpooled service charges, so tenants pay a contribution to the actual costs for their home/block rather than all costs for the whole borough being pooled and divided between all tenants.

The *Policy statement on rents for social housing* encourages the council to keep service charge increases to within CPI + 1%. The council reviews the actual costs being paid and will only recover the actual costs of the services. Service charges will be based, when reasonably possible, on actual expenditure for the preceding financial year. This means that at each annual review, the service charges are set at a 'fixed' amount rather than being 'variable'.

Where new or extended services are introduced, and an additional charge may need to be made, the council will consult with tenants who would benefit from the proposed new service.

8. Rent variation: timing, roles, responsibilities, and authority

The yearly change to rental and service charges are part of the annual HRA Budget Setting process, which is a decision for full council.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods and Communities, has delegated authority to agree all Formula Rents that have to be calculated or changed during the financial year outside the annual budget-setting timetable in accordance with this policy.

9. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

This Rent Setting Policy will be reviewed each year and be included as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account Budget report to full council. It will be modified as necessary such as to accord with any future council policy change, new legislation, regulation or changes to the legislative and regulatory framework or significant change to the benefits system.

10. Equality and Diversity

We are committed to ensure that this policy does not impact disproportionately on different equality groups. This strategy has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: the initial impact assessment

1. Process and guidance

The purpose of an EqIA is to make sure that the council is meeting the needs of all our residents by ensuring we consider how different groups of people may be affected by or experience a proposal in different ways.

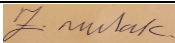
The council has a two stage EqIA process:

- Stage 1 - the initial impact assessment
- Stage 2 - the full impact assessment.

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This form is for use at Stage 1 of the process. This must be completed when undertaking a project, policy change, or service change. It can form part of a business case for change and must be completed and attached to a Project Initiation Document. The findings of the initial impact assessment will determine whether a full impact assessment is needed.

Guidance and tools for council officers can be accessed on the council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

Date started:	04.08.2022
Completed by:	Harrison Wilks
Service:	Neighbourhoods and Communities
Project or policy EqIA relates to:	Rent Setting Policy
Date EqIA discussed at service team meeting:	TBC
Conclusion (is a full assessment needed?):	No
Signed off by (AD):	
Sign off date:	07.09.2022

2. Summary of the policy, project, or service

This section should be used to summarise the project, policy, or service change (the proposal).

What is the purpose of the proposal, what are the aims and expected outcomes, and how does it relate to service plans and the corporate plan?

A 'Rent Setting Policy' is a requirement of the 'Rent Standard – April 2020' with this being regulated by the 'Regulator of Social Housing'.

How will the proposal be delivered, what governance arrangements are in place and who are the key internal stakeholders?

This Rent Setting Policy will be approved by Executive and included as part of each years Housing Revenue Account budget setting process. The Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods and Communities, Assistant Director Finance, and Lead Member for Housing are all aware a Rent Setting Policy is being produced.

Who will be affected by the proposal? Think about who it is aimed at and who will deliver it.

Tenants living in our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund accommodation. The aim is to have a clear policy that meets the requirements of the Rent Standard.

3. Data & Protected Characteristics

This section should be used to set out what data you have gathered to support the initial impact assessment.

The table below sets out the equality groups that need to be considered in the impact assessment. These comprise the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and other priority areas defined by the council.

Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Pregnancy/Maternity
Religious belief	Race	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Socio-economic disadvantage

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What data and information will be used to help assess the impact of the proposal on different groups of people? A list of useful resources is available for officers on the Council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

Data held on our housing management system – NEC Housing.

4. Assessing & Scoring Impact

This section should be used to assess the likely impact on each equality group, consider how significant any impacts could be and explain how the data gathered supports the conclusions made.

Scoring impact for equality groups	
Positive impact	The proposal promotes equality of opportunity by meeting needs or addressing existing barriers to participation and/or promotes good community relations
Neutral or no impact	The proposal has no impact or no disproportionate impact.
Low negative	The proposal is likely to negatively impact a small number of people, be of short duration and can easily be resolved.
High negative	The proposal is likely to have a significant negative impact on many people or a severe impact on a smaller number of people.

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Referring to the Scoring table above, please give an impact score for each group, explain what the likely impact will be, and briefly set out how the data supports this conclusion.

Equality group	Impact score	Impact and supporting data
Age	No	
Disability	No	
Gender reassignment	No	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
Pregnancy/Maternity	No	
Religious belief	No	

Race	No	
Sex	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
Socio-economic disadvantage	No	

5. Conclusion and next steps.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment if you have identified any groups as having a low or high negative impact.

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If no impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must include reference to the initial assessment in any associated reports, and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy, or service change.

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TITLE	Capital Monitoring 2022/23 - Q2
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 October 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance - Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

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

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to:

- 1) note the position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 2 (to 30 September 2022) as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A to the report.
- 2) approve and note the proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B.
- 3) note that due to the current uncertainty surrounding higher interest rates, as part of our enhanced financial management process, a review is to be undertaken to determine what capital projects can be postponed this year, to minimise exposure to borrowing at high rates. Any postponement is to be agreed at Executive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report informs the Executive of the progress of the Council in delivering its capital programme for the financial year 2022/2023. The Executive have previously agreed to consider Capital Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis and this report highlights the capital monitoring as at the end of the second quarter of the financial year (30 September 2022).

