



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in Council Chamber
- Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on
THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2022 AT 7.30 PM

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

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 12 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/KeBKr09Jbno>

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.

To: The Members of Wokingham Borough Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
56.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
57.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2022.	15 - 46
58.		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
59.		MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS To receive any announcements by the Mayor.	
60.		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 Council 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	
60.1	Maiden Erlegh	Jeremy Evershed has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question: Question The proposed 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh school is going to require significant investment from the Council given the engineering work to remove the 10-foot slope on the pitch, improvements to drainage to avoid downstream flooding, pitch replacement every 7 years costing more than £200,000, plus, potentially unbudgeted Noise Reduction fences. How much will the Council spend on internal staffing and external fees to confirm whether the business case is still viable at the stated cost of £800,000 as per the	

published minutes of the July meeting of the Executive?

60.2 Maiden Erlegh

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

Question

I live in Sevenoaks Road. Already at school drop-off and pick-up times, in addition to the sometimes dangerous behaviour of moving traffic (with vehicles driving on pavements if there is a delay) I have to close my windows to shut out the fumes and noise from cars parked outside my house after drop off or before pick-up, with engines running as drivers look at messages, listen to loud music, or converse by phone with the loudspeaker on?

If the 3G plans go ahead, particularly when there are matches from visiting teams, there will be traffic congestion outside school hours and I shall have to continue closing windows through the evening until after 10.00pm and at weekends too. The slamming of car doors will continue after 10.00pm, if players pick up refreshments at the shops outside the school and continue conversations or arguments on the road.

The school has no power to control users' behaviour once they leave school premises, and the Council already does not keep daytime traffic in check, so how can it ensure that residents do not suffer further stress, noise, and air pollution in the evenings and at weekends too?

60.3 Maiden Erlegh

Karen Brown has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

With regard to the 3G Pitch proposed for Maiden Erlegh How do you propose to ensure that the mental health of the local residents is not affected by excessive noise from users of the sports facility, cars with banging doors and excess fumes, 4.5 metre oppressive acoustic fencing, floodlighting till 10 pm weekday nights, all day and evening till 8pm at weekends. There is no respite from a 7 day and night a week facility. An area that is overall very tranquil and undisturbed will be turned into an area of noise and traffic chaos. Where is the care and consideration to families with young children, the elderly and the myriad of health issues with which people may be struggling with?

60.4 Maiden Erlegh Dr David Walker has asked the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question:

Question

If the proposed scheme for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh School passes the scrutiny of the Council and then it passes to a Planning Application, it is crucial that homeowners living in Avalon Road and Sevenoaks Road know beforehand the EXACT distances of the pitch, fencing and lighting from their properties. My question, therefore is what are these distances?

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

Question

Maiden Erlegh School has a nature area, known as Buckhurst Copse, at the edge of the playing field which is a remnant of ancient woodland. This provides a habitat for a large variety of wildlife, including bats, many species of birds, moths and foxes which come into our adjacent garden. Moth traps have revealed the copse supports significantly more moths than surrounding roads. The playing field is home to millions of insects and invertebrates and therefore an essential feeding ground for the wildlife - in addition to absorbing carbon dioxide. What assessment have you carried out on the effect of ripping up the school field and replacing it with plastic, erecting a very tall fence that will hinder or prevent migration, non-stop noise seven days a week and floodlighting the entire area every evening which will seriously affect the bat and moth population?

60.6 None Specific Andy Bailey has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question

Berkley homes produced a map showing 97% of new housing development taking place in the South of the Borough and only 3% taking place in the North.

Can the Executive explain how they plan to address this imbalance in the next iteration of the Local Planning Update?

60.7 Maiden Erlegh Marc Bates has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following

question:

Question

The consultation for the 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh was undertaken following a Technical Appraisal. The technical appraisal only listed one con for the Maiden Erlegh site being 'Construction would need to be during school holidays', this would not actually be possible as it would take at least 12-14 weeks. Other cons that should have been included are Traffic issues, close proximity to housing (boundary less than 10 metres away) and loss of grass pitch (consultation document states 'no loss of grass pitch' in Pro's which is wrong). The technical appraisal is not fit for purpose and misleading to residents and others who may rely on it such as the Football Foundation. Would the Council agree that a Technical Appraisal is a key part of any consultation of this type and therefore this should be undertaken again properly if the proposal is not shelved following this initial consultation process?

60.8 None Specific

Amanda Bates has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

According to information supplied by Sport England, noise levels for residential properties where the boundary is located less than 10 metres away from a 3G pitch will more than likely exceed the maximum noise levels recommended by the World Health Organisation notwithstanding the installation of high quality acoustic fencing. How are the council going to protect local residents from the intrusion of noise and light from a facility less than 10m from property boundaries?

61.

PETITIONS

To receive any petitions which Members or members of the public wish to present.

62. None Specific

THE TENANTS' CHARTER UPDATE 2022

To receive a presentation from Steve Bowers, Chairperson of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (Tenant Volunteer). Followed by an opportunity for Members to ask questions.

47 - 78

RECOMMENDATION:

- i) The Tenant Volunteers would like to ask the

Council to consider the new aspirations outlined in the Tenants Charter update 2022 report and continue to work in partnership with them to achieve these.

- ii) The Tenant Volunteers would like the Council to note the Tenant Charter video.
- iii) The Tenant Volunteers would like the Council to note the report Three Years on – What we have achieved so far! This shows some of the projects, documents and reviews the Tenant Volunteers have been involved with in the last year.

63. None Specific

COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND (LGBCE) CONSULTATION

79 - 130

To approve the Council's submission to the LGBCE as set out in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approves its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) as recommended by the Electoral Review Working Group and set out in Appendix 1 and the accompanying maps.

64.

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

131 - 142

To agree changes to the Constitution as set out below and in the attached report.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agree the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Monitoring Officer via the Constitution Review Working Group that:

- 1) The following proposals relating to the following areas of Council Rules of Procedure be agreed:
 - a. sections relating to Member and public questions as set out in paragraphs 1.1-1.4 of the report;
 - b. that Rules 4.2.1.1 Timing and order of business [Annual Council] and 4.2.2.1 Timing and order of business [Ordinary Council meetings] be amended as set out

in paragraph 2 of the report;

- c. that Rule 4.2.13.13 Motions on Expenditure or Revenue be deleted and Rule 4.2.11.2 be amended as set out in paragraph 3 of the report;
 - d. proposals relating to statements by the Leader of Council etc and from the Council Owned Companies being incorporated into the Minutes of Committee and Board Meetings and Ward Matters agenda item as set out in paragraph 4 of the report;
 - e. that Rule 4.2.2.1 Timing and Order of Business (Ordinary Meetings be amended as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
 - f. that Rules 4.2.9.5, 4.2.10.5, 5.4.29 and 5.4.37 – Scope of Public and Member Questions be amended as set out in paragraph 6 of the report;
 - g. Rules 4.2.8 Duration of Meetings, 4.2.8.1 Consideration of Motions and 4.2.12 Motions without Notice be amended, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
- 2) that it be noted that Rule 5.2.10.4 [Responsibilities of Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure] as set out in paragraph 8 of the report, will be amended;
 - 3) it be noted that Rule 5.2.7.17 [Responsibilities of Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing] as set out in paragraph 8 of the report, will be added;
 - 4) that Rule 5.4.19 Timing of the [Executive] meeting be amended as set out in paragraph 9 of the report;
 - 5) that Section 6.2 Overview and Scrutiny, be amended as set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report:
 - 6) changes to Chapter 8.2 – Planning Committee Procedure Rules as set out in paragraph 12 of the report;
 - 7) changes to Chapter 8.3 – Planning Member Guidelines on Good Practice as set out in

paragraph 13 of the report

65.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions.

A period of 30 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.

65.1

None Specific

Graham Howe has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Given that we all know the demand for SEND places is growing, can the Lead Member explain how capacity is going to be accommodated in a timely manner by having 2 new schools built at Rooks Nest and Grays Farm, which will take a considerable amount of time for planning consent, inclusion in the local plan, and funding to be agreed with the Dept of Education?

65.2

None Specific

Laura Blumenthal has asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:

Question

The Government announced in May that it would be extending its Household Support Fund scheme in October, so this Council knew it would get a guaranteed lump sum to spend on helping struggling residents. Please can you confirm that it is the Government's Household Support Fund that will be funding free school meals during holidays in the Borough, right up to May 2023?

65.3

None Specific

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

Question

At the September meeting of the Executive, it was resolved to reduce the number of blue waste bags per property per annum from 80 to 54. As an afterthought, or so it seemed to me, you decided to keep the possibility of more blue bags for larger households 'under review'. What exactly do you

propose to 'review' and why, after being in control of the council for five months, were you unable to bring a fully formed policy to the Executive?

66. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions in relation to the latest circulated volume of Minutes of Meetings and Ward Matters

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

To receive any statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members, and Deputy Executive Members.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.23 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 20 minutes, and no Member shall speak for more than 5 minutes

68. STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES

To receive any statements from Directors of Council Owned Companies.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.24 the total time allocated to this item shall not exceed 10 minutes, and no Director, except with the consent of Council, shall speak for more than 3 minutes.

69. MOTIONS

To consider any Motions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.11.2 a maximum period of 30 minutes will be allowed for each Motion to be moved, seconded and debated, including dealing with any amendments. At the expiry of the 30-minute period debate will cease immediately, the mover of the Motion or amendment will have the right of reply before the Motion or amendment is put to the vote

69.1 None Specific

Motion 489 submitted by Laura Blumenthal

'At present, a Member taking leave to look after their new-born or newly adopted child could find themselves in breach of s85(1), Local Government Act 1972 ("if a member of a Local Authority fails,

throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority”).

It is therefore proposed that this Council agrees the following Motion with the intention of introducing a Leave Policy for Members who become parents. This Council therefore resolves that: The Assistant Director of Governance be commissioned to work with the Head of Legal and the Assistant Director of Human Resources, to draft a Leave Policy for Members who become parents, taking into account guidance issued by the LGA, for approval by Council at the earliest opportunity.’

69.2 None Specific

Motion 490 submitted by Rachel Bishop-Firth
Many Wokingham residents are facing severe and increasing financial hardship. By September 2022:

- The cost of living was rising by 9.9% with some forecasts as high as 18.6% in the new year, while rises in pay and benefits fell far short of this.
- Typical household energy bills were expected to be over £2,500 a year.
- Interest rates had reached a 20 year high, putting added pressure on rents and mortgages.
- The removal of the temporary £20 a week uplift in universal credit had substantially reduced the income of those living on the lowest incomes.

For many Wokingham residents, price increases will be a real concern. For residents on the lowest incomes who were already struggling to heat their homes and feed their families, they're a disaster. Many of these residents cannot increase their income through work, for example because they have full time caring responsibilities or are incapacitated.

Use of foodbanks was soaring even before the latest

financial turmoil. Wokingham Foodbank distributed 4,811 crisis food parcels between April 2021 and March 2022, which was a 78% increase on the previous financial year.

Voluntary and community organisations are seeing a steep increase in residents approaching them for help over the course of this year, and they are already deeply concerned. They are seeing increased numbers of people who were previously coping financially but are now struggling.

Responding to this crisis adequately will take community-wide action and central government backing of the kind that we saw during the Covid crisis, at a time that council finances are also under enormous pressure because of inflation.

Wokingham Borough Council therefore declares a Cost of Living Crisis in the borough and commits to doing all that we can to support our residents during this very difficult time. We commit that this will be one of the council's main priorities during the coming winter and will work with the Hardship Alliance and the Hardship Alliance Action Group to support our residents.'

69.3 None Specific

Motion 491 submitted by Rebecca Margetts

'Wokingham Borough Council congratulates the England Lionesses on their incredible achievement of becoming European Champions. Many of these women were not offered the opportunity as children to play football at school and the only reason for their success was they were prepared and able to travel great distances to pursue their dream. Wokingham Borough Council believes all children should be offered the opportunity at school to play football and calls on all schools in Wokingham Borough to ensure that football is offered to every child who wishes to play.'

69.4 Wescott

Motion 492 submitted by Charles Margetts

'Residents who live of William Heelas Way in Wokingham have raised significant concerns with me about the speed of traffic outside Floreat Montague Park Primary School. The link road between London Road and the future Southern Relief Road has a 30mph speed limit and traffic levels which will only get busier when the Southern Relief Road opens. Wokingham Borough Council believes it is of vital importance that

young children can travel to school on foot or by bicycle in complete safety. To ensure children can walk and cycle safely to school Wokingham Borough Council will change the speed limit outside all primary schools to 20 mph.'

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2022 FROM 7.30 PM TO 11.00 PM**

Members Present

Councillors: Caroline Smith (Mayor), Beth Rowland (Deputy Mayor), Sam Akhtar, Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Anne Chadwick, Stephen Conway, David Cornish, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Phil Cunnington, David Davies, Peter Dennis, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, Maria Gee, John Halsall, David Hare, Peter Harper, Graham Howe, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Sarah Kerr, Abdul Loyes, Tahir Maher, Morag Malvern, Charles Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Alistair Neal, Ian Shenton, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Mike Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle and Shahid Younis

Members In Attendance Virtually

Councillors: Jim Frewin

42. Minutes' Silence

A minutes' silence was observed to mark the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

43. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Pauline Helliard Symons, Rebecca Margetts and Jackie Rance.

44. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments and signed by the Chair.

Page 25, Item 39 – substitute 'Local Policing Commander' for 'Police and Crime Commissioner'.

The inclusion of Keith Baker's apologies for absence.

45. Declarations of Interest

The following Members made a personal declaration of interest in relation to items on the Agenda:

- Prue Bray as a Director of Berry Brook Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.
- Stephen Conway as a Director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd and a Trustee of the Polehampton.
- David Hare as a Director of Optalis Ltd.
- Clive Jones as a Director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.

46. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor invited Members to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It was agreed that the time allocation for this item be extended to enable all tributes from Members to be heard.

Caroline Smith:

It is exactly a fortnight that we heard the sad news of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In this period so many words have been said by literally millions of people in condolences, thanks, memories, and tributes, that whatever I say will probably have been said already.

It is my great honour to begin tonight by leading the Council's own tributes to her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. This great lady has been part of this nation's shared consciousness for so many years. Many of us here tonight, have only ever known this one great monarch. I am sure we have all shared our grief with the nation during the recent time of mourning. King Charles described his mother's life as 'a life well lived.' This is a fitting tribute to a woman who lived her life to the full, keeping her promise to the nation far beyond the expectations of one so young, before taking on the role of our Queen. We must also bear in mind that not only have we lost our Queen, but that her children have lost a beloved mother, their families have lost their wonderful grandmother and a great grandmother. It is terrible to lose one so loved.

One memory that really helps me remember our wonderful Queen, was a picture of her walking past Prince Philip who was dressed in the uniform of the Grenadier Guards, when a swarm of bees disrupted the smooth running of the ceremony at Windsor. The photographer captured the Queen perfectly in a fit of giggles. We will never forget how central our Queen was to all our lives, across Wokingham, the nation, the Commonwealth, and the world. We must remember and celebrate her life of service and devotion as we struggle with our loss. Thank you, Ma'am.

Clive Jones:

The passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will have touched many people throughout the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and indeed the whole world. Queen Elizabeth II was a towering global personality and an outstanding leader. She dedicated her life to making the nation, the Commonwealth, and the entire world, a better place. As a 21-year-old she dedicated her life to one of service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth – a promise she wonderfully kept. This is an example to so many people and a huge example to anyone in or aspiring to public service. She reminded us of important underrated qualities; duty, dedication, stability, an aim for unity, dignity, calm, unfaltering, a lengthy 70 years of a lifetime of service. Everyone will have special memories of her reign. Many will remember her parachuting in, to open the Olympic Games in 2012 with James Bond, and the celebration of her 70 years on the throne with a cup of tea and Paddington Bear. Even at 96 she was a thoroughly modern sovereign.

I was privileged to meet her during the Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1977. She did a walkabout after the service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral in London. I, and some of my friends had stood outside St Paul's all night. We had a very good place to watch as the dignitaries arrived to attend the service. When it finished, she appeared at the Cathedral door. She turned right and began to walk down the steps. I knew at that moment she was walking straight towards me. Seconds later she was standing in front of me. 'Where have you come from?' she asked. 'How

long have you been here?' 'Have you had a good time?' I was the first person that she spoke to following the service, and I have several books on the Royal Family that record that, which are certainly treasured memories for me.

She once famously said 'life is full of first meetings and final goodbyes.' She was so right. Everyone that met her will remember their meeting with her. I certainly did and will certainly remember our final goodbye with her on Monday. Many residents of Wokingham will also have treasured memories of meeting Her Majesty, which they will be recalling at this sad time. Many of them will also have attended the lying-in state in Westminster Hall and queued for many hours to pay their respects to her. Others will have lined the route of the funeral at Westminster Abbey. I know of neighbours who went to Windsor to stand along the Long Walk as the Queen came home to her final resting place in the Castle. There was a graceful dignity about all the proceedings, which would have touched many who attended these events, and watched them on television. Whilst we mourn the Queen, we should remember that her family have lost a mother, a grandmother and a great grandmother. The grief on the faces of the Royal Family was very clear for all of us to see. I thought King Charles' card which said, 'in loving and devoted memory', was very heartfelt. King Charles said thank you to his mother in his televised address to the nation last week. He was not just speaking for himself and his family, but also for the nation, the Commonwealth, and indeed the whole world when he thanked her for a lifetime of service. We should also be saying thank you to King Charles for the start of his reign, building on the tradition and modernisation of the monarchy, which was started by his mother. Many of us will have been impressed that he has been able to go amongst crowds, particularly in London, and share his grief with people who have been to Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, and elsewhere to express their condolences. Queen Elizabeth made history, she was history, and Madam Mayor, she will never be forgotten.

Pauline Jorgensen:

I am honoured to be able to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen following her funeral this week. Her Majesty had a special place in our hearts, as was clearly demonstrated once more in the days following her death, with people of all generations, nationalities, creeds, and colours queuing across Edinburgh and then again across London for many hours to pay their respects. We owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude. She was always there for us during her 70-year reign. In good times and bad, she was truly dedicated to the people of the Commonwealth, working right up to her last days with dogged commitment. We will never forget her kindness, her dedication to her duty, and her lovely smile. May she rest in peace.

Rachel Burgess (on behalf of the Labour Group):

The late Queen Elizabeth's life of duty, service and dedication to our country has been an example to us all. Many of us have felt a major shift in our lives these past weeks as Queen Elizabeth has been an ever present, calm and wise presence in our lives for an astonishing 70 years. Even avowed republicans have shed tears at the news of the passing of this remarkable woman. These recent weeks have manifestly shown the extent to which she was loved and respected in Wokingham, the United Kingdom, and the world over. She approached her many years of service always with dignity and compassion. Our heart goes out to the Royal Family, and our thoughts are with them as they continue their period of mourning, along with the

many, many people whose lives she touched.

Jim Frewin:

Our Queen, we have much to thank you for – for being such a shining exemplar of dedication and to public service; for showing that historical organisations and long-standing plans can successfully evolve and adapt to meet changing times; for showing that successful leadership can be achieved with dignity, humility, compassion, and with humour; for showing that family can always be a priority no matter what. For all of these things we thank you, but most of all we simply thank you for being you, and for being our Queen. God bless and may you rest in peace.

Stephen Conway:

Whenever anyone we know dies, we feel a sense of loss. Sympathy for the family of the deceased mixed with memories of the loss of our own loved ones, and a heightened sense of our own mortality. In this case the enormous outpouring of grief indicates the high regard in which the Queen was held, not just in this country, but across the world. Many of us have been struck by the incredible sight of queues of people stretching for miles to see the Queen lying in state. The dedication of those people waiting patiently for hours and hours to pay their respects fills us with admiration and a sense that someone very important to so many lives has left the stage.

Over the last few days, I have been asking myself why the Queen's death has evoked such an impressive response. To mention her striking beauty as a princess and then as Queen, her captivating smile, her sense of humour, her warmth of personality, and ease of manner, is, I would suggest only to focus on the most superficial causes of her popularity. In part of course of the explanation, is the length of her reign. Very few of us were born when her father was on the throne. All of our lives she has been a reassuring constant in a rapidly changing world. She has been the mother, the grandmother, and great grandmother of the nation. To get to the essence of her appeal to so many people including many who are agnostic of the monarchy or even republican in sentiment, we have to recognise the quality that the Archbishop of Canterbury emphasised on Monday – her selfless sense of duty and her commitment to public service. If we can try in our own sphere to follow the lead that she has given, that would be our lasting tribute.

Beth Rowland:

Many years ago, I remember seeing 'The King is dead' on the boards outside the paper shop. I had learned to sing God Save the King at school although I did not understand who the King was. I think I was about 7. The following year 1953 my Nana bought a 9-inch black and white TV, and all the street came to celebrate in her house, the coronation of this beautiful lady, who was to be our new Queen. It was a fairy tale day, even on a tiny TV. I had a gold model of that beautiful gold coach, and a round jigsaw puzzle of the whole procession.

I went through my school life learning lots about kings and a few queens, hence my love of history today. When I married and moved to Windsor, I became even more interested as we lived in the flat across the road from the stunning castle. We visited regularly and saw the Royal Family in action on a regular basis. We saw them driving cars, the flag flying when they were in residence at the Castle, and of the

course the many shops selling memorabilia. I took a real interest in Royal history. You could go into the Castle for free in those days. Then I became interested in politics and was first elected in 1991, and to this authority in 1996, and could enjoy the beautiful pictures that we have.

In 2013 I was honoured to be invited to a Royal Garden Party. By then I was a wheelchair user, and I was given a parking space right across from Buckingham Palace, and only had to get across the road in my wheelchair, where I was provided with a young serviceman in full uniform to get me into the Royal Lawns. These were over a gravel pathway - a nightmare in a wheelchair. Only someone who appreciated fine detail and thought of others would appreciate this. Our Queen had this.

