

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023 FROM 7PM TO 8.40PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Stephen Conway (Vice-Chair), Rachel Bishop-Firth, Prue Bray, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, David Hare, Sarah Kerr, Ian Shenton and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

**Apologies:**

Councillor Clive Jones

**99. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**100. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The following declarations of personal interest were made by Executive Members in relation to agenda item 113: Shareholders Report. These Members did not participate or vote on this item.

- Councillor Prue Bray as a non-executive director of Berry Brook Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.
- Councillor Stephen Conway as a non-executive director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd
- Councillor David Hare as a non-executive director of Optalis Ltd.

Councillor Rachel Bishop-Firth declared a personal interest in agenda item 107: Delivering the Ukrainian/Afghan Refugee Resettlement Government Grant, on the grounds that her family were hosting a Ukrainian family.

**101. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER**

In the absence of the Leader, the following statement was made by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing, Councillor Stephen Conway:

'This is not the last Executive meeting of the municipal year - we have arranged a special meeting in April to help progress the Finchampstead and Twyford Neighbourhood Plans. But I want to take this opportunity to record my thanks to those whose work has helped residents and businesses of the borough in a very challenging year. I want to start by thanking my executive colleagues and the senior officers who have supported them, for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

I should like to extend my thanks to non-executive councillors of all parties for their work on council committees and working groups, and to all officers of the council for their dedicated service to the community. I should also like to express my gratitude to all our external partners for their important contributions to making life better for our residents, particularly the town and parish councils, voluntary and charitable sector, health care providers, police, fire service, educators, and the Youth Council, which I met this afternoon to get the representatives' input into our Young Person's Housing Strategy.

This year has been a tough year for many of our residents and local businesses, with a cost-of-living crisis and interest rate rises, putting up mortgage costs. It has been a challenging year for the council, too - tougher than anyone can remember. We have faced double-digit inflation, increased demand for services, shortfalls in anticipated income, and significant increases in interest rates that make council borrowing more expensive to service. The government gave us a small amount of additional core funding that no-where near covered inflation, let alone met the cost of increased demand for services.

In such difficult circumstances, other councils have effectively gone bankrupt, leading to deep cuts in services and much higher council tax. But by taking tough decisions on income generation and savings, Wokingham have been able to produce a sound, forward-looking, and compassionate budget, which supports those in the greatest difficulties.

We can all be proud of this achievement and many more too numerous to list this evening.'

## **102. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### **102.1 Paul Stevens asked the Executive Member for Planning and the Local Plan the following question:**

#### **Question:**

A recent report from the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) says Reading has 140 brownfield sites, 126.35 hectares, sufficient for 10,124 houses – the largest housing capacity in the county. It also claims that across Berkshire there are 359 such sites across the county, which would be sufficient to build at least 21,000 homes! This is more than enough to solve local housing need. In contrast Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) have listed only 25 sites on their Brownfield Register, 21 of which are already under construction. Are WBC engaged in any discussions across the wider Berkshire area about sharing housing need, in particular, regarding using Brownfield sites, such as those identified by the CPRE?

Mr Stevens was unable to attend the meeting, it was agreed that a written response would be provided, and is included below:

#### **Answer:**

Brownfield land registers provide a list of previously development land that the local planning authority considers to be appropriate for residential development, having regard to the following nationally set criteria:

- 0.25 hectares or able to deliver at least 5 dwellings or more;
- Suitable in planning terms (when considered against national and local planning policies);
- Available (the landowner / promoter has expressed an intention to sell or develop the land and there are no known impediments to it being delivered),
- Achievable (development is likely to start within 15 years).

It is important to note that sites identified in registers include those with planning permission and those that are already allocated in local plans for housing. This represents the vast majority of sites and capacity in registers, with new opportunities promoted by landowners being only a small proportion.

The information you quote does not draw a distinction between sites with planning permission, those which are already allocated, and those which offer potential new capacity.