The programme will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the financial year and any further rephasing will be notified to Executive for approval.

Recommendation One

The table below sets out a summary of the financial position for the capital programme as at the end of quarter two. Since quarter one, there has been a significant positive movement in the reported underspend position, moving from £1.1m to £18.6m. A breakdown of the major variances is detailed below. In addition, carry forwards of the current year budget in future years have increased from £21.5m to £212.8m. This was expected to happen and was referenced in Appendix A in the quarter one report. As we move through the financial year, projects can be delayed due to planning, design and construction challenges. The Council are also reassessing business cases and project

timelines on some capital projects in light on the current national economic conditions the Council find themselves in (e.g. interest rates, inflation, etc).

The executive is asked to note this position. Further information is provided in Appendix A.

		£'million
Capital programme approved at Council (Feb 2022)	a	123.2
Budget rephased from prior years (existing projects)	b	288.2
Budget movements in year	c	0.9
Current approved budget	d = a + b + c	412.3
Forecast spend for 22/23	e	180.9
Forecast carry forward into 23/24	f	212.8
Forecast variance (underspend) / overspend	g = (e+f) - d	(18.6)

As of 30 September 2022, there are £(18.6m) in savings across the capital programme identified. These are made up as follows:

Analysis of material budget savings identified as of 30 September 2022	£'million
<u>Chief Executive's Office</u>	
IT - Hardware (mobile phone replacements) <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£0.08m)
<u>Children's Services</u>	
School Kitchens - reduction in number schools due to academisation	(£0.13m)
<u>Place & Growth</u>	
Winnersh Triangle Parkway - unforeseen issues caused by the Thames Water Main. <i>Reported in Q1 capital monitoring (Jul'22)</i>	£1.3m
Managing Congestion and pollution - to be reinvested in active travel and bus priority <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£4.8m)
SCAPE Major Road Schemes- schemes near completion including shared costs due to work carried out by others. <i>Reported in Q1 capital monitoring, saving now increased.</i>	(£4.1m)
Payment of commuted sum to WHL - current projects completed	(£3.9m)

Warren House Embankment Stabilisation <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£3.0m)
Highways Infrastructure Flood Alleviation Schemes <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£1.3m)
Electric Vehicle (EV) Charge Points - Budget reduced to match government grant approved.	(£0.46m)
A329(M) & Drainage (Central Reserve Concrete Barrier and Carriageway) <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£0.4m)
Permanent & Portable Variable Message Signs (PVMS) Project - trail ended with costs less than planned. <i>Reported in Q1 capital monitoring</i>	(£0.1m)
<u>Resources & Assets</u>	
Redesigning use of WBC assets to generate future income <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£1.4m)
IT / System related projects (server rooms, software and Councillors laptops) <i>Reported in capital programme review paper (Jul'22)</i>	(£0.2m)
Total	(£18.57m)

Based on the savings above, approximately £14m of unringfenced funding has been made available to support the funding of the capital programme in 23/24.

Recommendation Two

As part of the monthly monitoring of the capital programme, the profiling of expenditure is reviewed and where required, a more realistic profile of the expenditure over the life of the project will be updated. Appendix B provides a list of the capital carry forwards identified to date this year, totalling £212.8m. These projects will be reprofiled across the next three financial years.

These carry forwards are the cumulative position and therefore include the £21.5m identified and reported to the Executive in quarter one.

The Executive are asked to approve and note the proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B;

Recommendation Three

The Executive are asked to note that due to the current uncertainty surrounding higher interest rates, as part of our enhanced financial management process, a review is to be undertaken to determine what capital projects can be postponed this year, to minimise exposure to borrowing at high rates. Any postponement is to be agreed at Executive.

Working with our treasury management advisors, the finance team are monitoring the current interest rates closely to understand any potential risks to the funding of the Councils capital programme. This includes longer term planning, additional sensitivity analysis and reviews of project business cases.



FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£181m	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£213m Carry Forward	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	tbc when 23/24 budget set	tbc	Capital

Other Financial Information

None

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality assessments are carried out as part of each capital project

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

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

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

Appendix A: Capital Monitoring Summary Report for Quarter 2 (2022-2023)

Appendix B: List of proposed rephasing of projects in Quarter 2 to 2023-2024

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CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT SEPTEMBER 2022