We enjoyed the Garden Party and being able to go around the beautiful gardens and enjoying the sandwiches and tea in a cup and saucer, and to see the great and the good. It was the year after the Olympics and there were lots of stars there. Towards the end of the event, all disabled guests were taken to one side and lined up against the side of the Palace – not worrying at all. The Royal party: princes and princesses, dukes, and duchesses, so many of the Royal Family were there. The Queen made a beeline for people in wheelchairs and spoke to each and every one of them. We were also allowed to take photographs. I have got a photograph of the Queen talking to me, and others in the party had the same. A day to remember. I saw the graciousness in practice. May our gracious Queen rest in peace. Thank you, Ma'am, for all those years of faithful service, and now God Save the King.

Prue Bray:

I met the Queen when I accompanied my parents to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party as an unmarried daughter, so many years ago I cannot actually work out what year it was. I think it was around 1980. I remember wishing that I had worn a hat, and that she seemed so much smaller than I had imagined. I also remember that despite all the people that she had already spoken to that afternoon, she managed to sound interested when she spoke to us. I remember that wonderful smile that lit up her face, as has been mentioned so many times in recent days. That encounter with the Queen lasted perhaps 30 seconds. I am one of perhaps hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions who met her over the course of the 70 years that she reigned. Like them I have never forgotten meeting her. If the media coverage is anything to go by like them, I find myself strangely and rather unexpectedly moved by the events of the last two weeks since her death was announced, including as I am speaking now. It all feels a bit surreal. It is hard to imagine this country without her. She promised to serve us all her days, and she fulfilled her promise. This is my chance to publicly say thank you Ma'am.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey:

As a child I spent five years living in Fiji. One of our house servants insisted on taking me on a trip to her village on her own island. This involved a two-day boat trip across the Pacific followed by half a day walking over land to the village.

Now this was an island with no new-fangled technology such as, roads, electricity or a public water supply. The people in this village had heard of things like telephones, tv's and cars, but very few had actually seen one, never mind used one. Their lives

revolved around fishing, hunting and farming, but there on the wall of every hut was always a picture of the Queen.

Fiji became a republic in 1987, but the Queen was still held in such high regard that they maintained the Queen as their 'Tui Viti', effectively the Queen of Fiji - even though she had no constitutional or legal standing. I do not yet know if this status will remain with King Charles III.

I think the point of what I am saying is that our Queen was not just the queen of the United Kingdom, she was the queen for many, many people around the world – who honoured and venerated her and were inspired by her existence. I sometimes feel that the residents of Britain often forget the wider meaning of its monarchy.

It was in Fiji where I first met the Queen for the first time – away from big crowds and the mayhem you get in the big, industrialised countries. She treated everyone who came to see her with respect, no matter their wealth or status - and I think that should be how we think of her as her legacy.

'Moce Vinaka vaka levu' – is what I will say – meaning goodbye and thank-you very much.

Keith Baker:

I was extremely proud and privileged to meet the Queen when she awarded me my MBE. We were all trained as to what we had to do, typical British control, and that we should address her as 'Her Majesty'. You call her on the first conversation 'Her Majesty' and afterwards 'Ma'am.' Remember that anyone if you get to meet her, or the King should I say. It got to my time to approach her, and my nerves simply took over. I got to her, did my bowing, approached her, she shook my hand, and I immediately forgot the protocol on speaking to her. That had no effect on her. My wife who joined me on that day, said that I was talking to her for the longest of any recipient of award, but to this day I cannot remember our conversation except for one bit. She asked me where I came from and my response was 'just down the road from where you live, just outside Reading.' She came across with a warmth that I had not experienced before or since. For a wider perspective, she was the foundation or rock of that this great country of ours has been built on. Internationally she was revered not just in the Commonwealth but right across the world. I agree with Boris Johnson when he in his tribute called her Queen Elizabeth the Great. I really think she was the greatest woman that we have ever experienced. She will be sorely missed. She may be gone but she will live on in our hearts forever, and her legacy will be everlasting.

Shahid Younis:

Exactly a fortnight ago, on Thursday 8th September, we heard the sad news of passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This sadness was shared by millions of people around the world, as she was admired not only in the United Kingdom, but around the commonwealth and beyond. Members of the Muslim community chanted the Arabic words of 'Inna Lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un' ("We surely belong to God and to Him we shall return"). This is mostly used when hearing news that a person has died). Her demise is a reminder for us all, that there is nothing eternal. We are on

borrowed time. Death is the only certain thing in life. Her 70 years of reign was indeed an embodiment of grace, elegance, and dignity. She saw leadership as an act of service and utter devotion to her duty to serve. It is a leadership type that is selfless and focuses on others.

As public figures, there are many leadership lessons we can take from her life. I shall mention just three: 1. Resilience and adaptability. During her remarkable time as a monarch, the Queen lived through war and peace, recessions and times of growth, family scandals and tragedies and a global pandemic. In total, she has appointed 15 different Prime Ministers and met 14 US presidents. She saw a mind blowing social, economic, and technological changes and challenges in her lifetime and has demonstrated an extraordinary level of resilience and adaptability. 2. Creating a solid circle. Being the Queen and being in a leadership role share many common traits. One of them is that although it looks like it is a one-person job, in reality, it requires a team effort. The Queen had a solid circle of advisers that she collaborated with before making a decision. She delegated tasks and shared responsibilities with other members of the Royal Family. A great leader understands the importance of having an excellent team to collaborate with and most importantly, making the most of their different areas of expertise, experiences, and points of view. 3. Work hard but find time to do what you love – the Queen’s schedule was always manic. However, it is no secret that she always managed to balance her responsibilities with her hobbies; like football (like me, she was an Arsenal supporter), spending time with her corgis, visiting her horses, and eating sandwiches with raspberry jam (another one of my favourites). Balancing work and play, and to do the things that make you truly happy is an incredibly important lesson for busy leaders.

Lastly, our thoughts are with the Royal Family at this difficult time. Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II will be greatly missed by all. May she rest in peace.

47. Public Question Time

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

47.1 Tony Johnson asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

In Wokingham Borough Council’s Constitution of 21st July 2022, the "Timing and Order of Business" for Annual Council and Full Council both say "Except as provided by Rule 4.2.2.1, the order of business at the Annual Meeting will be:" - before going on to define the order for the respective meeting.

As Rule 4.2.2.1 is itself the "Timing and Order of Business" for Full Council, should that reference really be to Rule 4.2.2.2 "Change to Order of Business" and has this reference been incorrect as far back as Wokingham Borough Council’s Constitution of November 2015?

Answer:

Mr Johnson thank you very much for bringing this typographical error to our attention.

As you rightly state, in the extract included in your question, “Rule 4.2.2.1” should actually state “Rule 4.2.2.2” in both instances and yes, the error has appeared in the

Constitution since 2015.

We are intending to address this typographical error at our next Council meeting in October.

Thank you again for bringing it to our attention.

Supplementary Question:

It would appear that except for this meeting and the last one, this Council has been acting beyond the powers granted in its own Constitution in changing the order of past meetings.

Although addressed to the Leader, this supplementary is as much for all of you as Members. Would this Council prefer to behave and conduct itself in accordance with the existing Constitution or should you citizen Councillors find a tennis court somewhere and work out a more equitable Constitution which is not subject to the diktat of whichever autocrat or bureaucrat believes they are in charge? Vox Pop Vox Dei as one Member remarked recently, although in English.

Supplementary Answer:

Thank you very much Tony. I am sure I speak for everyone in the Chamber when I say that we would prefer to conduct ourselves in accordance with the Constitution. The substantive part of your question I will come back to you with a written answer.

47.2 Alan Davis asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

In implementing its current policies and processes for road maintenance, which result in priority given to roads with high traffic density, how does the Council actively manage the risk of injury to pedestrians and other road users (including consequent compensation claims) in poorly maintained roads with low traffic density, like South Close?

Answer:

The selection of roads to be included in the annual planned structural maintenance programme is based upon UK Pavement Management System (UKPMS) which includes annual Network Condition Surveys and our own internal design process (including site visits to check the condition survey scores and where required core sampling to establish the scale of intervention to be recommended). This is recognised by central government and the wider industry through its code of practice as the national standard for a well-managed highway infrastructure. Wokingham Borough Council structural maintenance programme is based on the condition score of each road. Schemes with the highest condition score are being prioritised first.

This approach ensures that the annual structural maintenance programme is based on meeting the highest priority needs on the WBC network within the funding available.

In addition to the annual UKPMS described earlier, the network is also subject to safety inspections as defined by the Wokingham's Highways Inspection Policy. These inspections are carried out by trained and competent inspectors at defined

frequencies to ensure it is safe for public use. In between inspections defects can be reported to the Borough Council, and these will be inspected and repaired if they meet the required criteria.

Supplementary Question;

I understand that roads like South Close are subject to this annual inspection to assess their condition, and it is those assessments which inform the Council's decisions on road maintenance priorities. They are therefore very important. Would Councillor Fishwick please be prepared to share the current inspection report for South Close with me, and then come and assess for himself with me, how closely that inspection report matches the reality?

Supplementary Answer:

I would be happy to meet you on site.

47.3 Andy Bailey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Can the Executive Member for Planning please update me on the next phases of the Local Plan Update (LPU) including approximate dates?

Answer:

A new cross party Member Working Group has been established to consider options on how we might best plan for development going forward.

The Working Group has recently been briefed on the main issues raised by respondents to previous consultations and continues to be briefed on any new technical evidence as it emerges. The new group is currently in the process of familiarising themselves with larger scale promotions across the Borough. This will involve visiting each area and receiving a presentation from the promoters as to their vision. Work will then continue to review the options.

The programme for submitting a new Local Plan will be highly influenced by whether a further consultation is required before proceeding to confirm the strategy we wish to submit for examination. A further consultation is most likely should the decision be to vary significantly from the strategy previously consulted on.

I do not however expect to be in a position to confirm the detailed programme until early next year.

Supplementary Question;

Does this Administration support building houses beyond the planned period?

Supplementary Answer:

This is a very controversial question. I think there is a very important announcement from one of the interim Secretary of State's for Levelling Up. He raised the issue about flood resilience, and in particular flood resilience needed to be taken account of during the whole duration of a planning development. I find it very difficult to be able to consider the planning and flooding arrangements for a site close to a river, or any river for that matter, which takes us 20 years into the future.

48. Petitions

The following members of the public presented a petition in relation to the matters indicated.

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

Heather Murray	Heather Murray presented a petition with over 538 signatures regarding road safety on William Heelas Way. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways.</i>
Alan Davis	Alan Davis presented a petition of all the residents of South Close regarding road and pavement repair, resurfacing and maintenance on South Close. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways.</i>

49. Presentation by the Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Council received a presentation from Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The presentation covered the following points:

- RBFRRS performance – the response standard had increased from 68.9% in Q1 2021 to 70.1% in Q1 2022 but was still below the 75% target. Safe and well checks had increased significantly.
- Prevention – prevention proposals for 2020-2023 were outlined including –
 - Focus activities in support of children and young people through road and water safety education programmes, Fire Cadets and Fire Safe;
 - Within the Road Safety Programme targeted activity for motorcyclists based on risk;
 - Enhance the quality and quantity of referrals received through the Adults Referral Programme (ARP).
- Response – response proposals for 2020-2023 were outlined including
 - Undertake a review of our specialist water rescue capability to ensure it continues to be aligned to local risk and national best practice
 - In 2022/23, we propose to undertake a review of our incident support capability to ensure it continues to be aligned to local risk and reflects national best practice
- Protection –
 - Develop Risk-Based Inspection Programme methodology to look at both risk to property and risk of compliance.
 - Actively promote the use of sprinklers and suppression systems as part of

the overall fire safety solution to improve fire safety in both new and existing buildings.

- Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) – Members were informed of a forthcoming public consultation on the Corporate Risk Management Plan.
- Financial Position –
 - (2022/2023 Budget - £38.446 million)
 - Between April 2016 – March 2022 we have delivered the final efficiency plan target savings of £2.401 million
 - 2022/23 deficit forecast is £650k (1.7% of budget)
 - We are looking at unfunded pay awards where each 1% = £200k to base revenue
 - 4th lowest level of reserves as % of budget in England
 - In 8th lowest precepting Fire Authorities in England
- Sector wide challenges – e.g., climate challenge had seen an increase in wildfires and flooding incidents. Also, the challenge of ‘greening’ the organisation such as its infrastructure.

Following the presentation, Members asked the questions set out below:

Question from Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

What plans are being made to make the Fire Service more environmentally friendly – solar panels on buildings, electric vehicles will make the fire service more energy efficient, but are you also using biodegradable foam and other materials?

Answer:

We are funding buildings, electric vehicles etc. that is probably slower than I would like, particularly on the estates side of the situation. I am very pleased to say that we have invested a lot of the capital side of the organisation in the development of three fire stations that all have photovoltaic cells, some have grey water recovery etc. Where we can in new builds, we are developing the buildings to be more sustainable, and that has a significant impact on the revenue budget because we reduce our overheads as well. Unfortunately, the remainder of the estate, another 14 buildings, are significantly ageing, and we have a conditions survey that says we have to spend about £15million in a budget of about £1.2million to spend on those buildings. We are just about to reprofile that as a result of the sustainability audit and work out how we can accelerate the investment in the older estate on two parts. One is the environmental sustainability, and the second is on the inclusive facilities in those buildings. To attract a more diverse workforce we need to improve the facilities in those buildings as well. So, there is an audit currently being undertaken to support us in increasing the sustainability of the buildings.

In terms of the fleet, we have already purchased three electric vehicles, three hybrid vehicles and six new vehicles will come on to the fleet this year, but we have what we call a ‘white fleet’ and a ‘red fleet’, so the white fleet we would generally run around in every day, and the red fleet are the fire engines that run around. There is very little innovation at the moment in terms of either hydrogen or electric vehicles for firefighting. We are doing what we can in the white fleet, and we are keeping a close eye on some of the work in London and Oxfordshire around hydrogen and electric

vehicles for firefighting. We will build that into our Fleet Strategy.

Biodegradable foams and other materials, we have already improved the foam that we use. There is work to do but again I think it is, the innovation into this sector is very limited. Fire and rescue as a sector from either science or engineering is a very small sector, very low returns for the private sector, so we are often very slow to see the benefits of new technology coming into the sector. We have moved away from environmentally harmful foams which we were using as recently as 10 years ago. Now we are into more environmentally friendly foam solutions, but in terms of biodegradable we are not fully there yet.

Question from Parry Batth

A resident recently suffered abusive and threatening calls and text messages which were reported to the Police. Following extensive enquiries by TVP the issues were resolved and TVP informed the resident to contact the Fire Brigade to assess fire safety in her house. The resident then contacted Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) who were most helpful in installing fire alarms throughout her property and informed the resident that TVP should have contacted RBFRS to check fire safety at her house. Is there a communication disconnect between TVP and RBFRS, as TVP simply left it with the resident to contact RBFRS?

Answer:

First of all, I am sorry to hear that your constituent suffered that abuse, but also in answer to the question, I think of this occasion the service that your resident received was less than ideal. We have since taken that up with Thames Valley Police and have had quite a full answer to that question. I am pleased to say that we were able to support your resident as soon as we were made aware of the situation.

The results that I have had, would lead me to the answer of no there is not a communication breakdown between us and Thames Valley Police. They have been very well receiving of the question that we raised. They have identified that they have a high number of new Police Officers. A lot of them are young in their service, not in their years necessarily, but young in their service, who are learning the job, and often the amount of demand and how busy the Police are, some of the connections between organisations, if a new Police Officer is not familiar with them, can sometimes be missed. The response we have had from the Local Policing Area and the Chief Inspector there is that he is going to make sure those referral pathways and the expectations are made clear to his new officers, and that training takes place. He has thanked us very much for raising the issue with him, so I do not believe there is a communication breakdown. I think it is probably an experience and a reminder issue for policing.

Question from Michael Firmager:

In your presentation you said a number of restaurants and businesses, after a fire, do no restart. Do you work with the insurance industry and if so, how?

Answer:

No, we do not directly as an individual Fire and Rescue Service but as a sector more broadly it works with an organisation called the Fire Industry Association which is populated by a number of insurance companies who feed their information and

intelligence back in via the Fire Industry Association. That does find its way through to the Fire and Rescue Services so when we are engaging through our Protection Officers with businesses, we can use some of the data and trends that are coming from the insurance industry to inform them about risks to their business. So, there is a connection on a membership body national level, but not directly between Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and individual insurers or the Insurance Agency. Part of the reason behind that, just very briefly, is obviously we have a primary enforcing authority status as well and there is a fine line to tread between the advice that we give and the work that we engage in with private industry where we may also have enforcement role under a piece of legislation.

Question from Phil Cunnington:

Could you tell us what are the primary causes of the 30% of call outs we do not manage to make in 10 minutes, and are there any measures particularly Wokingham could consider that might aid you in meeting those targets?

Answer:

There is a mix of the primary causes of those fires. We attend still a number of automatic fire alarms. We have reduced the number by revising our response strategy to automatic fire alarms, the cause of which is often a faulty alarm system, poor management of the property, or a smoke detector going off for a controllable or spurious reason. Once we deploy a fire appliance to an incident, we lose it until that incident is closed. Hypothetically if there was an incident in this building and a Wokingham fire appliance was deployed to an automatic fire alarm, you would get the next nearest appliance which would obviously affect the response standard.

The majority of our incidents are the lower severity incidents. For a broad mix you saw me talk about the secondary fires and automatic fire alarms. In terms of the support therefore around secondary fires particularly and automatic fire alarms, when we work with your Neighbourhood Teams or Education as well, making sure that both young people and the kind of design of simple things such as where you would put refuse bins or what happens when school children are moving in and out of school, that kind of thing, we can often identify hotspots of where incidents will occur. Working with the local authority we can design out traps or bottlenecks is something we very much welcome doing with local authorities. In terms of automatic fire alarms, again working with your Planning departments and Building Control teams, particularly planning departments around the design of buildings and making sure that the appropriate standard of fire direction, but also the management systems that are put in place within buildings which can be picked up, particularly with Building Safety regulations now, between Planning departments and Building Control functions, is definitely going to be a role where work closer together and we would very much appreciate local authority support in that space.

In accordance with Rule 4.2.2.1 it was agreed that the time limit for the item be extended by 10 minutes to allow further Member questions.

Question from Bill Soane:

The ambulance crew and fire crew were able to find exactly where she was [his wife who had had a fall in an inaccessible place] because she had what3words on her phone. I think at the time the call is put through the operator who takes the call asks

if they have what3words, and I would just like to say that it certainly worked as they were able to pinpoint exactly where she was, so it is something that the Fire Brigade would encourage people to have?

Answer:

Glad that we were able to help, and I wish your wife a speedy recovery. What3words is fantastic and I think that your example and your wife's experience is a fantastic example of when what3words can be extremely useful. If you have got a road name or a house number or a road number, it is very easy to pinpoint people. When people are out and about in rural areas or the countryside what3words really does come into its own as well as in those urban areas as well. We absolutely advocate the use of what3words. As you have stated we use it in our Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Control operators will ask if people if they use what3words. Unbelievably there are quite a lot of people who do not have the what3words app. I have a work phone and it is automatically installed on my work phone that is a control device, so yes, we fully endorse the use of what3words and your example exemplifies how useful it can be.

Question from Pauline Jorgensen:

I was very interested to hear you talk about the potential for extending the Fire Service's remit to help the ambulance service. I recall that was mentioned a few years ago, and I just wondered how long it will be before it actually happens?

Answer:

We did assist the Ambulance Service and continue to do so in some cases. We use firefighters or Fire and rescue staff who volunteer to actually drive ambulances and support South Central Ambulance Service when their crewing is short. That is something that was started through the pandemic. Prior to that there was a national pilot and trial and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service took part in that in terms of employing fire engines to cardiac arrests or certain categories of medical emergency if we were closer than an ambulance. The thing I would stress very clearly is that the Fire and Rescue Service is not a replacement for the Ambulance Service. We do not have ambulances. We do not convey patients to hospital, and people that need an ambulance, those that genuinely call an ambulance for the right reasons, need definitive medical care, which is conveying to a hospital.

It has been talked about for a long time. I also stated that the terms and conditions of firefighters, so that is their role maps, their job descriptions, as well as the remuneration that they receive are nationally negotiated. This is something that has been kicked around much to my professional frustration for many, many years, and it seems to be at an impasse. The document that the National Fire Chiefs' Council together with the Local Government Association have produced, which is the future vision called Fit for the Future, includes renegotiating or redeveloping the job description of a firefighter, addressing the funding formula of how Fire and Rescue Authorities are funded across England, which is partly through revenue support grant from the government, and then predominantly through the Council Tax precept. Addressing that funding formula, both of those things together would lead to the job description being evaluated and the stumbling block being the appropriate level of pay for firefighters to take on that additional skill set, receive the right training, and then be able to formally support ambulance services where they need it up and down

the country. A long way of saying I do not know how long that piece of string is, but it is frustratingly long and has been around a long time. At least we now have a coherent vision strategy that has been put forward to Government to see what their response to that is.

Question from John Kaiser:

There was a very serious fire in my ward about 18 months ago, where a block of flats burnt down and are currently sitting there condemned. There are 9 blocks of these flats, 54 homes, which are all rented, owned by a large insurance company. What I am asking is who is responsible for checking those flat because we still have 24-hour fire marshals wandering around those flats. I am getting a lot of flack from people with regards to the quality of the Fire Marshals looking into their windows, all those sorts of things, but they are living very much petrified. It is affordable housing basically, so they do not have the resource basically to just up sticks and move away. I would like to know what responsibility the Fire Service has for that?