Reading Borough Council's current brownfield land register includes 142 sites. Of these 81 have planning permission or a pending planning application. Of the remaining 61, 41 sites are already allocated within the Reading Local Plan, leaving only 20 sites as having potential new capacity. The indicated minimum capacity of these 20 sites is assessed by Reading Borough Council as 324 homes.

A similar situation exists for the registers of the other Berkshire local authorities with the vast majority of identified sites already having planning permission or being allocated for housing within local plans. In the case of Bracknell Forest Council, there are no sites identified which do not already have planning permission or are adopted or draft allocations within their local plan.

Turning to the question of engagement, we do engage with other local authorities on planning policy matters, including housing need and supply, and we will continue to do so.

It is misleading however, to suggest that there are substantial opportunities to redistribute housing needs between local authorities. All local authorities are having to carefully consider the role of undeveloped, greenfield land in planning to meet the future need for housing.

The potential of the vast majority of available brownfield land is already known and accounted for in guiding how much greenfield land may be needed for development in future and is informing discussions accordingly.'

## **102.2 Ian Pittock asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:**

### **Question:**

The previous Conservative administration had a proposal for the Pinewood site in Wokingham Without. This consisted of rebuilding the sports facilities on one half of the site and building houses on the other half. About 4 years ago, I and Lindsay Ferris as LibDem Councillors met with Wokingham Without Parish Council to assure them that should the LibDems lead Wokingham Borough Council, we would not build houses on the Pinewood site and that we would at least offer a much longer lease than they currently had. As he is now the Executive Member with responsibility for the Local Plan Update in the LibDem led Partnership administration, can Councillor Ferris confirm that our promises to Wokingham Without Parish Council still stand?

### **Answer:**

Pinewood has never been promoted into the local plan process, nor has the land been assessed for its potential suitability for development within the local plan process.

What might be causing a misunderstanding is that separate to the allocation of land for development, the local plan Revised Growth Strategy Consultation (2021) included a proposal to identify Pinewood as a site for self-funded regeneration.

The purpose of the proposal was to set a positive planning framework to support investment into improving the site and buildings, which I'm sure we would all agree are of varied quality. Setting a positive planning framework would assist proposals to improve facilities, with existing planning policy restricting what is supported in principle.

In summary, I fully acknowledge that Pinewood is home to highly valued community facilities. The site has not been promoted for housing development and there are no proposals for housing development in the emerging local plan.

Matters of property and leases do not come under planning or the local plan, however I understand that a new long term lease of the Pinewood site has been agreed in principle and is with solicitors to complete.

**Supplementary Question:**

Is the lease for the complete site?

**Answer:**

Yes, the lease is for the complete site, I believe it is for 30 years. We had a tour of the site in late 2022, with a number of councillors in attendance. We asked them if they would be interested in potentially taking on the site, they said that they were in discussions on the lease.

**102.3 Chas Hockin asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:**

**Question:**

In relation to the proposed changes to refuse collection, it is suggested that 99% of kerbside properties could accept a wheeled bin. I live in a row of 4 terraced houses built in the 1980's. Whilst I, as I live on one end of the row have no problem with wheeling a bin from my back door to the kerb, the two houses in the middle will have difficulty. There is a path from the rear of their gardens to the front of the houses, but it would be very difficult for the current residents – one with a young child and the other an elderly person – to wheel their bins the length of the garden and along an overgrown, uneven path. It is also not practical to wheel the bins through their houses. Will these residents be exempt from having a wheeled bin?

**Answer:**

We recognise that here will be properties in the borough which cannot accommodate a wheeled bin and a full survey will be undertaken to assess suitability. In terms of your specific enquiry a site visit would be conducted to discuss further with the residents to establish accessibility. If it is determined that a wheeled bin would not be suitable then the properties would remain on a bag collection.

**Supplementary question:**

Do the new proposals fit with new national guidelines, which include up to six different bins. Will Wokingham Borough Council be implementing this?