Directorate	Current Approved Budget £,000	Forecast Spend £,000	Carry Forwards £,000	(Under) / Overspend £,000	Major Areas Of Forecast Overspend / (Underspend)	Material Carry Forward Movements
Adult Social Care & Health	14,589	4,658	9,931	0	No material variances identified at this stage	£7.4m Older People's Dementia Home £2.0m Adult Social Care Accommodation Transformation - Options to be developed to meet statutory obligation to house people with Learning disabilities or transitioning from Children's to Adult Social Care
Chief Executive's Office	6,494	5,688	729	(77)	(£0.08m) underspend IT - Hardware (mobile phone replacements)	No material carry forwards identified at this stage
Children's Services	18,345	17,194	1,022	(128)	(£0.13m) underspend School Kitchens - reduction in number schools due to academisation	No material carry forwards identified at this stage
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	19,277	19,277	0	0	No material variances identified at this stage	No material carry forwards identified at this stage
Place & Growth	161,621	48,871	95,957	(16,793)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. £1.3m overspend on Winnersh Triangle Parkway - unforeseen issues caused by the Thames Water Main. 2. (£4.8m) underspend Managing Congestion and pollution - to be reinvested in active travel and bus priority 3. (£4.1m) underspend on SCAPE Major Road Schemes - schemes near completion including shared costs due to work carried out by others 4. (£3.9m) underspend from payment of commuted sum to WHL - current projects completed 5. (£3.0m) underspend Warren House Embankment Stabilisation 6. (£1.3m) underspend Highways Infrastructure Flood Alleviation Schemes 7. (£0.46m) underspend Electric Vehicle (EV) Charge Points - Budget reduced to match government grant approved. 8. (£0.4m) underspend A329(M) & Drainage (Central Reserve Concrete Barrier and Carriageway) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. £55.5m SCAPE - Road infrastructure - Infrastructure to facilitate delivery of South Wokingham SDL including South Wokingham Distribution Road now planned for future years delivery 2. £8.29m Land Acquisition for Major Road Schemes - Future requirements to deliver SCAPE road infrastructure including post construction procedures of completed road schemes 3. £7.2m Toutley Highways Depot Modernisation - Early stages of project, majority of spend in next financial year 4. £6.2m Sports Provision to serve North & South SDL's 5. £5.5m California Crossroads - Delivery not expected to begin until Easter 2023. 6. £3.0m Earley Station Footbridge - Options to be approved construction unlikely until next financial year 7. £2.6m Greenways - Land owner agreement delays and public consultations delays 8. £1.6m Gypsy, Roma, Traveller - additional pitches 9. £1.4m Wokingham Town Centre Environmental Improvements - To minimise road user impact design & construction delayed until other road schemes complete 10. £1.4m Public Rights of Way Network - Loddon Long Distance path - Land owner agreement delays 11. £0.9m Self Build Scheme - Wider business case to be looked at during the year
Resources & Assets	191,929	85,209	105,146	(1,574)	<p>(£1.4m) underspend Redesigning use of WBC assets to generate future income</p> <p>(£0.2m) underspend in IT / System related projects (server rooms, software and Councillors laptops)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. £67m Community Investment - Fund for Commercial and Housing opportunities, future strategic opportunities being developed 2. £15.26m Solar Farms (Barkham) - Delays to the programme have occurred due to delay in securing planning permission and protracted negotiations with SSSEN over securing a viable connection to the grid. Those matters have now been resolved 3. £14m Renewable Energy Infrastructure projects - Business cases for Solar investment being developed, schemes to progress in future years 4. £4.47m Carnival Pool Area Redevelopment - Town Centre Regeneration schemes 5. £3.17m Infrastructure to enable Toutley East development - Delay in obtaining outline planning consent 6. £1.2m Energy Reduction Projects - Resource delays to projects
Total	412,254	180,896	212,784	(18,573)		

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Appendix B - List of proposed rephasing of capital projects into future years

Over the first six months of the financial year, the following capital projects have been identified to be reprofiled to future years in the capital programme.

Project	Reprofiled from 2022/23	Reprofiled to		
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Adult Social Care & Health				
Older People's Dementia Home	7,450,000	959,000	6,491,000	0
Adult Social Care Accommodation Transformation	2,022,988	2,022,988	0	0
Mosaic Modernisation Reimplementation	283,000	283,000	0	0
Replacement for Day services for adults	121,256	121,256	0	0
Suffolk Lodge - Fire Alarm replacement	53,399	0	53,399	0
Adult Social Care & Health Total	9,930,643	3,386,244	6,544,399	0
Chief Executive's Office				
Twyford Library Enhancement	444,652	444,652	0	0
Berkshire Records Office	203,000	203,000	0	0
Library Offer	81,609	81,609	0	0
Chief Executive's Office Total	729,260	729,260	0	0
Children's Services				
South West New School / Spencer's Wood Primary School	709,500	709,500	0	0
St. Cecilia CofE Primary School (Matthews Green) - Furniture, Fixings & Equipment	312,500	312,500	0	0
Children's Services Total	1,022,000	1,022,000	0	0
Place & Growth				
SCAPE - Road infrastructure	55,500,000	13,875,000	27,750,000	13,875,000
Land Acquisition for Major Road Schemes	8,292,461	8,292,462	0	0
Toutley Highways Depot Modernisation	7,249,213	4,784,213	2,465,000	0
Sports Provision to serve North & South SDL's	6,220,000	0	6,220,000	0
California Crossroads	5,519,687	5,119,687	400,000	0
Earley Station Footbridge	2,986,610	700,000	2,286,610	0
Greenways	2,599,373	500,000	500,000	1,599,373
Gypsy, Roma, Traveller - additional pitches	1,590,000	0	1,590,000	0
Wokingham Town Centre Environmental Improvements	1,436,847	790,847	646,000	0
Public Rights of Way Network - Loddon Long Distance path	1,354,441	1,026,000	328,441	0
Self-Build Project	899,460	749,000	150,460	0
A327 Cycleway`	680,000	680,000	0	0
Transport corridor improvements - Shepherds Hill to Thame	650,000	650,000	0	0
Borough Wide Non SDL Play Area Enhancement Project	578,769	578,769	0	0
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans	400,000	400,000	0	0
Place & Growth Total	95,956,862	38,145,978	42,336,511	15,474,373
Resources & Assets				
Community Investment	67,000,000	67,000,000	0	0
Solar Farms (Barkham)	15,260,414	15,260,414	0	0
Renewable Energy Infrastructure projects	13,985,000	7,500,000	1,500,000	4,985,000
Town Centre Regeneration - Carnival Pool Area	4,475,104	4,475,104	0	0
Infrastructure to enable Toutley East development	3,175,000	3,175,000	0	0
Energy Reduction Projects	1,250,000	625,000	625,000	0
Resources & Assets Total	105,145,518	98,035,518	2,125,000	4,985,000
Total reprofiling identified as at end of Quarter 2	212,784,283	141,319,000	51,005,910	20,459,373