Answer:

The legal responsibility rests with the Responsible Person who either owns or operates the building, so they are required to produce a Fire Assessment if the building falls under the Fire Safety Order. They will have done that because our responsibility as a Fire and Rescue Service then is for Fire Safety Inspecting Officer to go out and carry out what we call an audit on the fire risk assessment that is in place. There are clearly some kind of issues in those buildings if the Responsible Person believes that they need to have a Fire Warden or a waiting watch or whatever it is, but any remedial measures such as Fire Wardens will have been agreed with the Fire Safety Inspecting Officers as being adequate in order to underpin the Fire Risk Assessment that the building has in place. Effectively as long as the Fire Risk Assessment is suitable and sufficient then in terms of legislation there is little or nothing that the Fire and Rescue Service can do. It is when the Fire Risk Assessment is not suitable and sufficient then we would take action, either by issuing an enforcement notice, prohibiting parts of the building or taking legal action against that Responsible Person. What I can guarantee is that because there was a fire in one of the other buildings there, my Fire Protection Team will absolutely have carried out audits on that building and they will be up to date. If I can take the names of those buildings from you, I will also go back and double check that, that is the case.

Those Members' whose questions could not be answered due to time constraints were requested to send them to Democratic Services for a written answer.

At this point in the meeting a short adjournment was held prior to the meeting continuing.

50. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22

Council considered the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22, set out at Agenda pages 33 to 44.

It was proposed by Imogen Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Clive Jones that the recommendations contained within the report be agreed, subject to the deletion of recommendation 2 and renumbering of the subsequent recommendations.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey commented it was a good news story as it showed that the amount of external borrowing that the Council was predicted to need, had declined, reducing some of the potential impact on the General Fund. The report showed that the investments that the Council had were of benefit to it. However, the internal borrowing to capital financial requirement was outside of the target meaning that the Council had used more of its own internal money to finance its needs.

David Davies objected to the amendment of the recommendations.

John Kaiser thanked officers for the work that they had undertaken. He believed that the Conservatives had left the Council in the very best place possible to deal with the issues.

RESOLVED: That:

1) It be noted the Treasury Management Mid-Year report was considered and agreed by the Audit Committee at their meeting on Wednesday 27 July 2022; The Audit Committee approved recommendation 1) (“that all approved indicators set out in the treasury management strategy have been adhered to”) but wanted it noted that in fact the indicator for % of internal borrowing to CFR (29%) had not been met, with the outturn indicator at 44%. It was agreed this was in fact a positive reflecting a 33 - 44 reduction in required external borrowing (reprofiling of the capital programme) and increase in cashflow of grants received;

2) the contents of “Table A”, as set out in the report, which shows the net benefit per council tax band D equivalent, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £22.25 per band D for 2021/22, be noted. This credit provides income to the Council to invest in its priority services;

3) it be noted that as at the end of March 2022, the total external general fund debt was £196m, which reduces to £72m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness);

4) it be noted that the Council’s realisable asset value of approximately £443m, of which its commercial assets are estimated at approximately £249m.

51. Climate Emergency Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2022 July
Council considered the Climate Emergency Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2022 July, as set out on Agenda pages 45 to 178.

It was proposed by Sarah Kerr and seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh, that the recommendations set out within the report be approved.

Sarah Kerr thanked Members and those who had been Members in 2019 when a climate emergency had been unanimously declared, and Gregor Murray, the previous Executive Member, and the officer team for their hard work. She also thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Andy Croy for their involvement.

Sarah Kerr reported that there was still work to do including the incorporation of a

roadmap but that the comments from scrutiny and previous Task and Finish Groups had been taken on board and SMART targets developed with a clear review of what the projected carbon savings would be, with actions within the plan. There was a significant gap which still needed to be addressed. There were three ways in which this could be done - do more as a local authority directly; work in partnership to form a one Wokingham approach; and lobby government to remove the existing barriers. Business cases were being put together for new initiatives.

Andrew Mickleburgh commented that there was much to be pleased about. The Action Plan would not currently achieve net zero by the target date and meaningful action was required. He supported the call to lobby for greater government support and referred to the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been proposed. Andrew Mickleburgh emphasised that Overview and Scrutiny's concerns were being addressed and a road map was under consideration for future iterations of the Plan.

Gregor Murray commented that there were very few dedicated Climate Officers within the Council. He indicated that recently Climate Emergency UK had undertaken an independent 6 month review of the Climate Action Plans of every authority in the UK. Initially the Council had been rated 8th out of 400, an excellent achievement. However, this had been downgraded to 22nd following consideration of information provided by an unknown individual. He felt that this had undermined the officers' hard work.

Prue Bray commented that last year Members had not been satisfied with the content of the Plan as it had not covered all it had needed to. She stressed that it was time to act as a Council and a Borough and the Plan needed to be taken to the next level. It was still a work in progress.

Andy Croy commented that he appreciated the openness and transparency. He felt that a key recommendation was that a more ambitious approach be taken as measures still fell short. It would be vital to persuade more people to use public transport. He emphasised the need for a Citizen's Assembly.

Stephen Conway stated that it was fundamental to all residents and less progress would be made, the more the issue was politicised.

Keith Baker sought clarification around the funding of the Local Cycling, and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Pauline Jorgensen clarified that the proposal for the BSIP funding included bus priority at lights and other bus priority schemes. Bus lanes had not been included. With regards to the Local Cycling, and Walking Infrastructure Plan, she commented that it contained many positive measures but also some that would increase pollution and carbon emissions.

Gary Cowan stated that he had some issues with the Plan and that it did not adequately address the Council's plan for future housing development and its impact on climate emergency.

Lindsay Ferris indicated that the second session of the Local Plan Update Working Group had recently been held, the topic of which had been climate change.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The progress made in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) third progress report be noted;
- 2) it be noted that updates made from previous reports to demonstrate the expected trajectory that we calculate existing projects will deliver;
- 3) it be noted that a more ambitious approach will be required going forward to enable WBC to play as full a role as possible in achieving a net zero carbon borough by 2030;
- 4) it be noted that this remains a live document and will continue to be updated as more details become available to support decision making.

52. Single Use Plastics and Food Waste

Council considered a report regarding a decision taken in relation to Single Use Plastics and Food Waste, as set out on Agenda pages 179 to 184.

It was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Maria Gee, that the recommendations set out within the report be approved.

Prue Bray reminded Members that the report related to the process followed for a decision and not about whether they agreed or disagreed with the decision itself. A request had been submitted for a report to Council, which argued that a key decision had been made without being properly advertised. Officers had made the decision believing it not to be a key decision. It had not been possible to state with clarity as to whether it was a key decision and the Officer had withdrawn the decision. A decision would be made at the next Executive.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that the removal of free caddy liners was likely to damage the level of food recycling within the Borough, and the removal would cost more than it saved.

Keith Baker questioned where the business case for the removal was. He felt that a call in was inevitable to a due a lack of transparency.

Norman Jorgensen expressed concerns about the process adopted and the decision itself. He felt it likely that food recycling would decrease. He highlighted that the budget papers were first considered by Overview and Scrutiny and suggested that had there been a saving to be made it would have been identified at this stage.

Gregor Murray commented that residents had been told that the decision had been made to tackle the climate emergency, reducing the Borough's use of single use plastics, and saving money. He felt that the solution was not to remove caddy bin

liners but to find an alternative source for them.

Stephen Conway reemphasised that the report referred to process.

Maria Gee highlighted that voting against the recommendations would not mean that the report would not be considered by the Executive.

53. Continuation of the meeting

At this point in the meeting, 10.06pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), the Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. The Motion was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Stephen Conway.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

54. Single Use Plastics and Food Waste

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the recommendations contained within the report not be approved.

55. Member Question Time

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

55.1 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

When he was Executive Member for Climate Emergency Councillor Murray following my introduction was working to provide Freely Fruity with land at the Barkham Solar Farm site to use as a permanent base for their fruit tree and vegetable growing charity. What will the new Executive Member do to ensure that Councillor Murray's commitment to this amazing charity is delivered on?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Michael and introducing Freely Fruity to the Council. Establishing and maintaining strong partnerships is a priority for this Administration. Sometimes as a local authority we have done things to our community rather than with them, and we must recognise that partnership working allows us to collectively achieve a lot more for the benefit of our community.

I have been meeting and talking regularly with Freely Fruity about their work and aspirations and I have been really impressed with the work that they do. I am pleased that the Council is working with a vibrant ambitious charity which shares our objectives and commitments to addressing the climate emergency and our social values.

Our discussions with the charity are ongoing. We are currently reviewing the business case to plant a community orchard, whilst considering the legal requirements for the use of the land, as well as being able to meet all the operational requirements that Freely Fruity require. We need to ensure that we are being

diligent with Council assets to secure best value for our residents. In short, we are supporting their request in principle subject to the agreement of technical details.

Supplementary Question:

Freely Fruity recently won an award for their mission to plant more fruit trees in our community. As Wokingham looks to plant hundreds of thousands more trees in the coming years, what proportion will be native fruit trees?

Supplementary Answer:

I cannot answer that at this moment in time and I will have to get you a written answer, but it is a good question so I will provide it in writing.

55.2 Gary Cowan asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Can Wokingham Borough Council use a confidentiality clause or 'gagging clause' if an elected councillor is the whistleblower and if so, can they legally stop the elected councillor from making a protected disclosure even if the Council's own constitution suggests it can?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Gary.

The Whistleblowing policy and guidance arrangements in the Constitution applies only to Council employees, former employees, agency staff and contractors engaged by the Council. The policy protects their employment if they raise a concern about perceived danger or illegality by the Council that affects others. It does not apply to elected Members, and therefore the protected disclosure rules will not apply to them as a Member has no employment to 'protect'.

Any person including a Member should bring notice to the Council if they perceive any wrongdoing by the Council.

The Council must be seen to support whistle blowers, this is an important part of the democratic process.

Supplementary Question:

Section 9 of the Code of Conduct which covers Whistleblowing and Ethics, appears to be, if you read it, biased to the Council and its officers, not elected Councillors. The examples are an officer can report an elected Councillor to the Standards Board and the Monitoring Officer, but an elected Councillor does not have the same rights. Also, a senior officer can withdraw an elected Member's rights to access junior officers. There is a reference as well to 'has the elected Councillor apologised to the officer?', but there is no reference to 'has the officer apologised to the elected Councillor?' This would imply that wrongdoing is one sided. Officers can use the word confidential on any document, but an elected Councillor cannot do so, at risk of disciplinary action, if they breach the confidentiality applied to a document. Finally, if a critical comment is made by an elected councillor and the Council considers that it is not in the public interest... Very simply should this matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as on the surface it would appear to be not fit for purpose?

Supplementary Answer:

Thank you very much for your supplementary Gary. I think you make some good points. If its ok with you, I will get back to you in writing.

55.3 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:

When Councillor John Kaiser held the housing portfolio, he was exploring with officers to increase the percentage of social and affordable housing to 50% on all new sites. He was working towards including this as a policy amendment to the emerging Local Plan. This was to reflect the shortage of affordable homes in the Borough. Please can you share if you agree that this is a good idea to help tackle the housing crisis for those on lower income and will you be supporting this target yourself?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Laura. I greatly admired John Kaiser's work when he held the housing portfolio and I have spoken with him on housing matters since I succeeded him.

On the specific point about the 50% target for social and affordable housing on new sites, I too have been exploring this with officers.

A 50% target makes sense given that about half of new housing would need to be affordable if it were to meet local demand, as revealed in our own housing needs assessment, and of course in light of the number of residents waiting for suitable accommodation on the Council's housing register.

Whether we can achieve 50%, or some percentage higher than the current 35% on major strategic developments locations, will depend on whether the viability of development at such a percentage can be demonstrated to the Local Plan Inspector. It is important to remember that he or she is the final decision maker on this. We have to balance, obviously, our requirement and desire for more affordable housing with other infrastructure requirements that we want developers to provide to mitigate the impact of new dwellings, such as highways improvements and new schools, as well as improving environmental performance.

Currently on most sites we do try and achieve a balance of affordable housing between primarily social rented housing which is about 70% of all affordable housing provision) and shared ownership which is around 30% of all affordable housing provision). First Homes will soon come into play on some sites (as an affordable housing tenure), providing discounted market housing for first time buyers. In an area such as ours however much of the discounted market housing will not be truly affordable to many of those who need accommodation. Much of my effort, therefore, is directed to trying to maximize the social rented component of the affordable housing that we secure through the planning process.

Supplementary Question:

The previous Conservative Administration made a commitment to deliver an additional 1,000 affordable homes in the next 5 years using Council resources and the Council was on target to achieve this. Is it your intention to maintain momentum and fulfil this commitment?

Supplementary Answer:

It most certainly is my intention to maintain momentum and in fact if it is possible, I would like to increase the pace.

55.4 Graham Howe asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

In 2019 the Conservative Administration started the Solar on Schools project. The economic rationale is that schools typically spend 84% of their budget on labour costs, 5% on standing costs and as at 2019, 5% on energy leaving only 6% for discretionary educational spend. By installing solar on schools, the installations to date have shown savings which reduce energy to 3% of budget, therefore increase discretionary educational spend from 6% to 8%. Thanks to President Putin the world has changed. We must address ourselves to those things we can do something about. It is obvious the tripling in energy prices and no cap for schools, puts all schools into deficit. The council can do something about this by catalysing the solar on schools' programme by adding batteries and monitoring systems to make greater utility energy savings.

On the premise of addressing our energies to things we can do something about, will the Lead Member for Children's Services make sure the current Solar on Schools programme is accelerated to a full programme on all our 66 schools for the benefit of our 22,000 children, with immediate effect and inform Ward members of the scheduling progress within their wards?

Answer

I thank Councillor Howe for this question, and I share his interest and concern for ensuring that schools and other settings are able to make the most of renewable energies, especially at a time of significant fuel price rises nationally.

As the Councillor will know, school governing bodies and trustees make decisions as they relate to the utilisation of their school resources rather than we as the council directing such measures, and as such we shall continue to encourage schools to explore the use of Solar Power as potential solutions to the issues you have rightly highlighted.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for that answer and I know that we would be aligned in our objectives. You are absolutely right that it is the governors that do make those decisions, and with all of our secondary schools and three quarters of our primary schools being academies, then that is even more applicable, but there are things that we could do with Salix Finance for example, and financial packaging, to create encouragement for this to happen. In light of the Green Agenda, we all want to follow then I ask you please to do that and make it a key part of the strategy within Children's Services.

Supplementary Answer:

I would be very happy to work with Sarah Kerr, who is the lead on Climate Emergency, to do what we can to progress this programme because it is important. We have just had that debate on the CEAP, and we do need to do all we can to encourage movement in that direction.

55.5 Shahid Younis asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Housing:

With inflation rocketing, will the Administration commit to freezing or below inflation rent rises for the Council's social housing tenants?

Answer

As you know, the ringfenced Housing Revenue Account relies on rent and social housing tenants to provide the money to repair and maintain existing rental properties. The HRA also supports business plans to expand our social housing stock, such as the Gorse Ride project. As an Executive Member I have to be mindful of the need to ensure the long term viability of the HRA which is not immune from the serious challenges we are experiencing across the Council; high inflation, rising demand for services, and shortfalls in anticipated income. Even so, this Administration, is committed to focusing what support it can give on those who are least well off in our community. I am very aware of the hardship faced by many of our tenants who are not supported by housing benefit or other state payments. That constitutes about a third of the total of our HRA tenants, and therefore working with our officers to produce the lowest level of rent rise for existing tenants in a way that will protect the long term viability of the HRA.

Supplementary Question:

I think these are the most vulnerable people in our community. I was expecting maybe a more firm commitment. I understand the financial pressures as well, but hopefully you can give us some more of a firm commitment that definitely we will take some action, and the burden is reduced. They are having to choose between putting food on the table or actually paying the rent.

Supplementary Answer:

I can assure you I am taking this very seriously indeed. It is my ambition to ensure that we have the lowest level rise that we can possibly get. I am very well aware of all of those issues that you talked about in terms of the human impact of all this, on vulnerable people in our community.

Of course, I will do everything I can to ensure that any rent increase is a minimal one. I cannot say much more than that at the moment. I am going through a period of proper consultation, including with our tenants, with TLIP. We have a process we have to go through. There is a government consultation on proposed caps coming up soon which we have to submit a formal response to. You will perhaps see a little bit more of the thinking of the Administration in that response, and we have to of course wait for a final decision towards the end of the year. That is when we will be able to firm this up, but I am very much in sympathy with what you are saying, and I will be doing my very best to ensure that we protect our tenants.

55.6 Stuart Munro asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

At a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee you stated that the town centre regeneration programme did not make money and therefore did not benefit the whole Borough. Can you please clarify this as this statement is very clearly incorrect?

Answer:

My comments made at Overview and Scrutiny Management were made in relation to a question about opportunities to regenerate other areas of the Borough now, on the back of the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration programme. To clarify, the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration programme was a large investment for the authority and the income generated by this scheme is currently paying off the costs of the investment including debt repayment. The income envisaged at the creation of the scheme is currently not being realised.

Supplementary Question:

I do not think that it is the case. I think you will find that the debt is now being paid faster. My question is are you sure that is correct because I do not think that that is true?

Supplementary Answer:

I think it is true Stuart, but I will check and I will get back to you.

55.7 Keith Baker asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services, the following question:

In January, this Council unanimously passed the Anti Abuse Charter. The motion said progress updates would go to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny panel twice a year. When will it go to Overview and Scrutiny?

Answer

It has been recommended to Council's Corporate and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the work on the Anti-Abuse Charter as part of a Violence Against Women and Girls update at the November 2022 meeting and a further update on progress has been recommended as part of the March 2023 committee meeting.

55.8 Jackie Rance asked the Leader of the Council the following question. Due to her inability to attend the meeting the following written answer was provided:

At the elections of 2022, the Leader of the Council campaigned vigorously against housing at Halls Farm, and the electorate believed him. Please could Mr. Jones assure everyone that there will indeed be no development ever at Halls Farm.

Answer

As I and the Executive Member, Councillor Ferris have previously explained in answers to similar questions in May, June and July, our Administration is working closely 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.

This is a similar answer to a similar question given by your former leader on 23rd September 2021, when he said, " I don't believe that I am capable of answering that because it would be predetermination".

55.9 Peter Harper asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport

and Highways the following question:

Since the last consultation with the people of Finchampstead, the plans for the changes to California Crossroads have been changed and hence the results of that consultation are no longer valid.

Considering the length of time that has passed since the last consultation, will the Executive Member for Highways commit to carrying out a consultation on the proposed changes to the junction at California Crossroads?

Answer

The scheme is funded by S106 developer contributions tied to legal agreements from the Arborfield SDL and it can only be allocated to that project.

The scheme has been delayed for the last two years due to a combination of Covid and the Ridges being shut, otherwise it would have already been constructed.

The consultation that happened in late 2018/early 2019 is still valid as the designs have been based on that feedback. The design has considered the feedback from the consultation and are shown in the latest plans. We have been working closely with the Parish Council, Members and other stakeholders on the design and hope to begin construction next year.

56. Minutes of Committee Meetings and Ward Matters

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

Residents of Woodley are concerned by the dangerous cyclists in the pedestrianised town centre, and it does feel as if it is only a matter of time until someone is seriously injured. I would like to ask what the Executive Member for Highways can do to deter cycling through the shopping area to improve safety for my residents?

Answer:

I have actually seen cyclists going through Woodley town centre. It is something I will certainly look into for you, and I will get back to you.

56.2 Shirley Boyt asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

I am speaking about Bulmershe Leisure Centre which is in my ward. I have had reports about increases in the cost of swimming which are huge. I would like to ask the Executive Member, Ian Shenton if he could speak to Places Leisure to find out why the cost of a family swim has increased in certain age groups by 42%, which seems to be an extraordinary amount of money, and also in this climate people will just think 'oh we can't afford to teach our children to swim', and I find that very worrying, particularly in light of what the Fire Officer said earlier about the dangers of water. So, could we just look into why we have these draconian increases for swimming at Bulmershe Leisure Centre?

Answer:

I am already looking into that following some exchanges of emails in the last week or so. I am just waiting for answers at the moment, but I will get back to you and to

Councillor Baker who was also involved.

56.3 Peter Dennis asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Bearing in mind the petition we had earlier about Floreat School and the dangers there, I will note that there are issues with the crossing, traffic and pupil safety, so I would like to ask the Executive Member to do a site visit with me and an appropriate officer during a school drop off to actually observe and see the issues that we are aware of?

Answer:

I would be happy to meet you on site with an officer at school drop off time.

56.4 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Parents are calling for pedestrian crossings to be installed along Fairwater Drive near Highgate Road. This is a dangerous place for children to cross to get to school. Will you support the parents' call for a crossing? There has already been a site visit with an officer.

Answer:

I will look to see if it is actually listed at the moment on the Integrated Transport Schedule, and then see where that is, and if any surveys have been done. I will come back to you on that.

56.5 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

The residents of Lenham Close have been looking for some double yellow lines on their road, between Old Forest Road and the flats. I just wanted to know why it is not in the present roll up Traffic Regulation Order that was just put out please?

Answer:

Amendment 5 which is currently being consulted on, was set up under the previous Administration, so I am not sure why it has not been included, but I will find out where it is on the list, and whether it is going to be in Amendment 6.

56.6 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

On the new Keep Hatch Gardens development in Norreys, there is a fenced off balancing pond on the corner of Oak Avenue and Binfield Road which includes much needed footpaths around that pond, which allow pedestrians to walk away from the busy road where there is no pavement. This pond has been fenced off for months and months with weeds growing between the new paths around the pond and lots of fresh planting has died. More importantly because the footpaths remain fenced off, there is no safe pedestrian route for those walking along Binfield Road. They end up walking in the road because there is no pavement or footpath. I receive frequent pleas from residents to resolve this, so can the Executive Member follow this up with the relevant Officer and Developer to get these paths finally open, and to protect the safety of pedestrians walking through this area of Norreys?

Answer:

I will certainly follow that up. It sounds like it has not been adopted yet, so I will come back to you on that.

56.7 Pauline Jorgensen asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

I would like an update please on the progress on the Laurel Park car park gates. The securing of the gates has been managed by residents for more than ten years. It is a long-standing issue. We have had a series of email conversations on it, and I did email you on 12 September following your promise to give me an update on it. I was just wondering if you could tell me how it is progressing as I do not seem to have had an answer?

Answer:

I did update you in early August on that very subject. We have been in the holiday silly season, so it has been difficult to get a further update, but I have requested a further update on where we currently stand. As soon as I get it, I will pass it on.