**Answer:**

We don't quite know yet, expecting to know soon. We will need to see if further separation of items is mandatory.

**102.4 Tim Holton has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:**

**Question:**

Why should residents bother responding to consultations when, in the case of waste collections, you ignore 76% of those who responded indicating they did not like a proposal to change to fortnightly waste collections.

**Answer:**

I am afraid that your question contains inaccuracies. Firstly, our proposal is to continue weekly collections, with food waste every week and recycling and residual waste taking turns in an alternating pattern. Secondly, just 26% of those who responded to the consultation indicated they did not like the proposal, while 24% liked it, 43% found it acceptable, and 7% were neutral. To characterise the latter 50% as not liking it is fallacious as they had the option to tick "don't like" but did not do so. They made that choice for a reason and their choice should not be misrepresented, and overall, there was a clear majority in favour.

The aim of a consultation is to assess views and inform the decision-making process to ensure the best outcome for the council and residents. It is not a referendum and views expressed are unlikely to be unanimous.

The consultation on waste outlined the council's financial position and the questions gave 4 options to agree or disagree with the proposals. The council must make savings of more than £25 million over the next three years due to a continued reduction in government funding and rising costs, particularly supporting those most in need. Continuing with weekly collections would increase costs and not improve our response to the climate emergency, which the council has declared.

**Supplementary Question:**

Will a decision be deferred until a debate is undertaken at Council?

**Answer:**

The Executive is the decision making body, as far as Waste is concerned.

**102.5 Andy Bailey has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:**

**Question:**

Where residential planning proposals are predicated on 20 minute communities with adjacent employment zones and the inference being that employees will live within a short walk or cycle route, how is success or otherwise measured? Is there any assurance that these 'perceived benefits' are/will actually be delivered? How are they tracked, reported on and how are developers held accountable for delivery?

Mr Bailey was unable to attend the meeting, it was agreed that a written response would be provided, which is included below.

**Answer:**

One of the objectives of planning is to provide residents with opportunities to access nearby facilities, including schools, shops, public transport, and employment opportunities, and to walk and cycle wherever possible. This is sometimes referred to as a '20 minute neighbourhood.'

However, the 20-minute neighbourhood means different things in different locations. Within more rural areas, towns and villages, this also includes being able to travel by bus or car to facilities. Providing or upgrading key walking and cycling routes such as via the greenways project, of course, often facilitate more active travel for shorter journeys.

Experiences from both Wokingham Borough and elsewhere show that where new direct, high-quality routes are provided they are well used by residents as an alternative to private vehicles. These routes also have various health, environmental and other benefits.

There has been significant investment in improved bus services and upgrades to highway infrastructure secured as part of the new developments to assist mobility and travel across the borough. Although as we are all aware, Covid impacted on bus patronage generally, new bus services and routes continue to receive patronage, particularly when well-advertised and timed to start with a level of occupations within a new development.

Of course, one of the ways any member can find out for themselves how well a bus route, cycleway, new greenway or pedestrian route is used, is to travel, cycle or walk it for themselves.

The delivery of each of these types of improvement is secured through planning policies, conditions and legal obligations attached to planning permissions. These are enforceable by WBC, with stages triggered by a certain phase of development.

Progress is also tracked by reviewing developments as they progress. The Council has dedicated officers for example, to ensure developers delivering the Strategic Development Location's comply with conditions and legal obligations, including management and maintenance.

If the member has any further issues of detail they wish to raise, officers will be pleased to assist and can be contacted directly. If you start with Mr Corrigan in the Planning team, if he doesn't know the answer, he'll point you in the direction of someone who does.

### **103. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

#### **103.1 Gary Cowan has asked the Leader of the Council the following question: Question:**

As the law says in the provisions of the 2011 Localism Act that and I quote "A decision-maker is not to be taken to have had, or to have appeared to have had, a closed mind when making a decision just because:

(a) the decision-maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision-maker took, or would or might take, in relation to a matter, and (b) the matter was relevant to the decision." The government provided an explanation in plain English of what the change in the law means: 'Under S25 a Member will be able to

express strong opinions and even tell people that he or she intends to vote in a particular way, without fear of a challenge based on bias or predetermination.’