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Agenda Item 56.

TITLE	Revenue Budget Monitoring report FY2022/23 - Quarter Two
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 October 2022
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance - Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To deliver the Council Priorities for the Community, ensuring the efficient effective and safe use of resources.

The Council agrees and sets its budget in the February preceding the current financial year and this report seeks to update Executive on the budget position throughout the year and provide an estimate of the outturn position and impact on balances at year-end (31 March 2023).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive note:

- 1) the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report.
- 2) delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure to discount or uplift Leisure charges.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to allow the Executive to note the current of the forecast outturn positions for 2022/23 for the Council's net revenue expenditure, its General Fund Balance (GFB), the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Recommendation 1 – Current Position

The Executive has agreed to consider Revenue Monitoring Reports on a quarterly basis. In February 2022, the Council agreed and set its net General Fund (Revenue) budget at £161.3 million; following year end, this is to be further adjusted to include supplementary estimates and agreed budget movements. This gives a working budget for each of the Councils Directorates. The working budgets and forecast outturn are shown in the table below.

Department	End of Year Position		
	Current Approved	Current Forecast	Net over / (under)

	Budget		spend
	£,000	£,000	£,000
Adult Social Care	61,248	61,248	0
Chief Executive	11,918	11,918	0
Children's Services	37,743	38,848	1,105
Place & Growth	45,884	46,044	160
Resources & Assets	5,268	5,548	280
Net Expenditure	162,062	163,607	1,545

The current financial landscape continues to present an unprecedented challenge for the Council in terms of levels of demand on front line services and price inflation, as a result budgets are stretched.

Services are working extremely hard, supported by finance in understanding the impact of the demand on budgets, seeking to find options to mitigate pressures as they arise. In addition, programmes have been instigated to support the financial challenge including close control of expenditure; assessing sensible delays to capital projects to minimise exposure to borrowing; curtailing any other form of service delivery whilst minimising the impact and holding recruitment to posts where appropriate to support the in-year financial position.

There is still significant residual risk on the Council's financial position which will continue to be closely monitored as we move through the remainder of the financial year.

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

Adult Social Care

No material variances identified at present however the continued impact of growing demand coupled with the hospital discharge service stopping at the end of March 2022 is causing some pressures to market costs and volumes and is being closely monitored.

Chief Executive

No material variances, some small pressures being managed within the service.

Children's Services

The £1.1m reported overspend relates to ongoing pressures from rising demand across both Children in Care and Home to School Transport, along with recruitment challenges for essential case holding teams.

The number of Children in Care in Wokingham has now reached over 140, the highest ever experienced locally and a 22% increase on the same point last year. Despite targeted service work, such as that of the Compass Team, demonstrating successful outcomes in supporting children to remain at home thus avoiding expensive placement costs, demand levels have significantly exceeded budget projections. Market pressures and availability of suitable placement options for rising complexity within the cohort is also having an adverse impact on unit cost. Changes to thresholds within the mandatory National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children will further increase budget pressure.

In-year applications for mainstream school places are currently at unprecedented levels, with over 460 applications received in June 2022, compared to around 180 for the same month in previous years. For SEND, current assessment requests for Education Health & Care Plans are currently over 30 pupils per month. While not all mainstream and SEND pupils will be eligible for funded transport, given the current place sufficiency challenges faced locally, risks remain that the number of pupils statutorily entitled to transport will continue to rise over the remainder of the financial year.

Place and Growth

The £160k reported variance is due to lower than budgeted levels of car parking income, mitigated by reducing the amount of planned and reactive maintenance works being undertaken in year, as well as waste disposal tonnages being reduced. This is thought to be at least in part due to the current costs of living resulting in reduced waste disposal levels and therefore cost savings. This position in relation to waste disposal is £1m better than report at quarter one.

Risks do continue to exist around waste disposal due to the size of the contract and also around Temporary Accommodation demand which has stabilised significantly since the increases seen during the first quarter of the year. Significant work has been undertaken in relation to the prevention of homelessness, but a risk around future increases in demand still exists.

Resources and Assets

The £280k reported variance includes income shortfall in leisure of £290k, this is an ongoing risk as the service rebuilds following the pandemic; property pressures from voids and income shortfalls totalling £287k. These are partly offset by surplus forecast income on interest on balances because of the recent changes in interest rates.