56.8 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In January 2021, the very large membership of the Earley Environmental Group presented a wonderful proposal to WBC that could extend the existing protection of the much valued green corridor along Lower Earley Way, by its designation as a local nature reserve. Strengthened environmental designation would massively benefit the flora and fauna, our own Borough, and residents, and protect against attempts to build on this vital green space. Could you please provide an update on WBC's response to this important proposal?

Answer:

We very much appreciate the proposal from the Earley Environmental Group. I assure you we are keen to improve the protection of biodiversity in Earley, and the other points that you mentioned. We will undertake a detailed assessment of the proposal and consider how best to take it forwards in the coming months.

I must acknowledge that progress on this request has been slow, and I would like to thank the EEG for patience, but the Council has recently bought in an additional Ecology Officer which should enable us to progress this type of request in a much more timely manner going forward.

56.9 Shahid Younis asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

I have a number of cases in my ward where a number of children have been unable to find places in their preferred schools. Some of them literally live 100 yards from the school but instead they have got places which are right the other side of the Borough. As a result, children are travelling to schools which are allocated far away, and some parents have actually decided to home school them because they would rather not send them to the schools. This is obviously detrimental to the environment and also for the children concerned as well. This situation seems to be worse this year. I have not seen the situation so bad for a number of years. What steps are being taken to find school places near to where the children are living?

This is obviously not a short term; this is a permanent solution that we need to find.

Answer:

You are right. It is not a short term solution. One of the reasons why it is getting worse is that there are more and more children coming into the Borough from outside, particularly from Hong Kong. Wokingham seems to be a very attractive place for Hong Kong people to come to live, which is fine, but it is putting unprecedented pressure on our school places. We also have something like 150 Ukrainian children, who we have had to put in our schools, which is slightly more than we were anticipating. The rate of applications is not letting up.

We have a situation where the schools are not necessarily where the pupils are. We also have a situation where we have a lower birth rate so the bottom end of schools coming into Reception, we do not have pressure on school places. That makes it difficult to open some of the new schools without unbalancing and destabilising the schools that already exist because they would be taking the Reception and Year 1 pupils and so on, away from other schools rather than filling up naturally from the populations. It is a very complicated dance that the Officers are trying to do.

We have got some money in place to expand secondary schools but that is not going to solve it completely. Of course, there is parental preference also comes into play and where people live, so it is really complicated and it would be really helpful if you could give me the names of the schools so I can give you an answer that applies to those particular residents in your ward and not just a general principle because it is going to be hard to solve. We are actually running out of school places even with the Fair Access Protocol under which we move the additional children into schools. I think I will leave it there.

56.10 Stephen Conway asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

I have asked so many ward questions on the new Twyford library over the years that it is going to come as no surprise I expect that I am asking another one tonight on the same subject. This time however I am rather more confident of a positive response than I have in the past.

Will the Executive Member for Climate Change and Residents Services accept my thanks and that of a great many people in the community that I represent for her help in securing the long awaited new library in Twyford?

Answer:

I actually really think that, that thanks goes elsewhere though. The ward councillors that have campaigned for this for 20 odd years. Obviously, thanks need to go to the Officers as well that have got it to this stage. Most importantly thanks needs to go to the Polehampton Trust charitees particularly the late Dave Turner, and of course the community who have petitioned and backed this from the start, so that is where the thanks should go so thank you.

56.11 Keith Baker asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

During the month of August, I contacted a variety of officers and asked a number of questions prompted by residents in my ward. I am sure we all have. They included

planning, listing of a planning application, leisure, holiday camps and Bulmershe Leisure Centre, parking to do with verge parking, parking again, status of submissions for two yellow lines, streetlights, streetlights enveloped by vegetation (I have reported it twice), trees; request for an examination of a tree of maybe coppicing. We are now approaching the end of September and I have not had a reply on any of them, not even an acknowledgement of receipt of my emails. This experience is not new and has been repeated many times in the past, and I believe my experience has been experienced by many others in this Chamber. This lack of response is not limited to one department, as my examples above clearly illustrate. It is beginning to evolve into an institutionalised contempt for elected councillors. Does Councillor Jones agree with me that elected councillors deserve better than this, and what steps will he take to make sure all officers respond to all councillors in a timely fashion?

Answer:

You say that you have asked these questions since August but that the lack of response has actually been going on for quite some time. Has it been going on for one month? Two months? Three months? Four? Five? Six? Seven? Any indication? Years ok.

If you would like to copy me with all of those, I will chase them up with officers because I think you are absolutely 100% right that we should get timely answers to questions from all councillors.

Sarah Kerr added the following:

I have got the Customer Excellence programme and we are very conscious, obviously councillors as well are customers as well as the public, and the public get timely responses. We are developing the Customer Excellence programme at the moment that puts the customer front and centre. We recognise that there is a problem across a number of departments and not getting these timely responses. This also includes updating the CRM system as well to make sure we do not lose things in the process. There is a huge amount of work being done on that, and I am more than happy to have a chat with you offline about this Keith. I totally agree with you but we are addressing it.

Under Rule 4.2.13.16, Alison Swaddle sought a response from a senior officer, the Chief Executive, on the matter. The Chief Executive asked for the examples that Keith Baker had referred to in his question. She appreciated that councillors may not always receive the answers that they wanted in the time that they wanted them. She pointed out that there were often reasons why answers could not be provided in a timely fashion. Many officers did respond in a timely fashion and an improvement programme was being put in place to further improve matters.

57. Statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members, and Deputy Executive Members

Clive Jones, Leader of the Council,:

This Council finds itself in the most difficult period of the last 40 years. There is raging inflation, energy costs are rising, as are food costs. Fuel prices and the cost of other goods in our shops have also been rising for months. We have a cost of living crisis. The value of the pound has plummeted making our imports very

expensive, therefore increasing costs everywhere. Only today interest rates have risen to their highest level in 14 years at 2.25%, adding further pressure to the budgets of residents and the Council.

These are unprecedented times, where we as an Administration of the Council have to make many difficult decisions. We will not shy away from those decisions. Our first priority has to be to balance the Budget. Councillor John Halsall, the former Conservative leader only a few months ago said that reserves were for a rainy day, and it is now raining. Inflation was then around 5%. How things have moved on. Inflation has nearly doubled and is forecast by many to reach 18% next year. Things were so bad the previous Administration used £2million of reserves to plug the gap in the Budget. This is the equivalent of a nearly 2% increase in Council Tax.

It is no longer raining. We are in the storm and there is thunder and lightning everywhere. There is massive uncertainty in the economy, and the Council is not immune to these difficulties, but we will rise to the challenge of balancing our Budget and maintaining vital services and helping the vulnerable in the Borough the best we can. Along with Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, the Executive Member for Finance, I and the rest of the Executive and senior Officers are working very hard to maintain services. A number of services were not properly budgeted for by the previous Administration. This included the 18 bus service. We were advised of this budget shortfall 10 minutes after taking over the running of the Council. The Winnersh Triangle extension was not properly budgeted for, and there was no provision for food caddy liners.

In addition to this there are serious shortfalls in revenue targets set by the previous Administration. There will be shortfall in the Revenue Budget in Leisure Services, and as massive shortfall from car park charges. This could be up to £800,000. This year's budget for the provision of blue waste bags was the same as last year's. Why did anyone think that there would not be a rise in the cost of blue bags?

There are also pressures from rising demands for Council services across the board, including many statutory services that we must support. We have decided to support Free School Meals during school holidays for families who usually receive them. This helps over 2,100 families within the Borough. Over the coming months the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be looking at the Budget for the next 3 years. Councillors of all parties will be able to look at what is being considered for the next few years before the Budget is finalised in January. I encourage all councillors to take part in this process. There is now a new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, and I will be writing to him to ask for a meeting to discuss housing numbers within the Borough. This will be the third Secretary of State that we have had in the last 4 months. Hopefully we will be able to do something to reduce housing number forced on us by the Conservative government. I am also writing to other Secretaries of States including the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Transport, and the Secretary of State for Health.

Madam Mayor, as I have said, we are living in very challenging times, but this Liberal Democrat Administration will rise to the challenge, protect services as best we can, and balance our budgets demonstrating financial competence.

Stephen Conway, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing:

The new Administration is very much aware that the Council needs to work in a partnership of equals with a wide variety of external bodies if our residents and businesses are to be properly supported and the Borough is to continue to be a great place to live and work.

I want to take this opportunity to report to Council on the work we have been undertaking to develop, strengthen, and in some cases repair, relationships with external partners. Rachel Bishop-Firth and I have been working Senior Council Officers to develop an involvement with the Hardship Alliance of local voluntary and charitable bodies to help mobilise and coordinate efforts to address the local impact of the cost of living crisis. As the Council, like our residents, is feeling the pinch financially with double digit inflation, rising demand for services and significant shortfall in anticipated income, we are not in a position to give the Alliance substantial amounts of money. But we are doing our bit to mobilise resources in a joint effort to help those in our community who are most vulnerable to the pressures created by the current crisis. To this end, a fund or donation from businesses, charities and individuals will soon be established, and I urge all councillors to make their own contributions to that fund. Our work in the Hardship Alliance is an example of the benefits that can come from reflective partnerships.

We have also been devoting time and effort to rebuilding relations with the Town and Parish Councils. We started recently with a very productive meeting with the Town and Parish clerks. We hope that the Borough/Parish Liaison Group will also be able to play a significant part in developing our partnership in ways that bring real improvements in our community. There is still much to do, not least in gearing the Borough Council itself up to more reflective and productive partnership working. We have some excellent examples of good practice, and we want these successes to set the benchmark for more effective partnership working across the Council.

58. Statement from Council Owned Companies

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

59. Motions

59.1 Motion 486 submitted by Norman Jorgensen

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

59.2 Motion 487 submitted by Charles Margetts

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

59.3 Motion 488 submitted by Laura Blumenthal

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

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TITLE	The Tenants Charter – Modernising the Tenant Customer Experience within Wokingham – updated 2022
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Full Council 27 October 2022
WARD	All Wards
LEAD VOLUNTEER	Steve Bowers – Chairperson of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (Tenant Volunteer)

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

In September 2019, the Tenant Volunteers came to the Full Council to present the first Tenant Charter. This shared their aspirations and the benefits to the community that working in partnership with the Tenant Volunteers could have.

Over the last few years, each September, the Tenant Volunteers have shared a report on the continued partnership work and to highlight the achievements over the years. Three years on – What we have achieved so far – is the final update report from the last Charter.

The updated Tenant Charter report has been created by the Tenant Volunteers and outlines the updated aspirations of the tenants.

Please see the attached report – The Tenant Charter update – 2022 and please watch the Tenant Charter video shared at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- i) The Tenant Volunteers would like to ask the Council to consider the new aspirations outlined in the Tenants Charter update 2022 report and continue to work in partnership with them to achieve these.
- ii) The Tenant Volunteers would like the Council to note the Tenant Charter video.
- iii) The Tenant Volunteers would like the Council to note the report Three Years on – What we have achieved so far! This shows some of the projects, documents and reviews the Tenant Volunteers have been involved with in the last year.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to formally update the Council on the progress of the work of the Tenant Volunteers, already completed over the last year. As well as share the new aspirations in the Tenant Charter update 2022.

This report was developed by the Tenant Volunteers and has been subject to review and approval by the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel.

The charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council's Tenants on what is needed to modernise the customer experience and ensure continuous improvement. It is intended as a series of aspirations, rather than demands, and to stimulate a broader discussion within the council as a corporate body.

There are ten key priorities of Wokingham Borough Council tenants in the modernisation of housing services which are detailed in the Tenants Charter:

- 1) *Tackling the Stigma associated with being a Council Tenant*
- 2) *Communications with Tenants and Residents across the Borough*
- 3) *Greater Transparency regarding Health and Safety Inspection Results*
- 4) *Modernising Tenant Engagement Techniques to Increase Active Involvement*
- 5) *Identifying Future Patterns of Tenant Housing Need and Demand*
- 6) *Helping Tenants Manage their Personal Finances*
- 7) *Creating an easy 'friction-free' Customer Experience for Tenants*
- 8) *Maximising the Accessibility of Council Housing Services*
- 9) *Giving Tenants Greater Choice on who does repairs and when?*
- 10) *Developing a Protocol for the Analysis and Protection of Tenant Data*

The formal update report goes through each priority in detail to outline the thoughts behind each aspiration and provides some guidance and advice on how this may be achieved. The Tenant Volunteers would appreciate any help and support to achieve these.

BACKGROUND

The Tenant Charter was initially created and published by the Involved Tenants (now Tenant Volunteers) in 2019. In 2022, we (the Tenant Volunteers) reviewed the Charter and have identified several factors that make it timely to reflect on the future of housing services for council tenants and publish an updated version of the Tenant Charter:

- **The Grenfell Tower Disaster**
 - There have been emerging lessons from the Disaster and subsequent Grenfell Tower Enquiry. Notably the need for a greater focus on:
 - Health and Safety through the new Building Regulator,
 - Tenant Involvement working closely with the Regulator for Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman Service and,
 - Transparency over landlord decision-making ensuring that more information is shared with all Tenants.
- **The Social Housing White Paper**
 - The government's document '*The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper*' published by the Ministry of Housing Communities Local Government (now called the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) was published in November 2020 and requests:
 - Enhanced consumer regulation applicable to councils and housing associations.
 - Landlords to raise service standards, levels of resident engagement and customer satisfaction.
- **Digital Transformation**
 - There are emerging opportunities for enhanced communications through digital transformation of service delivery and enhanced resident

engagement in respect of increased transparency and an improved tenant customer experience especially regarding accessibility.

- **Demographic Trends**

- Social trends such as an ageing population, increasing demand for disability and social care support, increasing customer expectations and the rapid rise of social media platforms.

We believe that Wokingham Borough Council and the tenants need to respond to these challenges by working together to plan for the modernisation of housing services over the next decade and beyond if:

- current levels of Tenant Satisfaction are to be maintained / enhanced / monitored, and
- opportunities to increase engagement are to be realised.

This charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Tenant Volunteers on what we feel is needed to achieve the above and to improve the customer experience.

It is intended as a series of aspirations, rather than demands, and to stimulate broader discussions within the council as a corporate body.

Some of our proposals can be implemented relatively easily, some will require additional funding and others will require corporate agreement by full council.

Where suppliers are named, this is for illustrative purposes and does not constitute an endorsement.

We recommend that Wokingham Borough Council's progress in terms of addressing this Charter is formally reported to full Council each year and a full review completed every three years.

List of Background Papers
Tenants Charter update 2022 – Modernising the Tenant Customer Experience within the Wokingham Borough.
Three Years on – What we have achieved so far!
Tenant Charter video – to be shared at the meeting

Contact Steve Bowers	Service
Telephone No	Email steve.bowers@wbcinvolved.com

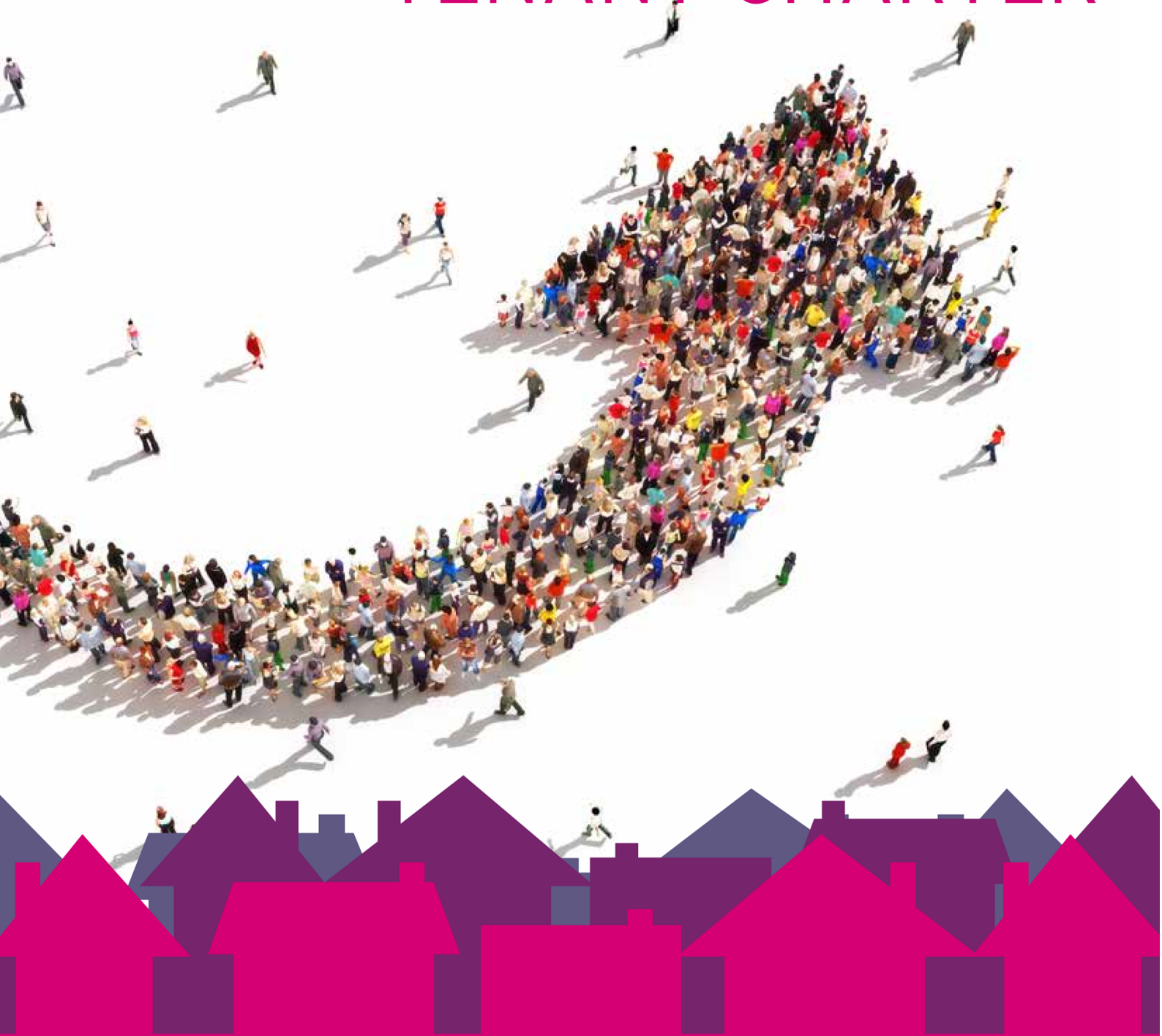
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Modernising The Tenant Customer Experience within the Wokingham Borough



Created
By
Tenant
Volunteers

TENANT CHARTER



Modernising the tenant customer experience within the Wokingham Borough:

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The Purpose of The Tenant Charter

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 - Enhanced consumer regulation applicable to councils and housing associations.
 - Landlords to raise service standards, levels of resident engagement and customer satisfaction.

Link to documents for more information: [The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942212/charter-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper.pdf)
(www.gov.uk)



Link to documents for more information: [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942212/charter-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper.pdf)
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- current levels of Tenant Satisfaction are to be maintained / enhanced / monitored, and
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This charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Tenant Volunteers on what we feel is needed to achieve the above and to improve the customer experience. It is intended as a series of aspirations, rather than demands, and to stimulate broader discussions within the council as a corporate body.

Some of our proposals can be implemented relatively easily, some will require additional funding and others will require corporate agreement by full council.

We recommend that Wokingham Borough Council's progress in terms of addressing this Charter is formally reported to full Council each year and a full review completed every three years.

Acknowledgements

This Charter has been produced by the Tenant Volunteers of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).

This revised and updated Tenant Charter was reviewed and created by the Tenant Involvement Strategy Group. It has been signed-off by all the Tenant Volunteers and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP).

The drafting of the Tenant Charter was undertaken in partnership with the Tenancy Involvement Team.

Special thanks are due to Simon Price, Kim Jakubiszyn and Rosalynn Funnell of the Wokingham Borough Council Housing department for their assistance and continued support in this project and their ongoing commitment to effective tenant engagement in the Borough.

Aspirations

1) Tackling the Stigma associated with being a Social Housing Tenant

The definition of social stigma is a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in a society have about something, especially when this is unfair.

This stigma impacts on the perception of council housing tenants by others and can be further categorised in the following ways:

- **Stigma of being a Social Housing Tenant**
 - Many tenants recall the days when council housing was sought-after and provided accommodation for different social classes, united in the need for a family home. Even today, the offer of a home in the Council's new developments is an exciting life-enhancing opportunity.
 - Sadly, over the last forty years the image of council housing has suffered, and it is seen by many, especially in the media, as second-class accommodation comprised of run-down neighbourhoods inhabited by unemployed individuals involved in crime!

- **Stigma of living in Sheltered Housing Accommodation**

Sheltered housing is accommodation specifically designed for older or disabled people to allow them to live independently. It usually consists of self-contained flats with communal facilities. Schemes vary in size, but most offer a range of self-contained apartments or bungalows on one site.

- When people hear Sheltered Housing Accommodation, they think of Care Homes.
 - In the last decade we have seen more people moving into this type of accommodation who are still working, are still very active, and living more independently.
 - We recommend that Sheltered Housing policies and buildings are reviewed as they do not reflect the current and future needs of older Tenants. When Tenancies for these properties are offered, it should be made very clear that you will be living in a sheltered scheme with access to the Floating Support Team.
- **Stigma of living on a Low Income**
 - Tenants and Residents who live on lower income are stigmatised in many ways, mainly by the use of stigmatising language such as "Poverty, being Poor, Living in Crisis, Being a Shirker, a Scrounger etc."
 - **Stigma of being a Tenant Volunteer**
 - when a Tenant or Resident volunteers with any organisation, there is a perception that they 'work' for them.
 - A Tenant Volunteer gives their time for free to support and help Wokingham Borough Council, other Tenants and staff to improve services for Tenants.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council tackle the issue of stigmatisation through:

- a proactive media campaign to challenge negative perceptions of council housing in the local and regional media – partly through generating regular information for the media on how

tenants actively maintain their communities and help support disadvantaged residents. The media work would also allow the speedy correction of inaccurate information.