This would suggest that the existing Constitution supported by this Lib Dem Administration, supported by the Conservatives is in fact illegal. Would you agree that the Administration has acted illegally and continues to do so by its support to the constitution that implies that pre determination is matter that can be referred to the Standards Board.

**Answer:**

Thank you for your question.

Firstly, let me say, that I do not agree that the Council has acted illegally. I will try to explain why, it is a complex issue, forgive me if the answer is long.

The WBC Member Code of Conduct, to which I believe you are referring in the final paragraph of your question, is based almost in its entirety on the Local Government Association’s (LGA) Model Code of Conduct and was agreed by full Council on 22 July 2021. You are correct that bias and predetermination are not explicitly mentioned in the Code of Conduct. However, the Code’s provisions on declarations of interest are relevant to predetermination and are about ensuring councillors do not take decisions where they or those close to them stand to lose or gain improperly.

The rules around predetermination are complex which is why the Government at the time (in 2011/12) brought in Section 25 of the Localism Act to clarify matters.

The concept that a councillor, as a decision-maker, should approach a decision with an open mind remains a key principle of public law. The Localism Act does not abolish predetermination as such; instead it provides a protection from challenge by identifying specific behaviour which cannot be regarded as evidence of a closed mind. The use of the words “just because” in the Act limit that protection to things the councillor has done or said to indicate what view he or she took, or would or might take. The purpose of clarifying the law is to ensure councillors can be involved in “campaigning, talking with constituents, or publicly expressing views on local issues” without “fear of being accused of bias or facing legal challenge”. However, the Act does not prevent a challenge based on bias or predetermination arising from other factors.

Evidence of personal bias arising, for example because a member would be personally affected by a decision they are making, would still lead to an unsound decision vulnerable to challenge and could lead to a Member Code of Conduct complaint. Neither does the Localism Act remove the requirement to ensure that decisions are reasonable in the legal sense. This means that, at the time a decision is made, the Council should be able to demonstrate that all relevant matters have been taken into account and that irrelevant considerations have not influenced that decision. Consultation responses, equality impact assessment and in the case of planning, all material considerations, should have been put forward and discussed at a meeting before a decision is taken, whatever prior indication an individual member may have given regarding his or her views on a particular matter. The rules were developed to ensure that councillors came into council discussions – on, for example, planning applications – with an open mind.

**Supplementary Question:**

In 2011, Wokingham Borough Council appeared in court, and the charge was against the developer, cutting down trees. The judge ruled that Wokingham Borough Council had

acted illegally. If that was the case, should not the Council remove or amend the Constitution so that it is compliant with the judge's order?

**Answer:**

I am not familiar with that particular case, so I am not able to comment. I will provide you with a written reply.

**104. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

**105. PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE COLLECTION METHODOLOGY AND CONTAINMENT OF WASTE IN THE BOROUGH**

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that the proposals would lead to single use plastics being removed from waste operations. The green waste bags would be retained until the government's position was clear, any further investment in wheeled bins would not be prudent at this time.

It was anticipated that residual waste would be reduced, by diversion into recycling schemes. This in turn would reduce waste management costs and increase the borough's recycling rate, which currently stood at 54%.

The public consultation carried out yielded a significant majority who liked or found the change to be acceptable.

The Executive felt that the strategy was well established and would lead to significant savings of in excess of £1m a year. The proposals had been considered and commented upon by Overview & Scrutiny. From a carbon reduction perspective, the proposals were sound. The Executive noted that 85% of councils operated alternative waste collections. It was noted that garden waste collection would continue unchanged.