General Fund

The General Fund Forecast is just under £7.5m however this needs to be taken in the context that it is early in the year and that work will continue throughout the year to contain costs and maximise efficiencies where possible to improve and firm up the year-end position.

See Appendix B for further details.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Housing Revenue Account is currently expecting to exceed budget by £140k. This is a result of rental income being slightly less than budgeted and staffing related costs. The variance in rental income is less than 1% but there is an impact due to the size of the budget. Risks continue to exist around the exact amount of rental income due to regular fluctuation as well as the level of voids and maintenance costs due to increases in costs of materials and labour. HRA reserves are estimated to be £1.3m on 31 March 2023. This remains a prudent level of reserves and above the minimum recommended reserve balance of £0.9m set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. See Appendix C for further details.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Schools are funded through a direct grant from Central Government known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This is used to fund individual schools through an agreed formula, costs associated with Early Years Services, education and support for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND), and to fund relevant support services.

The DSG is forecasting an in-year adverse variance of £5.7m against a total budget of £168m (3.4% of total income). This represents a movement of £1.2m from Q1, reflecting the risk identified at that time within the High Needs Block.

As is the case with the vast majority of authorities across the country, the overspend on the DSG relates to ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block (HNB), driven largely by continuing increases in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and their related needs resulting in demand for specialist placements.

The number of children and young people with an EHCP in Wokingham has risen by 75% since 2018, with a 30% increase over the 2021/22 financial year of those in receipt of 'top-up' funding from the High Needs Block.

Key risks to the HNB forecast

Current indications from assessment activity are for potentially an additional 30 Education Health & Care Plans per month. While the movement at Q2 reflects much of the changes associated with the new academic year, risks remain that costs associated with supporting children and young people with an EHCP will increase further.

SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme / HNB Deficit Management Plan

The SEND IIP is a large, ambitious programme of improvement and innovation, which currently runs until December 2022. Its purpose is to deliver the SEND Strategy (0-25), with five priority aims:

1. To strengthen local provision and quality of local practice
2. To improve the efficiency of processes (including timeliness and quality of EHCPs and the Annual Review process)
3. To ensure effective Transitions at all ages and stages
4. To strengthen sufficiency of local provision, more effective strategic commissioning and Value for Money, and greater impact on outcomes
5. All of the above enabled through effective and meaningful coproduction

In addition to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, the IIP is also designed to ensure that Wokingham gets the best value for money from its

allocation of resources to support delivery of services, for children and young people with SEND and their families.

WBC is participating in the Department for Education’s Safety Valve Intervention Programme from September 2022, with significant work being undertaken to inform that process.

See Appendix D for further details.

Recommendation 2 – Delegated Authority

You will note from the revenue monitoring an area under potential pressure is Sports and Leisure. The area is undergoing a comprehensive review and as part of this we require a much more responsive approach to the setting of fees and charges.

There needs to be flexible in our approach to pricing and understanding the customer needs against the commercial offering will always require a balance that ensures customer access can always be maintained and grown where practical. Managers need the flexibility to respond to local circumstance; support the wider customer experience and encourage greater participation in activities in parallel to the needs to be commercial in our service approach.

The Sports and Leisure service is aligned to wider Public Health ambitions around addressing inequality of access; increasing participation and supporting wider needs especially those who suffer long term health conditions. By providing flexibility of pricing alongside a framework that encourages and supports increased usage across our services can only enhance the delivery of these core services.

The Executive are asked to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure to discount or uplift Leisure charges.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	MTFP net budget of £163.6 million	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Effective monitoring of budgets is an essential element of providing cost effective

services and enables any corrective action to be undertaken, if required. Many of the budgets are activity driven and can be volatile in nature.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
None

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

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*
None – this is only a report on the financial position for quarter two.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
None

List of Background Papers
Appendix A – Revenue Monitoring Summary
Appendix B – General Fund Balance
Appendix C – Housing Revenue Account Monitoring Summary
Appendix D – DSG Monitoring Summary

Contact Stu Taylor	Service Finance
Telephone Tel: 07525 804116	Email stu.taylor@wokingham.gov.uk

REVENUE MONITORING REPORT September 2022

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

Department	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend	
	£,000	£,000	£,000	
Adult Social Care	61,248	61,248	0	The continued impact of growing demand coupled with the hospital discharge service stopping at the end of March 2022 is causing some pressures to market costs and volumes and is being closely monitored.
Chief Executive	11,918	11,918	0	No overall variance, pressures being managed within the service.
Children's Services	37,743	38,848	1,105	Rising demand from children in care / care leavers and home to school transport, along with significant recruitment challenges are driving budget pressures in-year. Unbudgeted costs are in part being mitigated by reserves held and management action on discretionary spend, however a significant challenge remains.
Place & Growth	45,884	46,044	160	Car parking income continues to be lower than budgeted, which is partially offset by expenditure on the waste disposal contract having reduced through a reduction in the volume of waste being collected combined with reducing the planned and reactive highways maintenance works in year.
Resources & Assets	5,268	5,548	280	The forecast variances include income shortfall in leisure £290k, this is an on-going risk as the service rebuilds following the pandemic. There are property pressures from voids and income shortfalls totalling £287k. These are partly offset by surplus forecast income on interest on balances as a result of the recent changes in interest rates (£300k).
Net Expenditure	162,062	163,607	1,545	