- an overhaul of the language used by councillors and council colleagues when referring to council housing – abandoning all references to ‘estates’ in favour of more positive terms such as ‘communities’ or ‘neighbourhoods.’
- specifying a requirement - in commercial and employment contracts – that contractors, service delivery partners and employees treat tenants fairly and do not stigmatise them.
- maximising the attractiveness of future housing schemes by increasing the level of tenant involvement in their design, amenities, and transport links, by working with local tenants in the monitoring of appearance and maintenance of all neighbourhoods. This could be through direct engagement, face-to-face or through digital means (social media, surveys and focus groups).
- investment in activities – like community engagement events – that celebrate local communities and enhance volunteer engagement. This may include the sponsorship of Holidays, Activities and Food (HAF) events and other activities that support communities in need (supporting the Wokingham Borough Council Anti-Poverty Strategy).

2) Communications with Tenants and Residents across the Borough

We would like all communications with Tenants and Residents across the Borough to be clear, understandable, accessible, and meaningful – we encourage consultation, and would appreciate teams working together to send one set of consultation at a time.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council improve communications by:

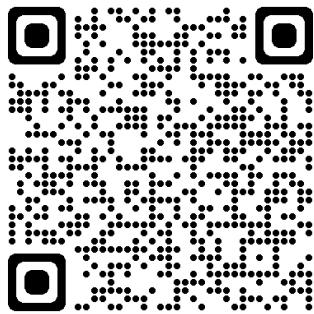
- Ensuring consultation is completed on anything that effects Tenants and Residents. We would encourage focus groups (face-to-face or on Teams), digital engagement through social media / website and local roadshows to achieve this.
- Ensuring council staff ask Tenants and Residents how they would like to be engaged with – digital by choice as well as face to face, paper format, telephone, mobile phone text message etc. (Please remember that not everyone within the Borough is digitally active.)

CIH document about the digital options
and digital by choice:

<https://www.cih.org/publications/going-digital-gearing-up-for-the-future>

Options for Communications to indicate
the range of formats suggested:

UNESCO



- Ensure departments across the Council communicate effectively with each other to support Tenants and Residents – for example the benefits team working in partnership with housing and Adult Social Care.
- Equality and Inclusion is important within all areas of Housing and the Council, especially

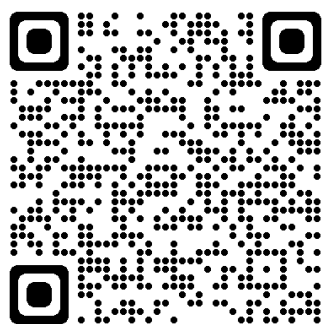


with accessible communications. We would like the Council to invest in this area, looking at

supporting tenants and residents with sensory needs through videos, audio description, the availability of documents in larger print and British Sign Language as a norm for the website and any digital engagement.

- We recognise that Wokingham Borough has become more diverse because of the various resettlement and refugee projects, and we need to ensure that all communications are designed from the beginning as accessible to all. Whether through the choice of languages available for each document, website translation services and telephone translation services. We would like these to become a normal part of every service and not just an add on at the end of a document. Some websites have an automatic translation option, could this be looked in to?
- We would like a set of service standards to show Tenants and Residents how they will be engaged with and show clear deadlines for instance: 5 working days to acknowledge after first contact followed by 10 working days to complete a full and thorough response (if needed). This should include guidance for staff members on out of office etiquette including out of office messages.
- Performance Framework data is currently scrutinised by Tenant Volunteers on a monthly basis – moving towards sharing this data with all Tenants through digital means (social media, Housing Matters etc.).
- Work in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council to introduce a new more accessible website that encourages Tenants and Residents to engage.
- Supplement this by broadening the range of communication channels to include Face time, WhatsApp, Microsoft Messenger, Microsoft Teams plus on-line housing surgeries with housing or benefits staff and ‘virtual chat room’ debates between councillors, staff and Tenant Volunteers.
- Ensure an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment is completed for all Policies and Service Improvements to ensure Wokingham Borough Council is compliant to the Equality Act 2010.

Link for further information: [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010)



Not all Tenants have a visible disability and require format changes to



communications.

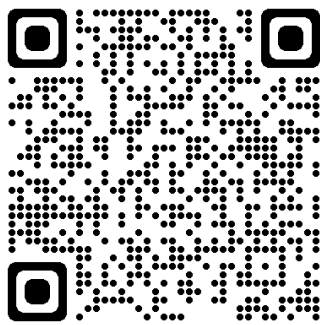
- When creating a new policy within Wokingham Borough Council, that effects Tenants (and Residents), we would like those customers to be involved from the beginning, including reviewing, planning, and signing off any new or amended policies. Meaningful consultation is important to ensure Tenant Satisfaction and continued engagement.
- Wokingham Borough Council have been working with [The First Word](#) to ensure the tone of communications to Tenants and Residents is more friendly and less corporate. We would like Tenant Volunteers to be trained alongside staff members to ensure we are able to continue to sign off communications and ensure they have been 'First Worded' by us! We would recommend that Wokingham Borough Council use [The First Word](#) readability test and ask that all communications meet the grade of 65 and above – Plain English. This ensures we continue to be compliant to the Regulatory Standards.

3) Greater Transparency regarding Health and Safety Inspection Results

The Grenfell Tower disaster has led to a renewed focus on the health and safety of council and housing association properties. The government's Social Housing White Paper (as mentioned in the Purpose of this Tenant Charter), sets out the guidelines and suggested changes for the sector to ensure greater transparency and Tenant Engagement for Social Housing. Specifically, it mentions the creation of a new Building Regulator and enhanced powers for the Regulator for Social Housing, please see below for more information.

Notably, it mentions the creation of a new Building Regulator and enhanced powers for the Regulator for Social Housing. On the 22nd June 2022, the Building Safety Act named HSE (Health and Safety Executive) as the new Building Safety Regulator in England.

Link for further information: [Building Safety Regulator - HSE](#)



The Grenfell Tower disaster occurred on the 14th June 2017 in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.



The Government is proposing a new, Tenant Satisfaction, Regulatory Standard to be implemented by 2025. This would require that data on tenants' perception and satisfaction continues to be gathered and results made available to the tenants by their landlord. The STAR Survey is currently in place and sent out every other year to gather the same data, but the new standard will request this data more often and ensure Landlords share this data, in live formats, more often. This will increase the amount of data collected regarding health and safety compliance and require the sharing of these results to increase the engagement and scrutiny from tenants.

[Tenant satisfaction measures: what we are proposing and how to have your say - summary \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



We welcome Wokingham Borough Council's current health and safety practice in the following areas:

- Installation of safety aids – fire, smoke, and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms - as standard in all new/existing council homes
- Annual testing of gas appliances and alarms in all council homes
- Annual testing of electric appliances in sheltered schemes and communal areas and community facilities.
- Five-year regular testing of electrical appliances (sockets and wiring) within general needs homes (Decent Homes).
- Weekly water for Legionnaire's disease in communal shared water use) in sheltered schemes and communal areas and community facilities

However, we would like to see Wokingham Borough Council be more transparent about the outcomes of these tests by:

- Publishing smoke, gas, electric and Carbon Monoxide monitoring inspection results as part of the digital personalised customer record (if possible). This could be shared as part of an annual report and regular social media updates with anonymised data which would bring practice in line with the Social Housing White Paper and Regulatory Standards.
- Publishing fire safety inspection results, as recommended by the Hackitt review. This could be as part of the accessible online personalised customer record.
- The Fire Safety Act 2021 (the Act) received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021 and commenced on 16 May 2022. The Act amends the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Fire Safety Order). We would like the service to review themselves against this bill and consult the findings to the relevant tenant volunteer groups. This will have a series of recommendations that will need to be shared regularly to all tenants.
- Performance Framework data is currently scrutinised by the Tenant Volunteers on a monthly basis. However, this data needs to be shared more widely to all tenants through digital means such as social media, Housing Matters etc.)

4) Modernising Tenant Engagement Techniques to Increase Active Involvement

Traditionally, tenant engagement has been largely based around physical meetings and community engagement events which means that not everyone is able or available to attend.

We recognise this issue but also celebrate the adaptations made to tenant engagement since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and understand that these have been successful in making engagement more accessible and flexible to tenants.

Tenant Engagement also includes walkabouts, housing officers engaging with people at their door, Housing Matters magazine surveys and satisfaction surveys

As work has begun to increase active involvement in a variety of formats, we would like Wokingham Borough Council to work with us to ensure progress is made to engage with more tenants.

We recently formed a new Tenant Complaints Panel to ensure Tenants are actively engaged within the complaints process.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council take the following practical steps:

- Increase the number of tenant Volunteers through a variety of involvement opportunities including face-to-face and digital engagement.
- To encourage more digital by choice engagement through online surveys, online focus groups and social media engagement. With the options of telephone and paper surveys if needed. This could include social media campaigns on particular subjects such as an anti-stigma campaign (Aspiration 1)
- Although we have multiple ways of getting involved through the formal groups (see Conclusion for more details of these groups) and we still want to encourage tenants to join us on these groups, helping us to scrutinise and challenge performance and enhance services. By offering more opportunities to engage, Tenants can also become involved in a more varied and flexible ways (accordingly to how much time they have to give).
- Create a link with the (Wokingham Borough) Resident Equalities Forum - which is an external group that is formed of representatives from each of the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010.
- Continue and create new links with local community organisations, Registered Providers, Charities, and any other organisations that can increase active involvement with some of those groups that are currently not represented within engagement structure.
- We would like investment to engage with those people who do not currently have a voice or need support to be heard ensuring that they have a say in service improvements and satisfaction surveys. For example, young people, the GRT community etc.
- Ensure an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment is completed for all engagement activities to ensure Wokingham Borough Council is compliant to the Equality Act 2010.

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



5) Identifying Future Patterns of Tenant Housing Need and Demand

Planning for the future means recognising trends such as an ageing population, more single adult households, increased diversity of residents and so on and matching this demand with new housing supply.

It also involves recognising changing inter-generational housing and service experience expectations. In simple terms, our children and particularly our grandchildren will have different needs in terms of the housing service provided.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council pursue the issue of future patterns of housing demands through:

- Greater choice of the types of housing and the tenancy terms being offered - not everyone wants the same thing – As Tenant Volunteers, we are aware that altering government legislation is difficult, but we will lobby through various means including membership of the Residents Panel - Association of Retained Council Houses (ARCH).
- Consultation when planning and building new homes and refurbishing others to become adaptable homes that mean tenants don't have to move in response to age or disability
- ensuring that new or refurbished homes are designed to more carbon neutral standards – including but not limited to installation of solar panels, power walls (Powerwall is an integrated battery system that stores your solar energy for backup protection when the grid goes down. Your system detects outages and automatically recharges with sunlight to keep your appliances running for days), rainwater butts and so on.
- We also aspire to greater tenant involvement in the design and planning for future tenant housing needs and demand.

We believe that council development planning will be improved:

- With Tenants having a greater role in strategic planning. This could be through consultation on development planning. This could be through the Tenant Volunteers working in partnership with the council's Strategic Housing Team. Working together analysing the research data that informs planning policy, particularly regarding projections of future housing need for social housing that meets the needs of the tenants.
- With Tenant Volunteers consistently being formally consulted on the allocations and lettings policy and practice – especially in any review of the 'banding system'.
- With Tenant Volunteers support the Council to become Carbon Neutral by 2030 and will do this in a number of ways, including encouraging the SAP ratings of the current properties to be taken from a C to a B (using Government funding where possible) and to encourage digital by choice to reduce the amount of wasted paper in the Borough.

6) Helping Tenants Manage their Personal Finances

Due to Government austerity, cost-of-living crisis, and the transition to Universal Credit allowing tenants receiving benefits to have their payments made directly to them, there is a need to support tenants to manage their finances more effectively.

Due to Government Austerity, the cost-of-living crisis and the transition to Universal Credit allowing tenants receiving benefits to have their payments made directly to them, there is a need to support tenants to manage their finance more effectively.

We believe that by helping tenants manage their finances more effectively the Council can increase tenancy sustainment and contribute in the longer term to the community in which they live.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council improve support to Tenants by tackling these issues via:

- Continuing to offer support to tenants, either by signposting or provided by Wokingham Borough Council direct.
- Signposting tenants to personal budgeting training courses that are free or low cost such as those provided by Wokingham Adult Education (more information can be found at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/libraries/reading-schemes-for-children-and-adults/adult-and-community-learning/>)
- Signposting to accessible money management apps available to tenants 'on demand' – to help them to understand their spending on recurring payments, assist with budget analysis and planning, or help with saving etc.
- Training and upskilling of staff on where to signpost tenants and residents to financial support.
- Continuing to provide the texting service to increase accessibility and provide additional ways of contacting the rents team.
- Continuing the support to Tenants via the Tenancy Sustainment Officers as a direct contact on financial management.

7) Creating an easy 'friction-free' Customer Experience for Tenants

We recognise that some of the most significant changes in human behaviour and customer expectations are being driven by the retail, online media, and technology sectors.

Mobile phones are widely used, for online shopping, banking, checking for the next bus and using social media and chat bots. Organisations are all working on how to make access to their apps / websites a much better and easier experience. QR Codes are now widely used within media, documents and policies and should be used to enhance the experience for anyone using mobile phones to access online content.

We recognise that transaction time is now as important as price to many consumers. Equally, the most successful retailers are reviewing their recruitment strategy for customer facing staff and increasing the number of transactions, that can be undertaken directly by the consumer on a 'self-service' basis. i.e. self-service scanners in supermarkets, where your loyalty card allows you to shop quicker and monitor your spending, providing an excellent customer experience, whilst allowing you to ensure you are still within your budget.

We would encourage Wokingham Borough Council to enhance the customer experience for all, leading to an increase in satisfaction for tenants and improving their relationship with their landlord.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council take practical steps to make the tenant customer experience easier and 'friction free' by:

- Recruiting council housing staff that are helpful, knowledgeable, with a commitment to customer service and a positive attitude. It is better to employ people with the right personality traits and then train them, than to base recruitment solely on the possession of formal qualifications.
- Having a Customer Delivery Officer and/or Housing Assistant as an initial point of contact for most telephone enquiries, with the ability to 'pass on' / have access to 'specialist officers' as required.
- Creating a standard Customer Service training programme that is mandatory for all officers of the Council with a specific additional training programme for Housing staff.
- Reviewing response time targets and steps to ensure that they are met in practice and that targets are agreed with Tenant Volunteers. Please see the Communications Aspiration for more information.
- Continue to provide a greater choice of ways to communicate with the Housing Service for tenants
- Review and development access to all council services to ensure accessibility, whether by telephone, email, online etc.
- Retaining the current face to face availability through pre-booked appointments.
- Promote and develop self-service for Tenants accessing housing services

- Self-service is now an integral part of our daily lives. Self-service check outs at supermarkets are second nature and in banking, self-service apps are widely used.
- The aim of 'self-service' is to encourage tenants to manage their accounts online.
- An online Tenants Hub / App would be ideal for them to be able to access services online 24/7, such as:
 - Check rent balance and view statements
 - Report repairs and make / change appointments
 - Check repairs history
 - Book a gas service and change appointments
 - Make a secure payment
 - Report anti-social behaviour
 - Report a change in circumstances
 - Log complaints and compliments
 - Landlord permissions for pets, satellite dishes etc.
 - Access information about the home (anything that is given out as part of your Tenancy pack) – such as how to use the central heating systems or where to locate stopcocks
 - Access a calendar of community events etc
- For self-service to be successful, tenants need to **actively use it**. This requires an easy-to-use platform, training videos and drop-in sessions, a marketing campaign, and the back-up option of speaking to staff for the percentage of the population that do not have access to the internet or whose disability prevents them from using online services. It also requires analytics and monitoring of how it is being used and barriers to its use.

Tenants are more likely to use self-service if other tenants, such as Tenant Volunteers and their groups, have been part of the team that design it and is consulted on the self-service offer.

We fully support the Customer Excellence project across the Council. We would like to ensure that Tenants are part of Customer Journeys and Customer Excellence projects to ensure consultation is completed as part of the continued partnership working.

8) Maximising the Accessibility of Council Housing Services

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council take practical steps to improve the accessibility of council housing services. We welcome the new Customer Excellence and First Word initiatives but think Wokingham Borough Council can and should go further.

Some of these steps involve changing how existing resources are deployed – others involve the use of new technology.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council increase accessibility by:

- Changes to the use of existing resources:
 - Freephone for all calls to council switchboard (like the freephone service that already exists for reporting repair requests)
 - Minimising call waiting times for housing services by ensuring that the Customer Delivery Officer / Housing Assistants / Call Handlers function is fully staffed – particularly at peak times
 - Review of existing and future resources (leaflets, posters and handbooks) / policies to ensure they are accessible by all, including an easy read version and the ability to change the language of any document once published online.
- Use of new technology
 - Introduction of a digital inclusion strategy to ensure that no tenant is left behind by the digital transformation of service delivery
 - Access to digital engagement / support at all Sheltered Properties ensuring Tenants are able to access training locally if requested.
 - Introduction of reporting apps – for repairs, Anti-social behaviour (ASB), neighbourhood condition – allowing photos of issues to be uploaded by tenants (as residents can already do in respect of reporting issues related to roads and highways)
 - Review of current ‘virtual customer service assistants aka chatbots’ to answer frequently asked questions (FAQ’s), direct customers to sources of information, perform simple tasks etc.in order to help tenants who have physical or learning disabilities or simply speed up call centre queues for everyone
 - Consultation / survey of Tenants and Residents should be digital by choice, i.e., available in different digital formats (email, mobile, WhatsApp, QR Code, Website) if the Tenant / Resident has access or in other formats such as by telephone or paper.

9) Giving Tenants Greater Choice on who does repairs and when?

The most important single issue for tenants is day-to-day responsive repairs. Some repairs will be 'qualifying work' which is the landlord's responsibility and others will fall to tenants to organise themselves.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council improve its repairs operations by:

- Introducing an accredited handyman service for 'non-qualifying work', providing tenants with a list of trusted tradespeople who could do jobs which are not the landlord's responsibility and building upon existing Wokingham Borough Council handyman arrangements for social care.
- Enabling tenants to order and cancel repairs directly with contractors for 'qualifying work' (Landlord's Responsibility)
- Enabling tenants to be offered a range of hourly time-banded appointment options when they negotiate repair times with contractors.
- Tenant Volunteers would also like Wokingham Borough Council to investigate the benefits of having a mixture of maintenance contractors – prime commercial, a directly employed labour force and (to support local economic development and help tackle climate change) local small contractors and handymen.
- Supporting Tenants and Tenant Volunteers to continue to be involved in the selection of prime commercial contractors holding any contractors accountable, if theirs or the work of any sub-contractors is substandard! This would be picked up by Tenant Volunteers (as live mystery shoppers) via complaints and monitored by the complaints panel, the Repairs and Maintenance Group and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel.
- Ensuring all Tenants have greater access to repairs reports (link to Aspiration 3)
- Ensuring all Tenants have clear communications ensuring contractors also adhere to aspiration 2 and ensuring tenants are alerted to repairs and have the ability to reorganise when inconvenient? Tenants should also have a greater choice in the communication formats sent to them (link to aspiration 2, 7 and 8)

The combined effect of these changes would place council tenants in an equal position to private owner-occupiers when commissioning repairs and provide a modest contribution to tackling stigma. (Link to aspiration 1)

10) Developing a Protocol for the Analysis and Protection of Tenant Data

The objective of Wokingham Borough Council Tenant Volunteers is to help Wokingham Borough Council build the level of trust required to gain tenant consent to use their personal data for housing data analysis.

The development of machine learning, artificial intelligence, sentiment analysis and the science of data analytics now enables councils to find out more about their tenants' circumstances, needs and aspirations and to use that data to improve housing services.

However, this increased use of personal data creates increased risks of data security and accidental non-compliance with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) [Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and UK rules which, together, place the responsibility on the council to hold an individual's data securely and with their consent.

We would like to see Wokingham Borough Council improve by:

- Using data analytics to predict future housing service need and demand
- Enabling tenants to hold Wokingham Borough Council accountable to the GDPR and by ensuring they are compliant when processing Tenant data collection, analysis, and findings
- Ensuring the Tenant Volunteers have the opportunity to regularly scrutinise and challenge Wokingham Borough Council through the analysis of performance figures and complaints data, looking for patterns, learning and service improvement suggestions.
- Involving tenants in the development of the Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) required under GDPR which identify and analyse how data privacy might be affected by specific actions related to the capture and analysis of personal data
- Developing a housing-led protocol for the use and protection of data held on tenants based on Information Commissioner (ICO) guidance and the practical execution of ICO guidance as set out in Transparency and Trust – the 2017 industry standard HouseMark guide to data protection in social housing

Conclusion

What is a Tenant Volunteer and what does it involve?

Definition of *Volunteering*

The definition of volunteering that the Wokingham Borough Council Tenant Volunteers have adopted is as follows:

We define volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment and communities. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.

This can include formal and informal volunteering across the Housing Service as well as wider community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer, and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals.

By volunteering to become a Tenant Volunteer and working in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council you can help improve the services to Tenants.

You will also learn how the Council works and begin to see the bigger picture and how complicated things can be.

Volunteering can be incredibly rewarding and some of the benefits of being involved are:

- The chance to meet new people
- Social opportunities
- Gaining confidence
- Understanding what is going on in your community and having a positive input
- Gaining new skills through training
- Honing skills to support you becoming employed

Tenant Volunteers Myth Buster

- Tenant Volunteers must sign an agreement to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed
- Tenant Volunteers are volunteers, and they are not paid, they **do not work** for Wokingham Borough Council.
- Tenant Volunteers **do not** receive preferential treatment
- Tenant Volunteers **must follow** the exact processes all tenants follow when reporting issues including repairs
- Tenant Volunteers do not raise their own issues at meetings
- Tenant Volunteers do not represent other individuals or groups; they put forward their personal thoughts and ideas, based on their own experiences as a tenant.