**RESOLVED:** that the Executive:

i) Approved the proposed change of policy from weekly blue bag collection to Alternate Weekly Collection (general refuse collected one week, recycling collected the next week, with retained weekly food waste collection)

ii) Approved the introduction of wheeled bins for the containment of refuse from the summer of 2024.

iii) Approved the utilisation of funds from the Waste Equalisation Reserve Fund to support the purchase and distribution of wheeled bins.

iv) Noted the petition submitted by Cllr Norman Jorgensen which sought the retention of weekly waste collection and noted the comments made by the O&S Management Committee at the meeting on 22 February 2023

**REASON FOR DECISION**

The report sets out how the Council intends to tackle financial pressures and drive forward its waste minimisation, diversion, recycling and carbon reduction commitments. Following the results of the second waste strategy consultation, it is proposed that Alternate Weekly Collections be introduced in Wokingham, with wheeled bins rolled out for containment of refuse.



## **106. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN PILOT PROJECT**

The Executive noted that the UK was exceptionally nature depleted, in comparison to the rest of the G7 countries. The proposals in this report mandated developers to achieve a biodiversity net gain, in a bid to reverse nature depletion. A target of a 10% gain had been set by the government.

The Executive welcomed the comments of Overview & Scrutiny, which were valuable and pertinent and would be supported. Executive members thanked Overview and Scrutiny members for their work to formulate the recommendations contained in the supplementary paper.

**RESOLVED:** that the Executive;

- 1) Approved the implementation of an ecological enhancement scheme at Ashenbury Park which will generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units, including the required capital expenditure of £201,190 and the establishment equalisation reserve to manage the ongoing maintenance costs.
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Place and Growth (in consultation with the Director of Resources and Assets and the Executive Member for Environment) to approve the implementation of further ecological enhancement schemes which will generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units, including the required capital expenditure up to £300,000 in 2023/24.
- 3) Noted the transfer of management responsibilities at Ashenbury Park from the Council's Grounds Maintenance contractor to the Council's Countryside Service in order to facilitate the ongoing ecological enhancement scheme.
- 4) The Executive also endorsed the recommendations proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee as follows, that;
  - i) officers ensure that there was clear communication with residents and community groups about the aims of the Biodiversity Net Gain pilot project in Ashenbury Park and the expected outcomes;
  - ii) design work on the pilot project proceeded, but no physical works to take place on site until the public consultation has been completed, evaluated and reported - consultation to include an option with no changes to Ashenbury Park;
  - iii) officers explored potential mitigations relating to the financial risks and outcomes relating to the project;
  - iv) noted Scrutiny Members' concerns about the potential negative impact on communities if Biodiversity Net Gain projects are not linked to the areas which are taking new housing development;
  - v) receive a map showing the proposed pilot project site within Ashenbury Park (included with the agenda papers);

- vi) officers provide a briefing for all Members on the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain into the planning process and the specific pilot Biodiversity Net Gain project in Ashenbury Park.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

To secure Executive approval for the initial expenditure required to implement the ecological enhancement scheme at Ashenbury Park in Woodley and to inform the Executive of the underlying commercial approach to the sale of the Biodiversity Net Gain units generated by the project.

#### **107. PROCUREMENT OF TREE MAINTENANCE FRAMEWORK CONTRACT**

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport & Leisure reported that tree maintenance had been carried out on an ad hoc basis to date, this contract would ensure that a procurement framework was in place for this work.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive approved the procurement of a four year Tree Maintenance Framework Contract.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

Officers require Executive approval to set up an internal framework to allow officers to procure routine, urgent and emergency tree works required for Highways, Public Open Space and Housing land.

A framework contract would allow the Operational Tree Management team to ensure the required procurement process is followed and value for money is delivered through an agreed schedule of rates without causing a delay to the delivery of service.