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Estimated General Fund Balance - 31st March 2023

Note	£,000	£,000
1 Estimated General Fund Balance (as at 31/3/2022)		(£9,026)
<u>Supplementary Estimates</u>	£0	
		£0
<u>Service Variance</u>		
Adult Social Care & Health	£0	
Chief Executive	£0	
Children's Services	£1,105	
Resources and Assets	£280	
Place and Growth	£160	
		£1,545
Estimated General Fund Balance 31/3/2023		(£7,481)

Notes

1. General balance as at 31/03/22 is estimated pending completion on the 2021/22 statement of accounts.

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

Service	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)	
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend		
	£,000	£,000	£,000		
Housing Revenue Account					
Capital Finance					
	Expenditure	4,837	4,837	0	
	Income	(20)	(20)	0	
	Net	4,817	4,817	0	
Fees & Charges / Capital Finance Charges					
	Expenditure	97	139	42	Increase in electricity costs have resulted in the existing budget no longer being sufficient to cover this cost.
	Income	(85)	(103)	(18)	
	Net	12	36	24	
General Management					
	Expenditure	2,036	2,012	(24)	
	Income	(87)	(87)	0	
	Net	1,949	1,925	(24)	
Housing Repairs					
	Expenditure	3,905	3,916	11	
	Income	(130)	(130)	0	
	Net	3,775	3,786	11	
HRA Housing Services					
	Expenditure	2,234	2,461	227	HRA rental income is currently forecast to be slightly under budget, there is however natural fluctuation in this during the year meaning the position could vary a little by year-end. A further £100k of overspend is in relation to staffing costs.
	Income	(17,917)	(18,024)	(107)	
	Net	(15,683)	(15,563)	120	
Sheltered Accommodation					
	Expenditure	340	332	(8)	
	Income	(520)	(504)	17	
	Net	(181)	(172)	9	
Subtotal Excluding Internal Recharges		(5,310)	(5,170)	140	
Internal and Capital Charges		5,310	5,310	0	
Total		0	0	140	

Housing Revenue Account Reserves	£,000	£,000
HRA Reserves as at 31st March 2022		(1,323)
Planned Spend	0	
Net Variance	140	
2022/23 Forecast Net Spend against Reserves		140
HRA Reserves as at 31st March 2023 (Forecast)		(1,183)

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REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

Report Date: September 2022

Service	End of Year Position			Comment on major areas of estimated over / (underspend)	
	Current Approved Budget	Current Forecast	Net over / (under) spend		
	£,000	£,000	£,000		
Dedicated Schools Grant					
Central School Services Block	Expenditure	995	995	0	
	Income	(995)	(995)	0	
	Net	0	0	0	
Early Years Block	Expenditure	11,289	11,654	365	
	Income	(11,289)	(11,654)	(365)	
	Net	0	0	0	
High Needs Block	Expenditure	29,642	31,110	1,468	Ongoing increasing number of children & young people with an EHCP, coupled with challenges around sufficiency of local provision
	Income	(25,779)	(25,660)	119	
	Net	3,863	5,450	1,587	
Schools Block	Expenditure	129,842	130,097	255	Overspend reflects required growth fund expenditure to deliver required mainstream places
	Income	(129,842)	(129,842)	0	
	Net	0	255	255	
Total		3,863	5,705	1,842	

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TITLE	Lease for Learning Disability Respite Centre
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 October 2022
WARD	Maiden Erlegh
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Adult Social Care and Health - Matt Pope Deputy Chief Executive – Graham Ebers
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services - David Hare

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

Loddon Court is The Council’s Respite Centre for adults with learning disabilities run by Optalis. People can stay for one or several nights which gives families a break and enables them to keep caring for their loved one for many years. Without the respite service there would increase in family breakdown and more demand for high cost supported living or residential accommodation.

The existing lease expired in April 2021 and The Council have been negotiating a lease extension period of up to 2035 with a break clause in 2031. The budget for Loddon Court falls within Adult Social Care, however the lease negotiation was completed by the commercial property estates team. Responsibility and authority for signing lease is held within that team. Once the lease is signed then we can request a licence to alter document which will enable the council to proceed with the refurbishment of Loddon Court.

Details of the current spend can be found in Part 2 of the Executive Report (Financial Information).

“No lending or leasing arrangements including hire purchase or similar agreements, or provision of loan or other financial guarantees shall be entered into without first consulting Director Corporate Services (Chief Finance Officer) and, in addition, in relation to land and buildings, the Service Manager, Strategic Assets. Where arrangements or guarantees exceed an estimated whole life value of £150,000, the approval of the Council’s Executive should be sought.”

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve a 15-year lease for the ground floor of the address below. The lease to be signed with Ability Housing Association.

289 Loddon Court
Wokingham Road,
Earley, RG6 7ER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Loddon Court is a purpose-built building on Wokingham Road, Earley. Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) own the land and Ability Housing Association (AHA) own the building. WBC lease the ground floor from Ability and commission Optalis to provide

Respite and Outreach Services. There are 8 rooms on the ground floor which are primarily used for short breaks by WBC and other Local Authorities. The customers who utilise the service primarily have a learning disability, mental health, complex needs and associated physical disabilities. The length of respite stays varies from 24-hour periods to several months for emergency care. On the first floor there are 9 supported living flats let out on tenancies by Ability.