The **Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel** is a Wokingham Borough Council constituted group, chaired by a Tenant and with a membership made up of Tenant Chairs, Senior Managers, Councillors and Co-opted members from the Voluntary Sector and a Housing Association.

This group ensures Wokingham Borough Council are fully compliant to the Regulatory Standards (Consumer and Rent)

[Regulatory standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



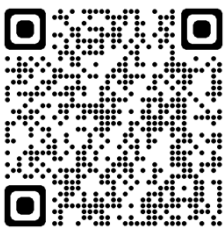
There are also four formal groups, which Tenant Volunteers regularly attend, according to their interests and each group meets once a month for approximately two hours.

Repairs and Maintenance Group

Review and monitor all areas relating to the Repairs Service such as day to day repairs, planned maintenance, kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, grounds maintenance and gas servicing.

This group ensures Wokingham Borough Council are fully compliant to the Home Standard.

[Home Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



Neighbourhoods Group

Review and monitor areas such as the re-letting of empty properties (voids), rents, anti-social behaviour and our events within the neighbourhood.

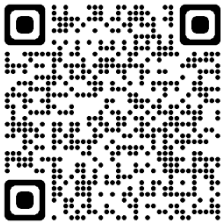
Plan, help to organise and attend large scale events such as the Community Fun Days.

This group ensures Wokingham Borough Council are fully compliant to the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Tenancy Standard and the Rent Standard.

[Neighbourhood and Community Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



[Rent Standard and guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



Communications Group

Review and approve publications for Housing Services including letters, leaflets, surveys, policies and procedure. Plan, collate and edit Housing Matters magazine and provide support with the Annual Report.

The first three groups are open to all tenants from Wokingham Borough Council housing and the Local Housing Companies (Loddon Homes and Berry Brook Homes).

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

[Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



The Independent Living Group - Sheltered Housing

This group is made up of Tenant Volunteers who live in one of the 8 sheltered housing properties in the Borough. They meet to discuss the current and future services for this group of tenants.

Tenant Involvement Strategy Group

This group is made up of Tenant Volunteers from the groups above, who come together to complete reviews of overall strategies and the Tenant Charter.

It is important to note that members of this group do not represent other individuals or groups; they put forward their thoughts and ideas, based on their experiences as a tenant.

To ensure compliance to the **Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code** Wokingham Borough Council have formed the Tenant Complaints Panel. This is made up of Tenant Volunteers who come together monthly to review anonymised complaints and give feedback on possible service improvements,

[Complaint Handling Code - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)



This is a list of some of the achievements the Tenant Volunteers have made over the last year 2021 - 2022

POLICIES	
Pet Policy	Tenants' complaints panel
Succession Policy	Neighbourhood & estate Management
Keeping Communal Areas safe	Homelessness
Mutual Exchange	Allocations
Tenant Volunteer I. T	Rent Setting
Complaints, Compliments and Compensation Policy	Chairs panel terms of reference
Voids Policy	Succession Policy
TRAINING	
Leadership	Complaint Training for Tenant Volunteers
Tenants Panel	
OTHER STUFF	
Anti-Poverty Strategy	Sheltered Housing Handbook update
Presentation of Tenant Charter to full council.	Presentation of Tenant Charter to Departmental Team meeting
Updated Terms of Reference for all groups to include Loddon Homes and Berry Brook Homes	Fire Safety Act Changes
2-day event -11 th National Tenant Panel Conference	Ending Rough Sleeping Plan
Terms of Reference for Tenants Complaints Panel	Complaints Review Template
Monitored reasons behind voids refusals	WBC Neighbourhoods Service standards feedback form (we were shown how the new one would look and asked for feedback)
Neighbourhood and Block Inspection form (We were shown how the new one would look and asked for feedback)	Tenant Volunteer Survey review workshop
Presentation of Tenant Charter at Departmental meeting	Sponsorship of Father Christmas at Holidays Activity and Food (HAF) events
Sponsorship of some further HAF activities at Easter and over the Summer	Housemark workshop
Tenant Involvement code of conduct	Feedback from contractors/project meetings
Asset management report	Tenant charter review and update
Anti-poverty community project	Fire safety in sheltered schemes
Terms of reference review	Action plans (Strategy & ILG)
Topographical surveys (ILG)	Neighbourhood service standards
Housing needs queries	Tenants charter assessing progress

Residents Equality Forum	We have taken part in interviews for recruitment of new permanent and fixed term contracted staff members.
Social impact procurement	Satisfaction survey workshops x 2
Tenants' satisfaction measures (survey questions – for the new Regulatory Standard)	ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) Member of National Tenant Panel including planning of conference.
Consultation on the Housing Restructure	Government Rent Capping Consultation through WBC and ARCH.

Letters that have been proofread across the year

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Permission

Tenants EV letter

Keeping Communal Areas Safe Policy

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Neighbourhood Management Policy

Unity Doors Instruction Booklet

Residents Leaflet

Self-Insured letter

Letter to residents on rubbish in garden

Anti-Poverty Strategy

Clements Close

Complaints, Compliments and Compensation Policy

Annual Rent increase

HRA Digital solutions

Gorse Ride Regeneration

Mylne Square – wildflowers

Polehampton clear corridor

Letter to Residents

Sheltered – outcome of EROSH survey

TLIP letter

WBC Garage letter

Succession Policy

Mutual Exchange Policy

TITLE Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission for England Consultation

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Council on 20 October 2022

WARD (All Wards);

LEAD OFFICER Chief Executive - Susan Parsonage

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is the independent body that is responsible for deciding the boundaries between the wards of Wokingham borough. It is reviewing Wokingham borough to make sure councillors represent about the same number of electors, and that ward arrangements help the council work effectively. It wants to be sure that its proposals reflect community ties and identities.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) as recommended by the Electoral Review Working Group and set out in Appendix 1 and the accompanying maps.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

A new pattern of wards is being developed for Wokingham Borough Council.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body accountable to Parliament. It recommends fair electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities in England. In doing so, it aims to

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors
- Reflect the electoral cycle so that each ward is represented by three councillors
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances

The LGBCE has decided that the number of councillors in Wokingham should be 54, the same as now. It wants to hear what residents and organisations such as the Borough Council think about their local area. A 10 week consultation inviting proposals is running until 7 November 2022.

A cross-party working group of councillors has considered future warding arrangements taking into account the LGBCE criteria and has put forward the submission set out at Appendix 1.

The LGBCE will consider the Council's proposal alongside those received from other bodies and individuals before formulating its draft recommendations which will be published on 7 February 2023. A further period of consultation will take place from 7 February to 17 April 2023 before the LGBCE's final recommendations are published on

27 June 2023. Changes will come into effect from May 2024 when all 54 seats will be elected.

Background

At its meeting of 17 February 2022, Council received an update on the LGBCE review and agreed to set up a cross-party Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG).

On the 24th March, the Council agreed the Phase 1 submission on the number of Councillors as 54 Members. On the 30th August, the LGBCE supported this proposal and launched their consultation on warding arrangements on this basis. The consultation is open to anyone to submit a proposal prior to the deadline on the 7th November 2022.

The ERWG met on the 25th July, 17th August, 12th September and 27th September to discuss the proposal and work through the options.

LGBCE Timeline

Stage/Action	Timescale
Preliminary Period Informal dialogue with local authority. Focus on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data. Commissioner-level involvement in briefing group leaders on issue of Council size. Meetings also held with officers, group leaders, and members.	June 2021 to February 2022
Phase 1 - Council size submission Deadline for submission by Council of proposals on Council size for the Commission to consider.	25 March 2022
Phase 1 - Council size decision LGBCE analyses submissions from local authority and/or political groups on Council size and takes a “minded to” decision on Council size.	25 March to July 2022
Formal start of Review Consultation on future warding arrangements LGBCE publishes its initial conclusions on Council size. General invitation to submit warding proposals based on LGBCE’s conclusions on Council size.	August to November 2022
Development of draft recommendations Analysis of all representations received. LGBCE reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations.	December to January 2023
Consultation on draft recommendations	7 February to 17 April 2023

Publication by LGBCE of draft recommendations and public consultation on them.	
Final recommendations Analysis of all representations received. LGBCE reaches conclusions on its final recommendations and publishes.	27 June 2023
Order made Statutory Instrument approved.	Average likely to be 4 months from being laid i.e. November 2023
New arrangements come into place for elections on	2 May 2024

Analysis of Issues

The Electoral Review Working Group has agreed this submission. The submission outlines a pattern of warding arrangements and maps that reflect the LGBCE criteria of:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters – this means ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
- Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- Promoting effective and convenient local government – this means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, we must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council as shown below.

There are several areas where the ERWG was able to achieve unanimity, and these have been reflected in the submission. Where members of the group had alternative views, we have included these options.

The LGBCE guidance states, “The law states that where a council hold elections in three years out of every four where a third of councillors are elected at each election (‘by thirds’), we should seek to deliver a pattern of three-member wards across a district. This means that every voter will have an equal opportunity to influence the makeup of the council at each election.”

“We will only move away from such a pattern where a three-member ward would significantly undermine our other obligations under the law, namely: to deliver electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and promote effective and convenient local government.”

The ERWG noted that there were a small number of exceptional examples in other Councils where the LGBCE has accepted proposals that include one and two member wards. There was a view amongst some members of the ERWG that the Hurst and Swallowfield areas met these exceptions. Some members of the ERWG felt that both areas were unique communities that shared little affinity with the surrounding areas. However, the majority of members of the ERWG felt that, although the communities were distinct, they had sufficient affinity with the neighbouring town and villages that a three-member ward would meet the criteria and ensure electoral equity. We have provided both options to the LGBCE.

The ERWG has concluded that the submission and the options within it, meet the requirements set by the LGBCE for an effective warding arrangement for the Borough. All the options meet electoral equality requirements with each proposed ward within the +/- 10% threshold. The ERWG believes that the warding arrangements proposed reflect the local communities. As far as possible, the proposals respect existing town and parish boundaries and reflect the development of new communities in the Strategic Development Locations (Shinfield and Arborfield Garrison) in the south of the borough. The warding arrangements will present some challenges for electoral administration where new warding patterns are not co-terminus with parish boundaries and the proposed Parliamentary boundaries (currently under consideration). This will require new polling districts. Officers have confirmed that these can be accommodated (largely through the expansion of existing polling districts).

Ward Naming

The guidance provided by the LGBCE sets out its approach to the naming of wards. It recommends that where wards remain largely unchanged the existing name should be retained unless a good reason is provided to justify the change.

In designing the pattern of wards consideration has been given to ward names that reflect continuity of community identification in respect of the proposed wards as well as other factors such as parish/village names, local community landmarks and smaller area names. The Council has also given consideration to whether existing ward names are still relevant where community identities may have changed over time. The rationale for each name chosen has been set out in Appendix 1.

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)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
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Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
The Electoral Review will result in all-out local borough elections in May 2024 which will be a significant event requiring careful planning and delivery with support from services across the Council.

Public Sector Equality Duty
The outcome of the Review will determine the number of councillors for the Borough as well as both the number of wards and ward boundaries, allowing for the most effective representation of the Borough's diverse communities.

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 are no specific impacts of this decision on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not Applicable

List of Background Papers
Council Submission on Warding Arrangements Detailed Ward Maps Council Submission on Council Size

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DRAFT SUBMISSION

Wokingham Borough Council Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review

Background

On the 30 August 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) launched a public consultation inviting proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards for Wokingham borough.

The LGBCE is minded to recommend that 54 councillors should be elected to the Council in future. The LGBCE is now inviting proposals from the Council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral wards based on that number of councillors.

In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, the LGBCE seeks to:

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors;
- Reflect the electoral cycle so that each ward is represented by three councillors;
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities; and
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances.

Approach

The Council established a cross party working group in February 2022 to respond to the LGBCE's electoral review which includes a Council response to future warding arrangements. The group has sought to establish consensus on the warding arrangements. Where consensus was not possible, we have outlined the different proposals.

The group felt that due to the changes in the borough since the last review in 2002 that the Council's proposals should reflect the communities as they exist today rather than base our submission on the warding arrangements from 2002. The ERWG agreed that the principle of the approach was to keep communities together rather than divide them between wards.

Where possible we have sought to ensure that Town and Parish Council boundaries are reflected in the proposal but where significant development has occurred, we have been unable to achieve this in its entirety.

We have considered the proposed changes in the Parliamentary Boundaries that effect the borough.

Overall proposal

There are maps included in the submission but there is an online version that enables users to zoom in and out to identify the exact boundaries this is found here [Boundary Review \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com). The map references are in alphabetical order.

The borough is bisected east to west by the A329(M) with, historically, its main population along this corridor. With Woodley and Earley towns in the west, Winnersh in the middle and Wokingham in the east of the Borough. The Council has used this to divide the Borough into the North, Central and Southern areas. The other notable geographical boundary is the river Loddon that runs from the south west of the borough until it meets the Thames south west of Wargrave. The Loddon forms the eastern boundary of Shinfield, Earley and Woodley.

The majority of the working group supported the idea of uniform three member wards across the borough. The majority felt that 3 member wards enabled the electorate to render their verdict on the Council performance every 3 out of 4 years and having a one-member ward would create unfairness for those in that ward. The minority view held that there were unique areas of the borough that would only be effectively represented in one member wards. These areas were in Hurst and Swallowfield discussed below.

North

The North of the borough comprises the parishes of Sonning, Charvil, Twyford, Remenham, Wargrave, Ruscombe and Hurst. Twyford is the largest village.

Northern Ward

The working group considered two main options. The communities of Sonning, Charvil, Remenham and Wargrave are rural communities located on the banks of the river Thames. The group felt that although each of these communities were different that they held shared interests and were able to have a shared identity. All but Sonning and Charvil are part of the green belt. This ward we have labelled "Northern" ward. We did discuss names and were conscious of the need not to have the same ward names as neighbouring authorities so ruled out Thames (Reading) and Riverside (RBWM). We have labelled this ward "Northern" with the expectation that the community will identify a suitable name. Map reference 9.

Twyford and Hurst

Twyford is the largest village in the north and represents a hub for services to all the rural communities. The group was divided on the parish of Hurst. Hurst is a rural area being quite sparsely populated with the village itself being a focus of the community. The challenge for the working group was how to incorporate this into the warding arrangement. The current arrangement is that a part of Twyford (polling district TBM) is included within the boundaries of the Hurst ward to support a one-member ward. The working group agreed that this polling district should form part of a future Twyford ward.

A ward that combined Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst would enable a three-member ward. This was the majority view of the working group who felt that Ruscombe, although a separate parish, looked to Twyford and represented a good fit. Ruscombe is designated as part of Twyford for planning and highways purposes. There are no shops, schools or public buildings in Ruscombe. Community groups span both i.e. Twyford and Ruscombe share a Community Association and Horticultural Society. The majority felt that amalgamating the three parishes enabled the community links to be respected. Map reference 14a

A proposal supported by the minority of the working group was to combine Ruscombe and Hurst to form a single member ward and for Twyford to be a two-member ward. The rural nature of the wards and that commonality of the issues shared between the areas of Ruscombe, and Hurst were felt to be significant. The majority of the land is owned by one estate that straddles the two parishes. Map reference 14b and 14c

The working group were agreed on the external boundary of the ward(s) and so this did not have a wider impact on the overall submission.

Central

The central area comprises Woodley, Earley, Winnersh, and Wokingham.

The working group could not reach consensus on the Whitegates area of Earley Town Council. A view majority was that the area was a part of Earley Town Council and that residents should be part of the Earley wards. Another minority felt that the physical links with Earley were weak, and residents looked to Woodley.

The working group could not reach consensus on the current Shinfield North ward. A view majority was that the area was a part Shinfield Parish Council, and the community did not consider themselves part of Earley. A minority view felt that the physical barrier of the M4 with only pedestrian access to the rest of Shinfield mean that this area should be considered part of Earley.

Notwithstanding the disagreements above Woodley and Earley would both support 3 three member wards. The majority view would have the advantage of being wholly within the Town Council boundaries.

Both Woodley and Earley have a strong sense of community with district centres, shared community facilities (including libraries, doctors and dental surgeries), and schools. The boundaries within these communities are therefore less well defined.

Earley

There was unanimous agreement on the proposed warding pattern for Earley. Map References 7, 12 and 16.

Woodley

Woodley has two proposals. The proposed warding arrangement supported by the majority of the working group is based on the major roads in the ward and has the advantage of keeping the airfield development in a single ward. Map Reference 2a, 8a and 13a. The warding arrangements supported by minority view is based on the minimum amount of change to the existing polling districts in town. Map Reference 2b, 8b and 13b.

Winnersh.

The working group agreed that the current wards of Winnersh, remained an accurate reflection of the community and would be unchanged. Map Reference 17.

Wokingham

The working group agreed that the current wards of Evendons and Emmbrook remained accurate reflections of the communities and would be unchanged. Map Reference 3 and 4.

The Wescott-Norreys' boundary was difficult to resolve. The working group felt that the boundary of Wescott should be extended into the new development in Keep Hatch as there was affinity with the new development across the road and the Montague Park Primary School acted as a focal point for this new community. This would be moved from the Norreys ward.

This left the Wescott ward underrepresented. The working group considered several options but felt that the best option was to include the Beanoak Estate, south of the Binfield Road into Wescott ward. This then required the adjustment of the boundary in the town centre: moving the Norreys' boundary from Rose Street to Peach Street. Map Reference 15.

This had the result of all four Wokingham wards being coterminous with the boundaries of the town council.

South

The South comprises Shinfield, Swallowfield, Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead and Wokingham Without parishes.

The south of the borough presents the largest challenge for the warding arrangements of the Borough. This area has seen significant develop in two Strategic Development Locations (SDL's) since the last review. These have been based in Shinfield to the west and Arborfield Garrison in the central area. This has resulted in significant population centres in these areas, plus Finchampstead and Barkham, with sparsely populated areas across the rest of the south.

Wokingham Without

The working group agreed that Wokingham Without should remain with its current boundaries as this provides a good fit for the existing community. The development in the north of the ward would be limited by 2028 and not have a major effect on the

character of the ward. Although the group noted plans for future development in this area. The working group discussed the possibility of the inclusion of the triangle created by Hollybush Ride and Heath Ride but felt that was unnecessary given the known development in the ward prior to 2028. Map Reference 18.

Finchampstead

The group agreed that Finchampstead should be represented by a single ward. In order to reduce the size of this ward the area around the Arborfield Garrison and Eversley was ceded to the South ward to the west to give sufficient population to comprise a three-member ward. Map Reference 5.

Arborfield with Barkham

The group agreed that the SDL at Arborfield Garrison should be represented in a single ward. This development currently sits at the meeting point of four separate parishes. It was therefore not possible to represent the community at Arborfield Garrison without cutting across parish boundaries. The Council has worked hard to develop a sense of community in this development, and this has been effective. The proposal is therefore to combine this with the Arborfield and Barkham parishes areas to form a single ward. Map Reference 1.

Shinfield

As noted above in the discussion about Earley the working group could not reach agreement on location of Shinfield North. The minority view was that it should form part of a ward with the Shinfield element of the current Shinfield South element.

Notwithstanding the disagreement around the location of Shinfield South the group were faced with the challenge of splitting the current ward of Shinfield South as the SDL in that area would result in poor electoral equality. This was the case even if Shinfield North was removed to form part of the Earley wards. The majority view was that the centre of Shinfield would form a three-member ward Map Reference 10.

Southern Ward

The majority view was that the Ryeish Green, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Hyde End Farm area would form part of a wider Southern ward incorporating Grazeley, Swallowfield, Farley Hill and Eversley. These are all small rural communities with their own characters and sense of community. However, the majority of the working group felt that they had a common character. Map Reference 11a.