#### **108. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

The Executive thanked the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee and officers for all of their work on developing these recommendations.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive approved the officers' responses to the recommendations in the report and requested that the Inclusion Cross Party Working Group considered these alongside action planning.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

The Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 2 November 2022, received a presentation from the Hardship Alliance about the cost of living crisis and how this was affecting children and young people in the borough. The recommendations contained in the report were agreed following a robust discussion about the difficulties being faced by families in the borough due the adverse economic situation.

#### **109. TACKLING POVERTY STRATEGY: YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN**

The Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty reported that the Tackling Poverty Strategy was centred around supporting communities. Strong progress

had been made across the last few months to further the work embedded in the strategy, particularly in terms of addressing the challenges of the Cost of Living Crisis.

One of the themes of the strategy included supporting those on lower incomes, this had included distributing energy saving government grant funding to support residents. Immediate help such as blankets, draft excluders, alternative forms of heating food for those who did not have conventional ovens. Energy saving advice and help to reduce fuel bills.

Significant investment had been made to ensure that residents knew where to seek help and support. This had included training frontline staff to provide advice and a booklet packed with advice for residents on how and where to seek support.

The close partnership working between Wokingham Borough Council and hardship alliance partners had been invaluable to the delivery of the strategy and to the response to the Cost of Living Crisis.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive noted the progress made in delivering on the Tackling Poverty Strategy during the first year.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

This report presents an update on the first year's delivery of the Tackling Poverty Strategy, giving an overview of many of the initiatives that have supported the residents in poverty across the borough. It was an essential aspect of the work undertaken to make Wokingham borough inclusive and a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business.

#### **110. COVID MEMORIAL WOODLAND**

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that this report had secured cross party support and proposed an area for quiet contemplation and to reflect and remember those who were lost during the pandemic.

The Executive asked that the sculpture or structure planned for this space be developed in conjunction with the relevant officers with responsibility for arts and culture.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Approved that the Covid Memorial Woodland will be located in the South East corner of Rooks Nest Farm.
2. Approved the implementation of a Covid Memorial Woodland, which will generate Biodiversity Net Gain units, including the required capital expenditure of £254,000 and the establishment equalisation reserve to manage the ongoing maintenance costs.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

The Covid Memorial Woodland will provide an opportunity for the Council to support the community and residents with an area to reflect and remember those who were lost during the pandemic whilst supporting the Council's tree planting target. In addition to contributing to Carbon Sequestration targets of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), delivery of

the Covid Memorial Woodland will build further on the Council's commitment to reach Tree Cities of the World status.

#### **111. OFFICER RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Chair invited the Chair of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group, Councillor Shirley Boyt, to introduce the report.

Councillor Shirley Boyt reported that there were multiple reasons as to why this work was initiated but mainly to address the disparity of service level being received by social housing tenants as opposed to HRA tenants. The work had been well supported by officers.

The Chair thanked Councillor Shirley Boyt and other members and officers in developing the recommendations contained in the report.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

- 1) Approved the Officers' responses to the Recommendations of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group, set out in subsection 1.6 of the report;
- 2) Noted the report of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group, contained as Annex A to the report.

#### **REASON FOR DECISION**

The Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 25 May 2022. The Group has met on 7 occasions and has engaged with a range of stakeholders including the Executive Member for Housing, tenants of social housing, the Association of Retained Council Housing, and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel. The Group surveyed tenants of Preferred Registered Providers (PRPs), and received over 165 responses which helped to provide a snapshot of the concerns and issues of our residents.

The report and Recommendations of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group were presented to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2023, and the Committee resolved that the Group's 12 Recommendations to the Executive, as amended, be approved.

#### **112. DELIVERING THE UKRAINIAN/AFGHAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT GOVERNMENT GRANT ALLOCATION**

Councillor Rachel Bishop-Firth declared a personal interest in this agenda item, on the grounds that her family were hosting a Ukrainian family.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing reported that this was a good news story. This scheme devised by the government was designed to ease pressure on housing stock. Essentially 17 new homes would be developed in the borough to home refugees/asylum seekers from specific countries. As refugees were able to eventually move to their own property, these homes would become available for general use, increasing the borough's housing stock.