The council owns the land that the Loddon Court stands on and lease this land to Ability Housing Association who own the building on the land. The lease agreement, for the land, stipulates that the land can only be used for Respite or Supported living

The care is provided by Optalis who are required to register with CQC as the approved care provider.

BACKGROUND

Loddon Court's respite care provides the eligible customer with a planned break. This may be facilitated in various ways to best suit the person with learning disabilities, mental health, complex needs and associated physical disabilities. Respite care has a significant impact on an individual's independence and choice by contributing to the care elements which maintain people in their own homes and enable their carers to continue caring.

- Respite service enable people to stay at home with families/Carers
- Without regular respite, risk of family breakdown and service users needing long term supported living or residential care at significantly higher costs to the council in both housing benefit and care cost
- Used by approximately 60 families per year

Details of the financial information can be found in Part 2 of the Executive Report (Financial Information).

Refurbishment of the Loddon Court Respite Centre

- The Loddon court building requires a refurbishment which has been planned for, budgeted for, and agreed outside of this lease agreement.
- If we refuse to sign the lease, then we would be unable to request a licence to alter and we could not complete the planned refurbishment, but the building would further into disrepair. Currently issues with Ventilation
- There is no other local respite provision in our borough or surrounding regions
- The approximate cost to replace the building was £3m

Timescales

- The lease needs to be signed as matter of urgency. Until the Lease is approved and signed, the council is unable to proceed with refurbishment of the service.
- The refurbishment needs to take place at time where there is minimum impact on clients and income for the council. This is currently due to start in December 2022.
- If the work is unable to take place during that time, then the impact or delay will be significant as it will be difficult to close respite centre during busy times.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Contained in Part 2 of the report	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Contained in Part 2 of the report	Yes	Revenue

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Contained in Part 2 of the report	Yes	Revenue
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Other Financial Information
Contained in Part 2 of the report

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
N/A – This continues an existing Service

Public Sector Equality Duty
Not Required - As continues an existing service.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
The current building is older. As part of the refurbishment, we have requested the assistance of WBC Environmental Team,

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Commercial sensitivity of Lease

List of Background Papers
None

Contact Jenny Lamprell	Service Adult Social Care
Telephone Tel: 0118 974 6586	Email jenny.lamprell@wokingham.gov.uk

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS) (MEETINGS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (ENGLAND)
REGULATIONS 2012

NOTICE OF URGENT NON KEY AND KEY DECISIONS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ON 27 OCTOBER 2022

SUBJECT FOR DECISION	REASON FOR URGENCY OF KEY DECISIONS
81 Agenda Item: 57 Lease for Learning Disability Respite Centre	The lease needs to be signed as matter of urgency. Until the Lease is approved and signed, the council is unable to proceed with refurbishment of the service. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The refurbishment needs to take place at time where there is minimum impact on clients and income for the council. This is currently due to start in December 2022.• If the work is unable to take place during that time, then the impact or delay will be significant as it will be difficult to close respite centre during busy times.

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TITLE	Officers' response to the recommendations from the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task & Finish Group
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 October 2022
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure - Ian Shenton

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report sets out the Officer response to the 15 Recommendations set out in section 2 (Attachment 1) Tree Protection & Biodiversity Task & Finish Group, Report and Recommendations, March 2022

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve the Officers' responses contained within this Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tree Protection & Biodiversity Task & Finish Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and met for the first time in August 2021. The Group agreed Terms of Reference including scrutiny of the Council's current policies and plans relating to Tree Protection and Biodiversity, the impact of the Environment Act 2021 and the emerging WBC Tree Strategy. The Group also carried out a case study relating to the loss of approximately 450 mature trees at Bearwood Lake.

The Report and Recommendations of the Tree Protection & Biodiversity Task & Finish Group were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on Thursday 17th March 2022 and the committee resolved that the Task and Finish Group's 13 recommendations to the Executive, as amended, should be approved.

This report provides Officer responses to the recommendations made by the task and finish group. Overall, the recommendations are accepted by Officers subject to a few cases where Officers have explained their reasoning.

BACKGROUND

1.1 The Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group (the Group) was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and met for the first time in August 2021. The Group comprised Councillors Chris Bowring (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman), Gary Cowan, Paul Fishwick and Jackie Rance. The Group agreed the following Terms of Reference:

- To scrutinise the Council's current policies and plans relating to tree protection and biodiversity in relation to the Council's statutory powers and duties, including the implications of the Government's Environment Bill (now the Environment Act).
- To review the Council's Planning and Development Control policies and procedures relating to tree protection and biodiversity and the opportunities arising from the Local Plan Update.
- To carry out a case study relating to the loss of c450 mature trees at Bearwood Lake. To consider the content and implications of the Council's emerging Tree Strategy.
- To consider the opportunities for improved partnership working with local stakeholders – residents, specialist and community groups, schools and Town and Parish Councils.
- To consider the implications of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and the opportunities for improved tree planting (250,000 trees across the Borough), tree protection and biodiversity.
- To consider examples of best practice in tree protection and biodiversity from across the country.
- To consider how progress is monitored, reported and communicated to Members and local stakeholders.
- To produce a report to the Executive with recommendations for improvement.