There was a minority view that Swallowfield was a unique community and should be represented by a single member ward. Map Reference 11b. The remaining area around Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross represented by a two member ward. Map Reference 11c

Map Ref	Ward Name	Description	Justification	Agreement
Central				
3	Emmbrook Ward (Wokingham)	The northern boundary is provided by the A329(m) and follows the Town Council boundary. The western boundary follows Old Forest Road and Simons Lane to the green space of Bob's Copse. The southern boundary cuts through the town centre. The eastern boundary follows the Twyford road and Cantley Park green space. The Ward is based on Community focused on the Emmbrook Primary and Secondary Schools and the Northern part of Woosehill.	The ward is based on the existing ward boundary and comprises a stable community. The ward is entirely within the Wokingham Town Council area.	Yes
4	Eventons Ward Wokingham	The ward is in the South West element of Wokingham. In the east it is bounded by Finchampstead Road, and the southern boundary is the edge of Wokingham town. The northern and western boundary follow roads that divide the ward from Emmbrook ward.	The ward is unchanged and is entirely within the boundaries of the Wokingham Town Council. The community is centred on the local primary school.	Yes
6	Norreys Ward (Wokingham)	The ward is in the North East of the town of Wokingham. In the north it is bounded by the A329m. The west is bounded by Milton/Twyford Road and to the South by London Road as far as the Binfield Road incorporating the Bean Oak Estate and the new development in Keep Hatch. This development has more in common with Wescott ward.	The ward is largely unchanged except in the eastern boundary south of the Binfield Road and an adjustment in the town centre. The ward is entirely within the Wokingham Town Boundaries. The community is well established and focused on the All Saints and Keep Hatch Schools.	Yes
15	Wescott Ward (Wokingham)	In the east the ward is bounded in the North by the London Road and the railway line in the South. It then incorporates Chapel Green and follows the railway line south until it reaches the edge of the Gorrick plantation and comes back north along the Finchampstead Road. The new element of the ward is in the far east of the ward where it follows the new development south of	The ward is entirely within the boundary of Wokingham Town. The ward is largely unchanged except for the addition of its North-East Boundary south of Binfield Road and moving the boundary from Rose Street to Peach Street in the town centre. The	Yes

		the M4 to Keep Hatch nature reserve and along the Binfield Road to the junction with London Road.	keep hatch area is a new development that mirrors the development on Montague Park and residents look to the primary school there for their sense of community. The Bean Oak estate has an established community and should be kept together.	
17	Winnersh Ward	The ward is bounded in the North by the A329m and in the West along the river Loddon. The boundary to the south incorporates Sindlesham and is bounded to the east by Camellia Way.	The ward is un-changed and the boundary of the ward is completely coterminous with the boundaries of the parish council. There are strong community links through the three primary schools.	Yes
	Woodley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Woodley comprises three wards (named the same with different boundaries along major roads. Loddon Bridge Road, Woodlands and Headley Road). 2) Woodley comprises three wards. All of the town council is covered by these three wards. The divisions are based on the exiting ward boundaries. 		No
8a	North Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley in the north (railway line that separates it from Sonning parish) and in the east and west. The southern boundary of the ward runs along Woodlands Avenue around the town centre and along Headley Road and Headley Road East before following Tippings lane and following the course of a stream to the edge of the town boundary.	The ward forms the Northern part of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
8b	North Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley in the north (railway line that separates it from Sonning parish) and east. The southern boundary runs along Headley Road and Spitfire way. In the west the boundary runs along Crockhamwell Road and Warren Road.	The ward forms the Northern part of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing coronation ward so entails moving fewer residents into new wards.	Minority

13a	West Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the east along the river Loddon and the A329(M) in the south. The boundary in the west is formed by Loddon Bridge Road until it meets Headley Road East before following Tippings lane and following the course of a stream to the edge of the town boundary.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
13b	West Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the north (railway line), west and south (railway line). The eastern boundary largely follows the boundary of the internal parish divisions.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing Loddon ward so entails moving residents into new wards.	Minority
2a	East Woodley	The wards follow the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the South (Railway Line and A329(m) and west. In the east the boundary is formed by Loddon Bridge Road and the northern boundary is formed by Woodlands Avenue and Headley Road.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
2b	East Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the north, east (river Loddon) and south (A329m). The western boundary follows Loddon Bridge Road, the edge of the town centre and Headley Road.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing South Lake ward so entails moving fewer residents into new wards.	Minority
	Earley	Earley comprises three wards. All the town council is covered by these three wards	Rushey Way provides a convenient east to west split across the town. Laurel Park is a significant green space that separates houses. The university is a distinct area. The remaining divisions are along roads.	Yes
7	North Earley	The northern spur of the ward follows the Parish/Borough boundaries, the rest of the ward follows main roads Mill Lane, Beech Lane, Wilderness Road and green space Laurel Park	The ward forms the North of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes

16	West Earley	The ward runs along Borough Boundaries in the north and east and the parish boundary in the remainder of the east. The southern boundary is formed by a main road Rushey Way that forms a boundary that separates the two communities. The west boundary is separated by Laurel Park and Wilderness Road.	The ward forms the West of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes
12	South East Earley	The ward runs along the southern boundary of the town boundary along the main Lower Earley Way Road. The boundary to the east is also the town boundary and follows the course of the river Loddon. The northern boundary is that formed by the Wokingham Road and Rushey Way. The ward is separated from North Earley by Mill Lane road.	The ward forms the southeast of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes
North				
14a	Twyford and Hurst	This ward combines all of Twyford Parish Council with Ruscombe to the east and Hurst to the South.	The ward is largely focused on Twyford. With community facilities in the village, shops and library and cross rail. The current Hurst ward incorporates part of Twyford Parish.	Majority
14b	Twyford	This ward combines all of Twyford Parish Council and would comprise a two member ward.	The ward comprises the whole of Twyford Parish	Minority
14c	Hurst and Ruscombe	This ward comprises the rural wards of Hurst and Ruscombe to form a single member ward.	The ward comprises Hurst and Ruscombe. There is closer affinity with rural Hurst and the village of Twyford	Minority
9	Northern	This ward combines the existing parishes of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning.	The current Sonning Ward includes part of Woodley and we have taken this opportunity to reflect the Town boundaries in the belief that residents identify with Woodley and have stronger links to this part of the borough. The communities	Yes

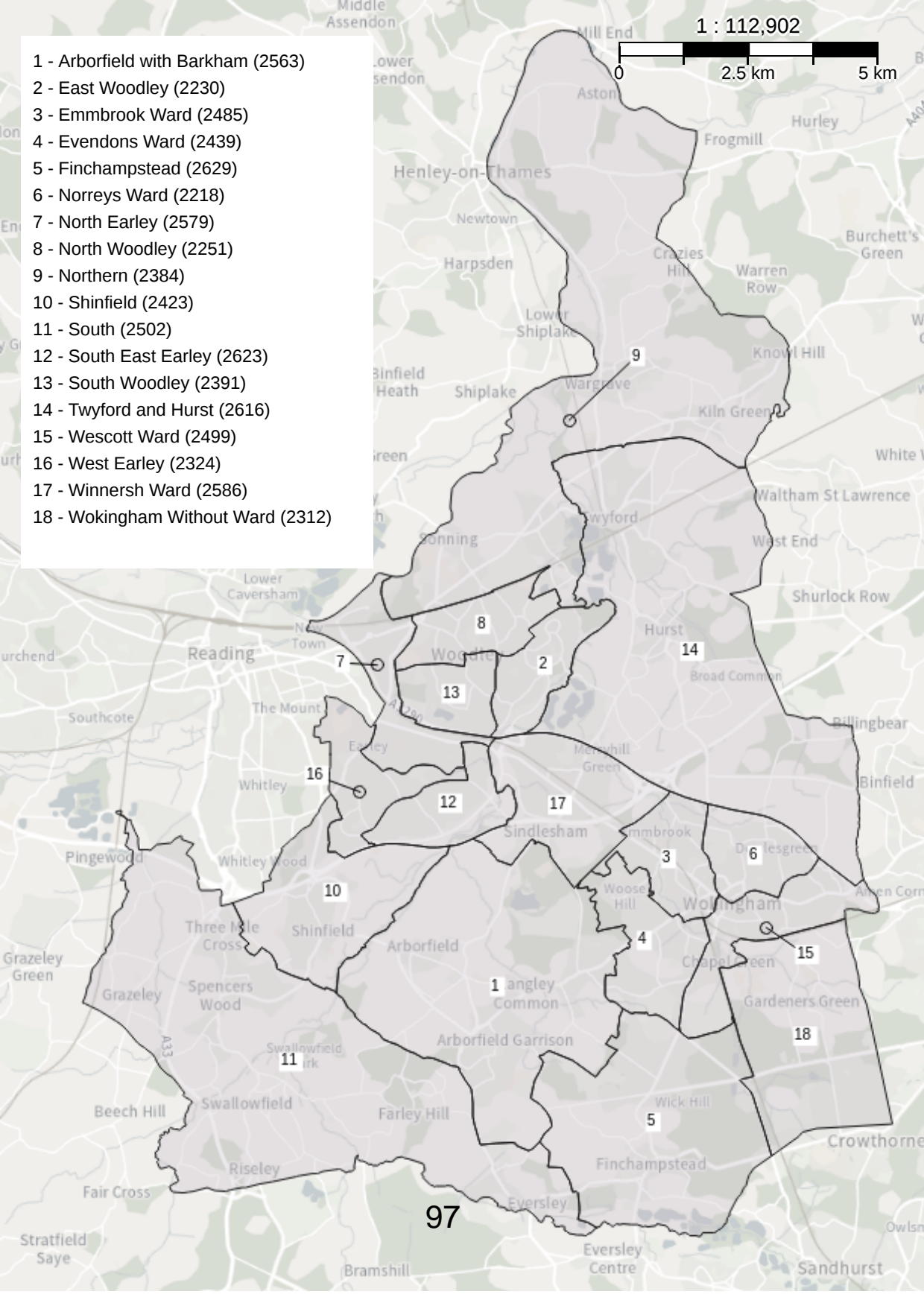
			represented by this ward have distinct separate identities but would view themselves as distinct from both Woodley and Twyford.	
South				
10	Shinfield	This ward combines both the Shinfield North and the settlements of Shinfield village centre. The new eastern boundary is formed by the break in the settlement between Shinfield and Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green. Following the Hyde End Lane and before following the field boundaries to the river Loddon.	The existing Shinfield South ward is too large. The proposal is to incorporate Shinfield North and Shinfield village and move the significant populations in Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood into a new South ward.	Yes
18	Wokingham Without	This ward is bounded in the west and south by the Borough boundary. To the east the ward is bounded by Lower Wokingham Road and the railway line as far as Luckley Road. The northern boundary is formed by the railway line.	The ward is un-changed and the boundary of the ward includes the whole of the parish council. There are strong community links focused on the Pinewood Community Centre.	Yes
5	Finchampstead	This ward combines Finchampstead North and South wards and the North, East and Southern boundaries are unchanged. In the west the area in the North becomes part of the Garrison, in the South the area around Eversley is moved to the Southern ward.	Finchampstead has a strong sense of community. Due to major development in the Garrison area this area is over-represented and forms a different community to the rest of Finchampstead. This includes California Country Park which is central to the identity of Finchampstead.	Yes
1	Arborfield and Barkham	The ward is bounded to the north by Winnersh and Wokingham parish and town councils respectively. The east boundary of the ward is the river Loddon. The southern boundary follows the	This ward combines the established communities of Barkham, Arborfield and Arborfield Cross with the new Arborfield development at the Garrison. All of	Yes

		Arborfield parish boundary until it meets Eversley Road where it encircles the new development at the Garrison.	Barkham and Arborfield parish councils are included in the ward.	
11a	South	This ward is bounded in the south and west by the borough boundaries. To the east the ward is bounded by the break in the settlement between Eversley and Finchampstead. The northern boundary follows the boundary with Arborfield Parish except where it skirts around the new Garrison development.	This ward is largely rural in nature. The communities are separate; Three Mile Cross, Ryeish Green, Grazeley, Swallowfield, Riseley, Farley Hill and Eversley each having its own identify but they share a commonality of concerns.	Majority
11b	Grazeley Swallowfield and Eversley	This ward is bounded in the south and west by the borough boundaries. To the east the ward is bounded by the break in the settlement between Eversley and Finchampstead. This ward contains the entire parish of Swallowfield and incorporates Eversley in the South. The northern boundary follows the parish boundary along the Loddon and Back Lane as far as Beech Hill Road where it follows Whitehouse Lane as far as the A33 where it follows this major road to the Borough boundary. This ward constitutes a single member ward.	The South ward as proposed under option a is too large to be represented by three councillors. The residents of Swallowfield have little affinity with Spencers Wood/ Three Mile Cross.	Minority
11c	Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross	This ward is bounded to the South by the river Loddon and the Shinfield Parish boundary to Beech Hill Road where it follows Whitehouse Lane as far as the A33 where it follows this major road to the Borough boundary. The boundary in the east is determined by the break in the settlement between Shinfield village. This ward comprises a two-member ward	The South ward as proposed under option a is too large for three councillors to be able to service. The residents of Swallowfield have little affinity with Spencers Wood/ Three Mile Cross.	Minority

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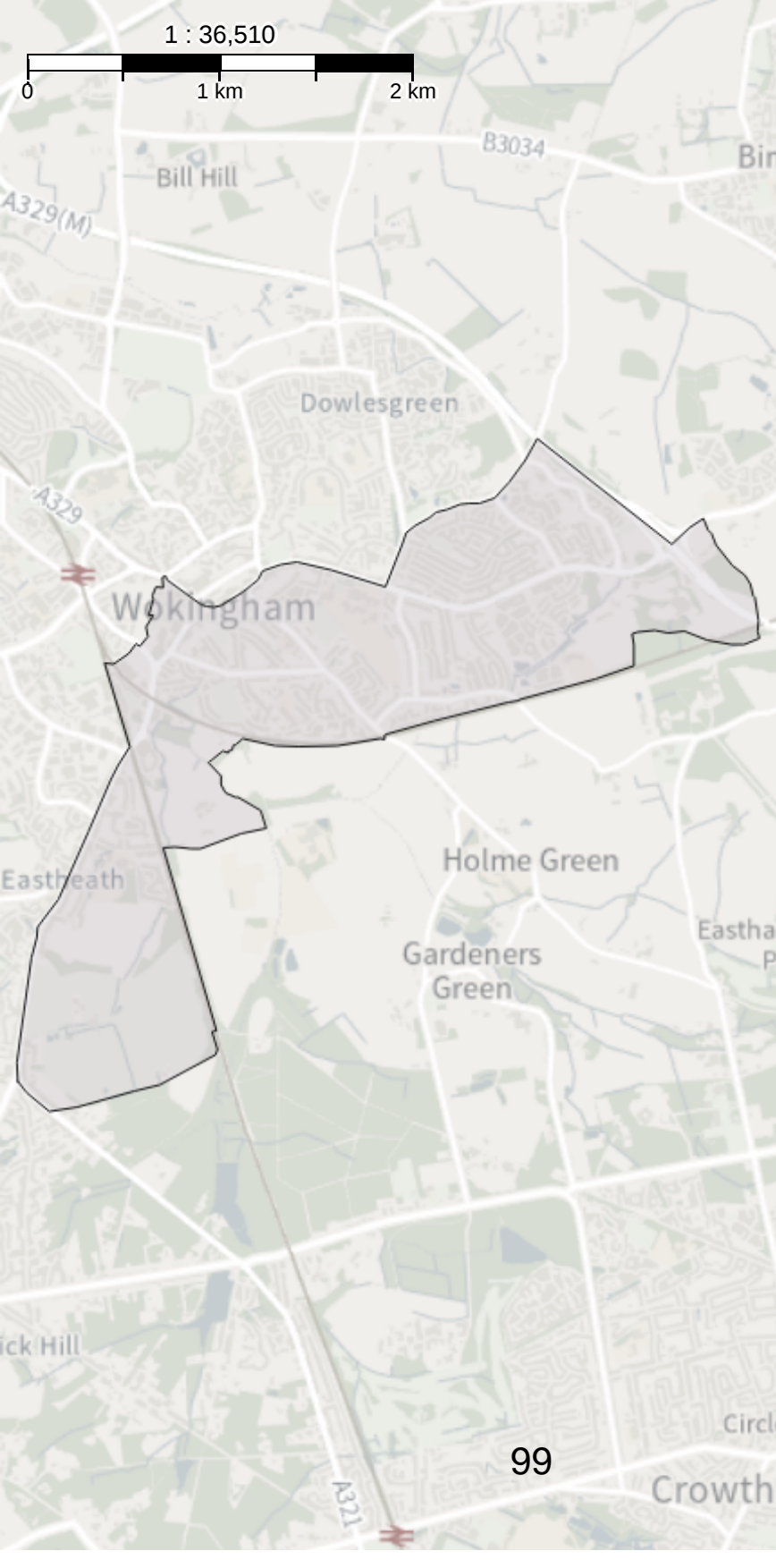
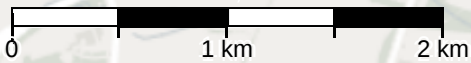


- 1 - Arborfield with Barkham (2563)
- 2 - East Woodley (2230)
- 3 - Emmbrook Ward (2485)
- 4 - Evendons Ward (2439)
- 5 - Finchampstead (2629)
- 6 - Norreys Ward (2218)
- 7 - North Earley (2579)
- 8 - North Woodley (2251)
- 9 - Northern (2384)
- 10 - Shinfield (2423)
- 11 - South (2502)
- 12 - South East Earley (2623)
- 13 - South Woodley (2391)
- 14 - Twyford and Hurst (2616)
- 15 - Wescott Ward (2499)
- 16 - West Earley (2324)
- 17 - Winnersh Ward (2586)
- 18 - Wokingham Without Ward (2312)



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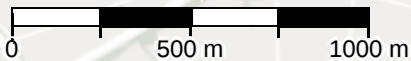


Map Reference 16

Wescott Ward

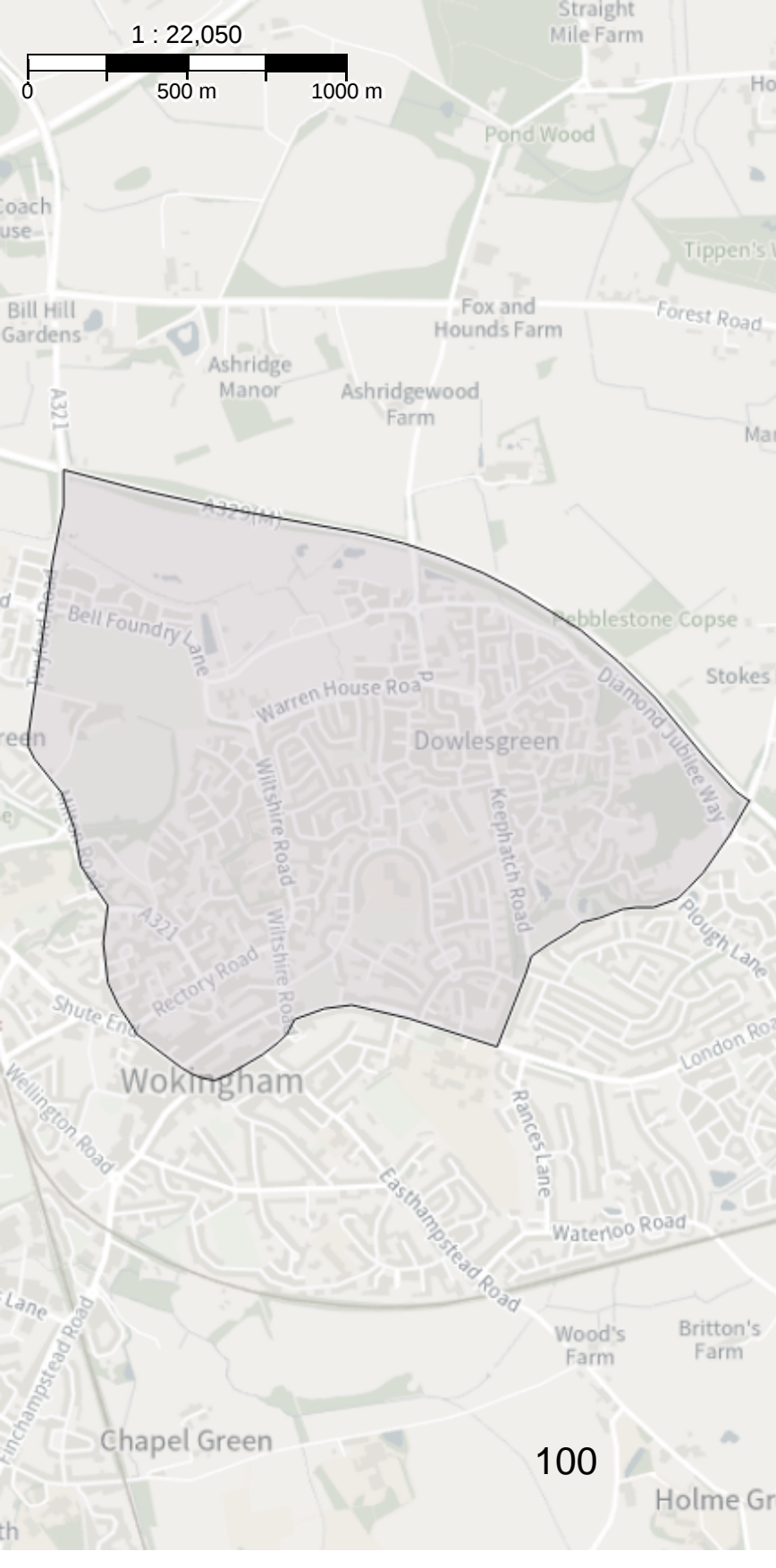
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Property count:	4353
Total Electorate:	7497
Clr electorate:	2499
Electorate Status:	Balanced
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Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

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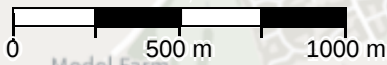


Map Reference 6
Norreys Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4132
Total Electorate:	6654
Clr electorate:	2218
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

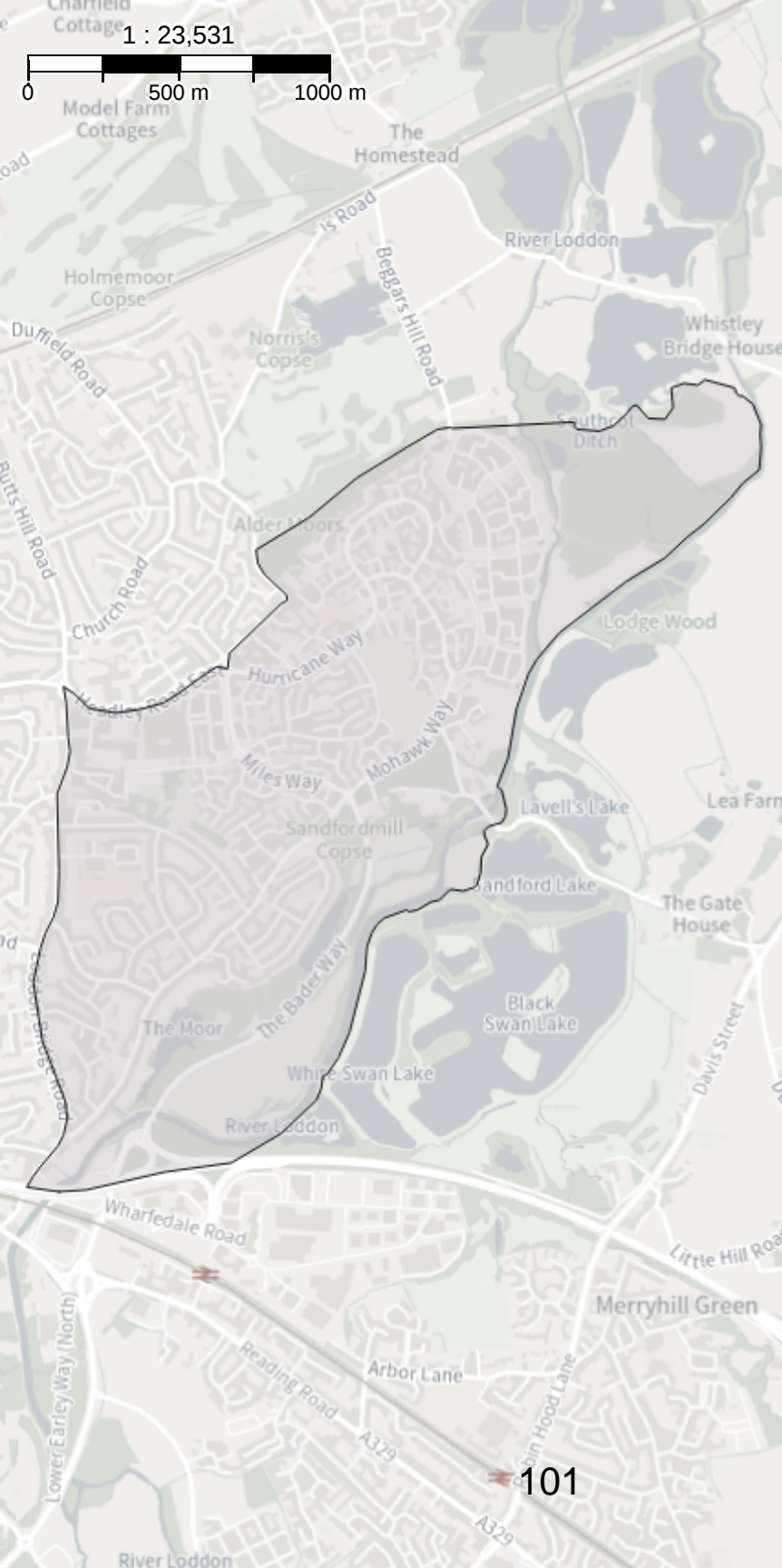


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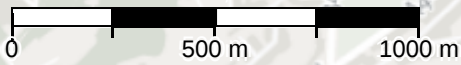