It was noted that the government had prescribed that the scheme would only apply to refugees from specific countries, namely Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive noted the Government grant allocation to Wokingham Borough Council and proposal to deliver 17 homes as part of the Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement scheme and approved:

- (1) The release of up to £2m commuted sums (developer contributions for affordable housing) to be used in conjunction with the £3.1m grant allocation for the purchase of the 17 properties;
- (2) That the properties go into either the Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) and £3.7m of borrowing be undertaken within the HRA, or into Loddon Homes Limited (“LHL”) with a loan of £3.7m; with authority to be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader for the Council to determine and approve the end landlord and the borrowing terms;
- (3) The delegation of authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader for the Council and Executive Member for Housing to approve the transfer of commuted sums up to the value of £2m to support the purchase of each property.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

To mitigate against housing pressures on local authorities, the Government has provisionally allocated grant to those most affected by the Ukrainian refugee and Afghan resettlement programmes. This grant allocation has been allocated to Wokingham Borough Council based on part funding of 17 properties to help mitigate against the additional housing pressures. This report seeks approval to ensure that the funding allocation can be delivered effectively in Wokingham Borough within the restricted timescales and ensure that ownership of the properties are retained for housing other priority cohorts in the longer term, as per the Government’s guidance on this funding stream.

#### **113. OFFICER RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LOCAL CYCLING, WALKING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways thanked members and officers for developing these recommendations and further for agreeing to consider individual schemes going forward.

The Chair invited the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Alistair Neal to introduce the report. Councillor Alistair Neal reported that the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan was a live document, members had met twice to develop recommendations. He thanked officers for their support with this work.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their work on this, further examples of Overview and Scrutiny benefiting policy formulation.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

- 1) Approved the Officers' responses to the Recommendations of the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group, set out in subsection 1.6 of the report;
- 2) Noted the report of the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group, contained as Annex A to the report.

### REASON FOR DECISION

The Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 November 2022, whilst their Terms of Reference were agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2023. The Group has met on 2 occasions, and has engaged with Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, a WSP consultant and the Transport Planning Team Manager. Due to time constraints, the Group were only able to review the main LCWIP report, whilst the related appendices were not considered by the Group, such as early outline maps and designs.

The report and Recommendations of the LCWIP Task and Finish Group were presented to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2023, and the Committee resolved that the Group's 14 Recommendations to the Executive, as amended, be approved.

#### **114. LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) enabled a long term approach to developing strategic active travel connections between key destinations. The LCWIP had been the subject of two public engagement exercises. It was a live document which would be regularly reviewed.

The Executive were pleased to receive the report and thanked officers and the Executive Member for all their work on this strategy.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive agreed to adopt the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan as the Council's strategic plan for Active Travel over the next 10-15 years.

### REASON FOR DECISION

The report presents the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) with a view to the council adopting it as the strategic plan for Active Travel over the next 10-15 years. The LCWIP enables a long-term approach to developing strategic active travel connections between key origins/destinations and forms a vital part of the Government's strategy to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey.

Getting more people to walk and cycle will help respond to the [Climate Emergency](#), tackle congestion on our roads and achieve the ambition of our [Corporate Delivery Plan](#) to make Wokingham Borough a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business.

### **115. OFF STREET CAR PARK CHARGES**

The Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways reported that the last rise in off street car park charges had been five years ago. The previous administration had not kept pace with rising costs and this now needed to be addressed. The Council was facing the worst financial pressures in decades.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive;

- 1) Considered the objections received to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order in respect to off-street parking charges;
- 2) Agreed to the increases to the parking charges as detailed in revised Appendix 1 which was circulated as supplementary paper 3;
- 3) Agreed to proceed with the making of the Wokingham Borough Council (Various Off-Street Borough Car Parks) (No. 1) Order 2023 TRO in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Order Procedures 1996; and
- 4) Instructed the Assistant Director for Highways & Transport to inform those who have responded to the consultation accordingly.