1.2 The Group met on 10 occasions and considered evidence from the following:

- Richard Bisset (WBC Lead Specialist Place Clienting)
- Laura Buck (WBC Green Infrastructure Special Project Manager)
- Professor Jo Clark (University of Reading – Department of Geography and Environmental Science)
- Katy Dagnall (Clerk, Finchampstead Parish Council)
- Duncan Fisher (WBC Ecology Officer)
- Alison Griffin (Wokingham & District Veteran Tree Association)
- Fran Hobson (WBC Service Manager – Community, Heritage, Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Chris Hannington (WBC Trees and Landscape Manager)
- Katy Hughes (Clerk, Wokingham Without Parish Council)
- Professor Martin Lukac (University of Reading – Ecosystem Science, School of Agriculture)
- Lucy Moffat (Clerk, Twyford Parish Council)
- Jan Nowecki (Clerk, Wokingham Town Council)
- Emma Pilgrim (WBC Place Clienting)
- Councillor Ian Shenton (WBC – mover of the Council Motion on Ecological Emergency)
- Matthew Stanton (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust).

1.3 The Task and Finish Group report was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in March 2022. The report provides the Group's recommendations to the Council's Executive (Appendix A).

1.4 Recommendations with Officer responses are listed below.

Recommendations	Officer Response
1. That an annual update report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and full Council, covering the updated Biodiversity Action Plan, Tree Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain Process, Flood Risk Management and any other issues relating to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the Borough.	Officer will develop a suitable Biodiversity Update report format to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee annually.
2. That, as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan update, the Council work with partners and specialist groups to produce an updated audit and baseline with SMART targets for future actions on biodiversity across the Borough.	Officers are already working on an updated Biodiversity Action Plan with key stakeholders that will include SMART targets.
3. That the Council aim to achieve 20% Biodiversity Net Gain, where possible, judging each planning application on its individual merits.	Officers are supportive in principle of a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain target (which is above the proposed mandatory target of 10%). It should be noted that this target would need to be agreed through the Local Plan Update process. As part of this process the Council will require a suitable evidence base to show that this level of biodiversity net gain alongside other requirements does not make potential development sites unviable and therefore undeliverable.
4. That Members and officers receive training on the Council's powers and duties relating to tree protection and biodiversity and the implications of recent changes in legislation.	Officers welcome the opportunity to support members and deliver training on the Council's duty and powers in relation tree management. The Councils tree officers will continue to regularly attend training sessions to keep their knowledge on trees and landscapes and the legislation surrounding this subject up to date.
5. That the Local Plan Update and supporting documents be consistent with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021)	The Local Plan Update will be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

relating to climate change, flooding and conserving the natural environment.	
6. That officers contact reservoir owners in the Borough and request that WBC receive early notice of any potential works under the Reservoirs Act, with a view to developing a communications plan in advance.	Officers in the drainage team can work with the Emergency Planning team to encourage early notification. However, it must be noted that the Council is not the regulatory or governing body in relation to reservoir works and the Reservoirs Act, and therefore is unable to take any enforcement action where a reservoir owner does not provide early notification.
7. That local Members and Parish Councils receive updates on the ongoing discussions with the owner of the Bearwood Lake site on potential mitigation measures for the felled trees and water run-off.	Officers are engaging with the landowner on some potential replanting opportunities and will ensure that members and the parish council are updated once a plan is developed.
8. That officers liaise with Town and Parish Councils and community groups to improve monitoring and compliance with planning requirements relating to tree planting on new developments	Officers value and welcome input from Town and Parish Councils and community groups and will actively engage with them to improve monitoring and compliance.
9. That officers consider the implementation of area-wide TPOs on new, large-scale development sites.	Officers will consider the use of area based TPO in line with national guidance and where appropriate.
10. That the Tree Strategy and the 250,000 tree project be underpinned by an Action Plan setting out short term, medium term and long term actions.	The draft Tree Strategy will include policies on the retention and replacement of trees open spaces and highway verges and an Action Plan setting out short term, medium term and long term goals.
11. That officers work to develop improved partnership working, engagement and communication with key partners, including Town and Parish Councils, the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association, schools, specialist and community groups.	Officers will work to develop and improve partnership and engagement with key partners in the local community within the existing resource constraints
12. That officers work with partners and specialist groups to encourage and empower residents in improving the local environment, for example by supporting residents to take the lead on local initiatives.	Officers will work with partners and specialist groups to encourage and empower residents in improving the local environment within the existing resource constraints
13. That the Council's website and communication channels be used to provide improved information and guidance on tree protection and biodiversity issues and signposting to specialist groups.	Officers are in the process of updating the information on the website

BUSINESS CASE

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

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

Other Financial Information

It is assumed at this stage all costs arising from this work will be contained within existing budgets. However, if further resources are required they will be reported back to executive for consideration

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty

This report has had due regard to the public sector equality duty and where applicable and available has included information relating to impacts upon people with protected characteristics and inequality.

Climate Emergency – 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

As stated in the report, there are major benefits in tackling ecological and climate emergency issues jointly. There are strong interdependencies and opportunities for joint working.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

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