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

To recommend to the Executive following the end of the objection period that having reviewed all objections there are no material reasons to alter the proposals and to approve the increases to the off-street, car parking charges as detailed in the report.

### **116. MOVING TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT**

The Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways reported that the application process for local authorities had been published by the Department of Transport. Traffic studies had been completed and 11 main sites had been identified and selected, which included school streets. If the Council's submission was successful, traffic restriction powers would be granted in June 2023.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

- 1) Noted that the Local Highway Authority has applied to the Department of Transport for a Designation Order that would enable them to undertake enforcement in respect of Moving Traffic contraventions.
- 2) Agreed to the Civil Enforcement of moving traffic restrictions powers granted by the Department of Transport to be used to enforce contraventions at the sites detailed in Appendix A as well as any additional sites across the borough which are deemed suitable.
- 3) Agreed to setting the fee banding structure for penalty charge notices issues by APNR at level 2 which is the same as set for civil parking enforcement.
- 4) Agreed to the creation of a new post within the Council's Parking Services to support the service in the delivery of its statutory duties under the TMA 2004 and

- 5) Noted that further public consultation in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance must be carried out before moving traffic enforcement can be implemented in respect of further locations/restrictions which are outside of those detailed in Appendix A.
- 6) Where further sites were proposed for enforcement of moving traffic offences, authorise the Director for Place and Growth to commence consultation on those proposals in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance and, where no objections are received in response, proceed with implementation.
- 7) Approved the procurement approach of these goods/ service/ works via a direct award via CCS Framework RM6099 - Transport Technology & Associated Services to Marson Holdings who NSL are part of to align to the current contract.

### REASON FOR DECISION

To provide the Executive with details of the Moving Traffic contraventions powers that if granted can be used to enforce traffic controls which are enabled through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and the correct signing and lining and included the following, driving through a 'No Entry' sign; turning left or right when instructed not to do so; entering yellow box junctions when your exit was not clear; driving where motor vehicles were prohibited; and driving a private vehicle on a route for buses only and to seek approval to implement these powers.

Implementing these powers will assist with the Councils commitment to improve air quality through reduced traffic congestion and will encourage behavioural shift towards sustainable travel choices by keeping junctions and cycle lanes clear of obstructing vehicles and improve bus reliability.

### **117. CLIMATE EMERGENCY POSITION PAPER**

The Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Residents Services reported that she was pleased to see the linkages being made between Climate Emergency and social systems and in particular impacts on low income groups. Tackling the climate emergency would have positive impacts on the health and quality of life of residents.

The report presented an update on climate work, including two key schemes that would be launched in Spring 2023. Both schemes would enable residents to decarbonise their homes, reduce their energy bills and address the cost of living crisis.

The Executive welcomed the report and thanked the Executive member and officers for their work.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive noted the status of Wokingham Borough Council climate emergency work, in particular the two key schemes that will be launched in Spring 2023.

### REASON FOR DECISION

Climate change affects every member of our community, particularly the most vulnerable people. Tackling the climate emergency will have positive impacts on the health and quality of life of our residents. This paper presents an update on our climate work,



including two key schemes that will be launched in Spring 2023. Both schemes will enable our residents to decarbonise their homes, reduce their energy bills and address the cost-of-living crisis.

#### **118. SHAREHOLDERS REPORT**

The following declarations of personal interest were made by Executive Members in relation to this agenda item. These Members did not participate or vote on this item.

- Councillor Prue Bray as a non-executive director of Berry Brook Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.
- Councillor Stephen Conway as a non-executive director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd
- Councillor David Hare as a non-executive director of Optalis Ltd.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey chaired this agenda item.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive noted:

- 1) The Housing companies' budget and operational position for December 2022,
- 2) The Optalis budget and operational position update for December 2022.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

The purpose of the report is to ensure awareness and transparency of the financial performance of the Council Owned Companies.