Map Reference 2a East Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3808
Total Electorate:	6690
CLr electorate:	2230
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

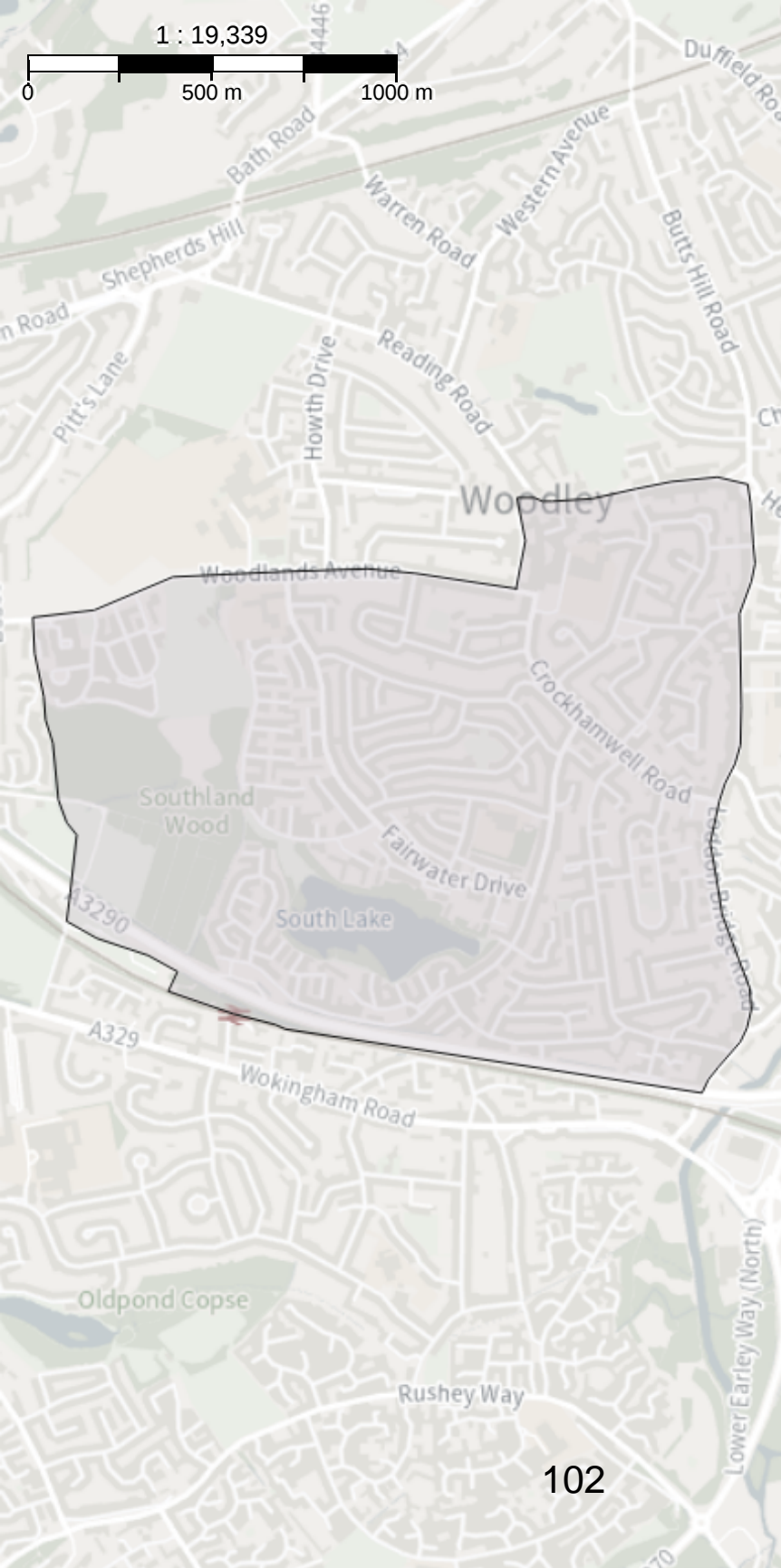


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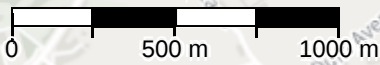


Map Reference 13a
South Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4153
Total Electorate:	7173
ClIr electorate:	2391
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



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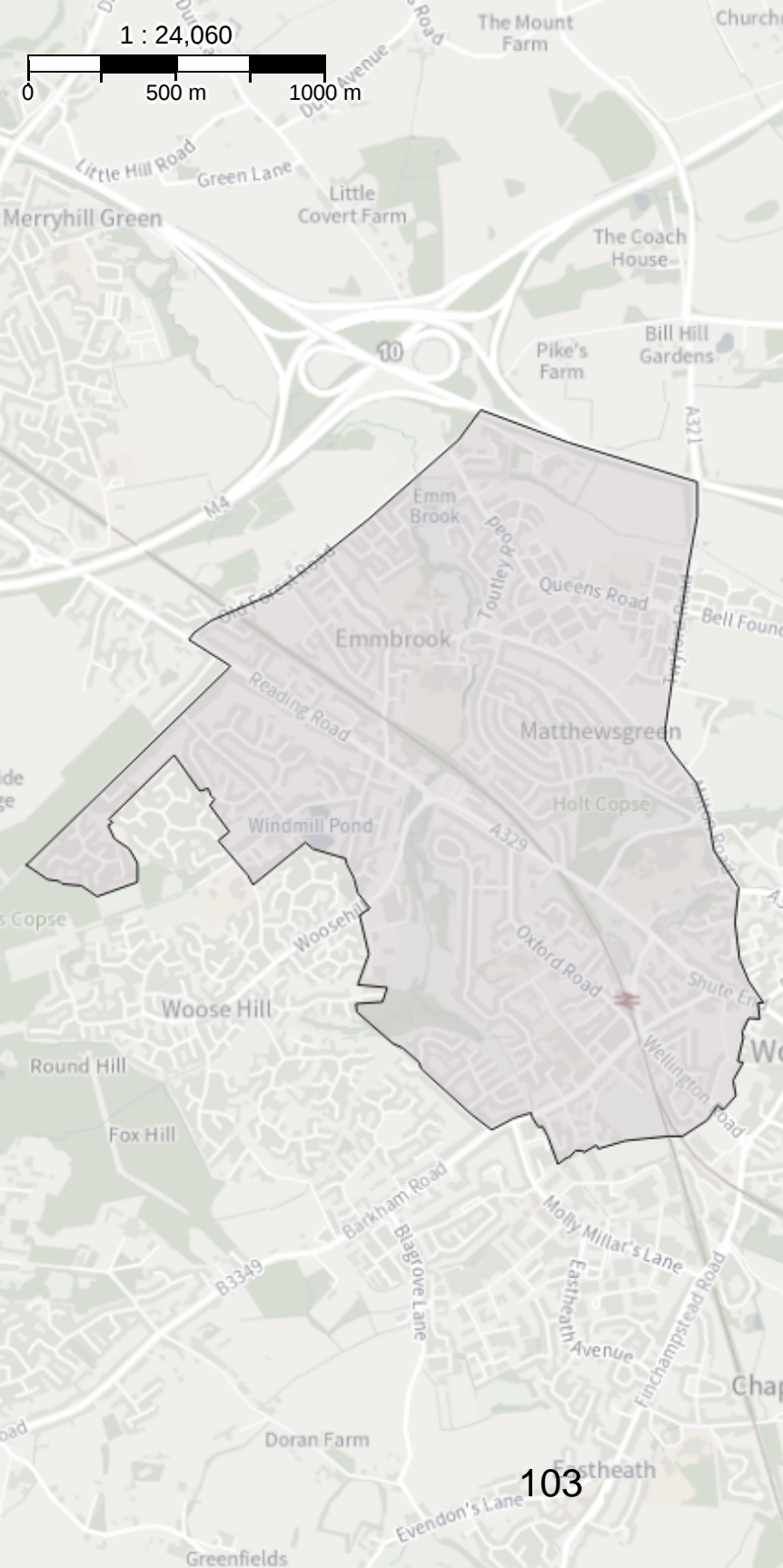


WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Map Reference 3

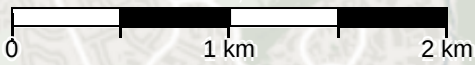
Emmbrook Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4559
Total Electorate:	7455
CLr electorate:	2485
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



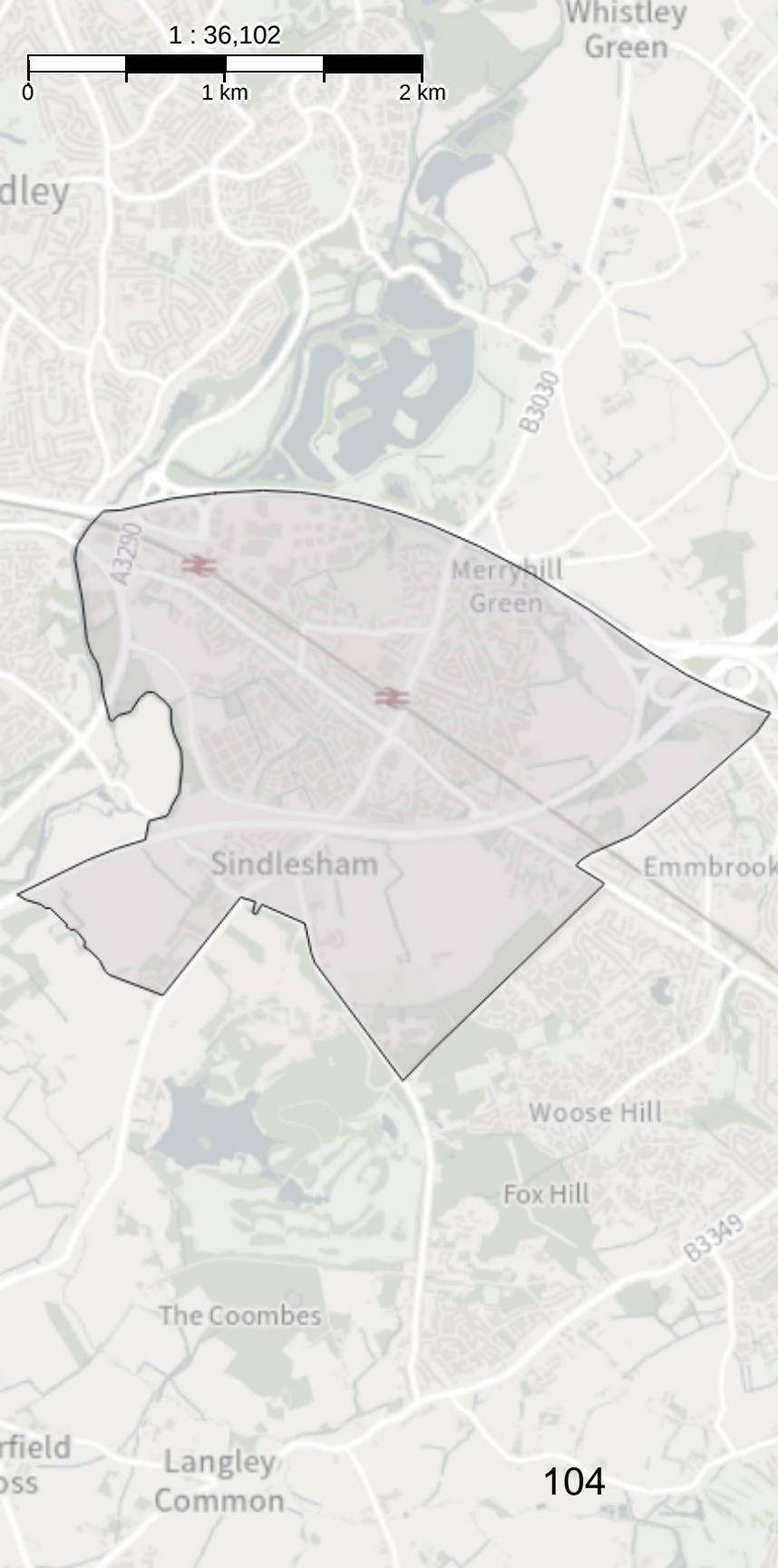
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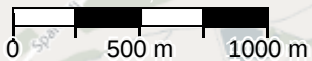


Map Reference 17
Winnersh Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4222
Total Electorate:	7758
CLr electorate:	2586
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

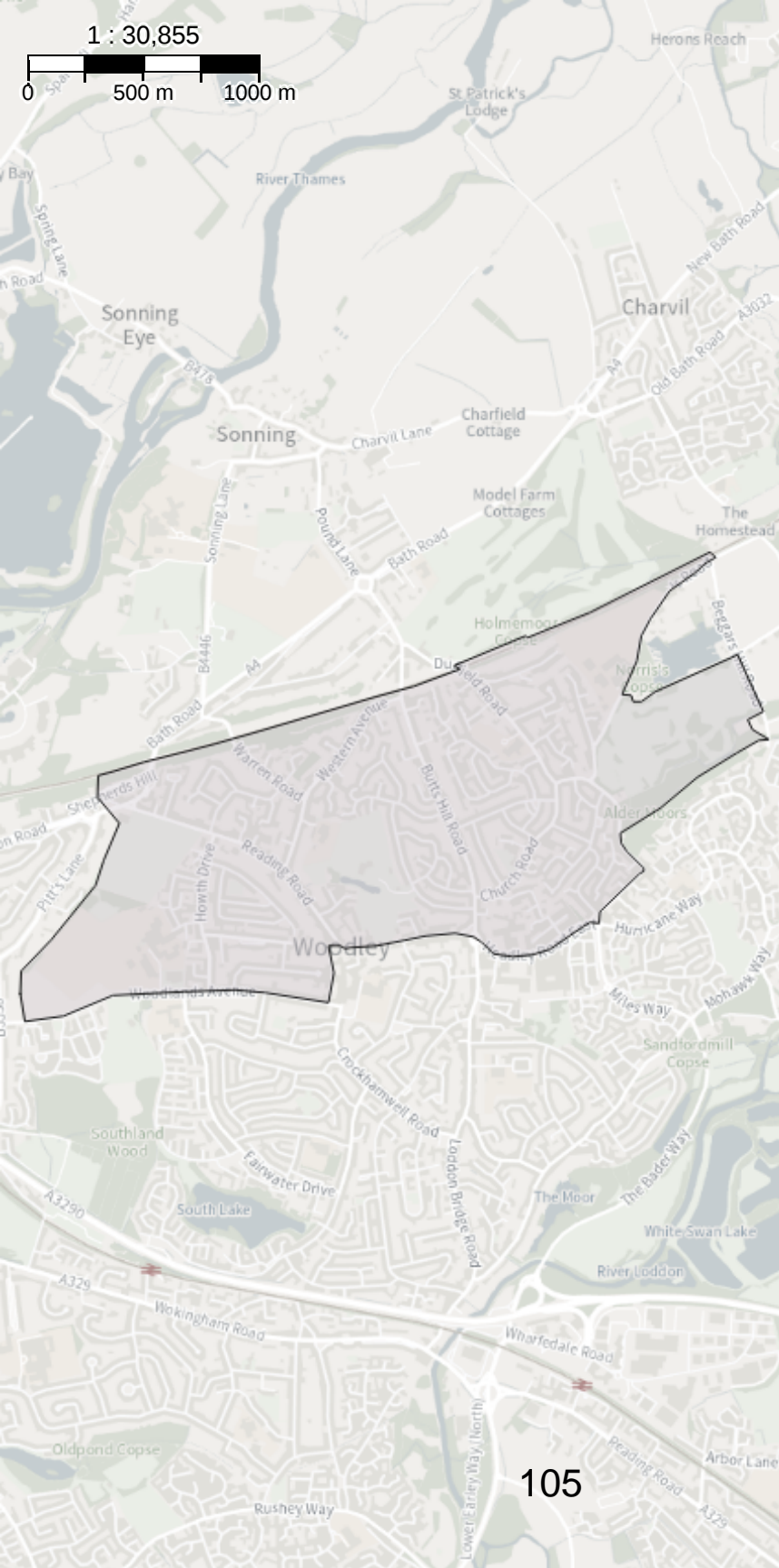


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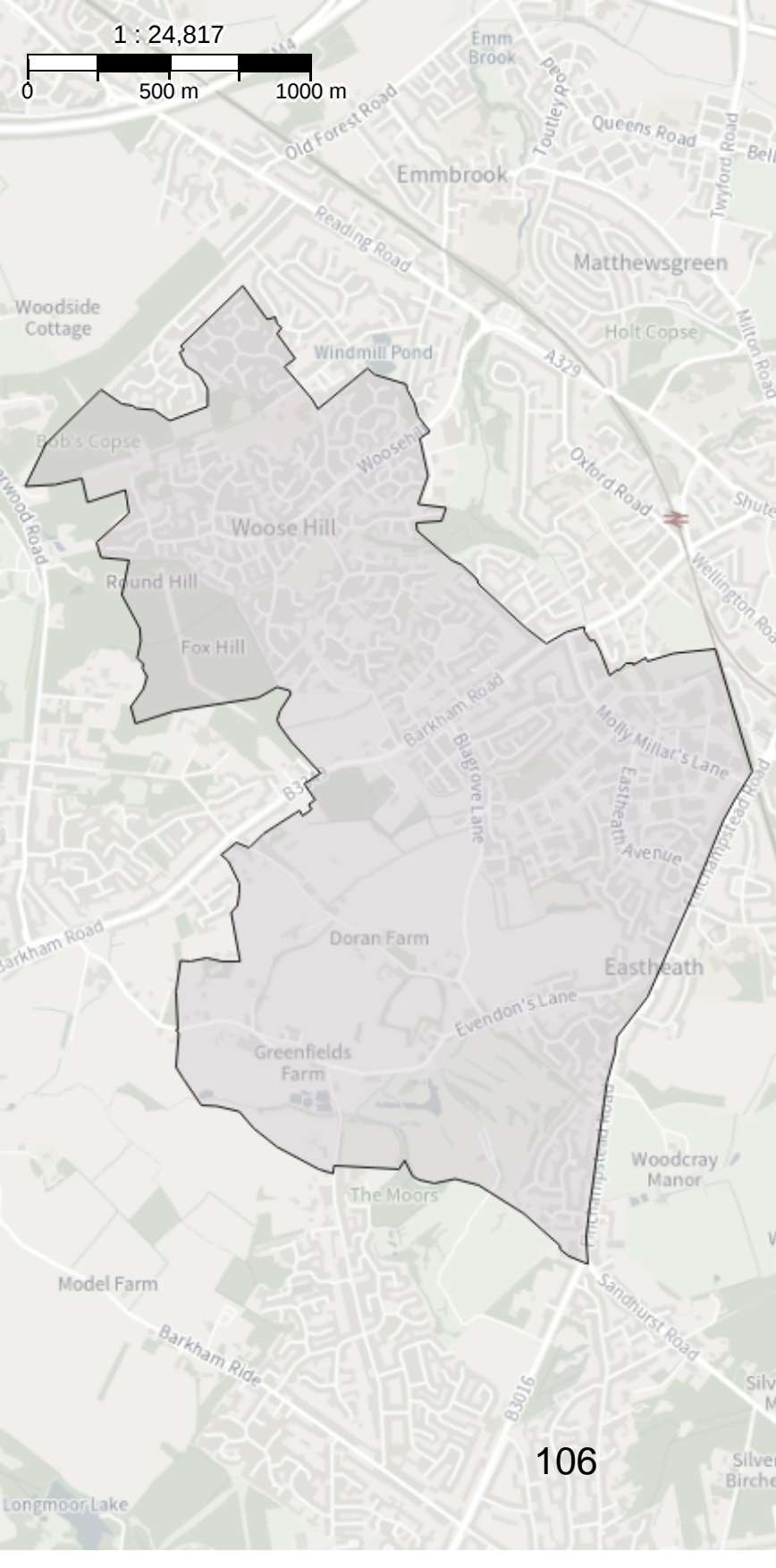
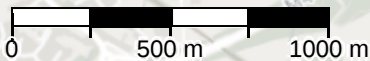
Map Reference 8a
North Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3697
Total Electorate:	6753
CLr electorate:	2251
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



105

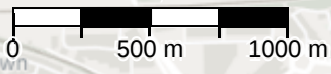
1 : 24,817



Map Reference 4 Evendons Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3939
Total Electorate:	7317
CLr electorate:	2439
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

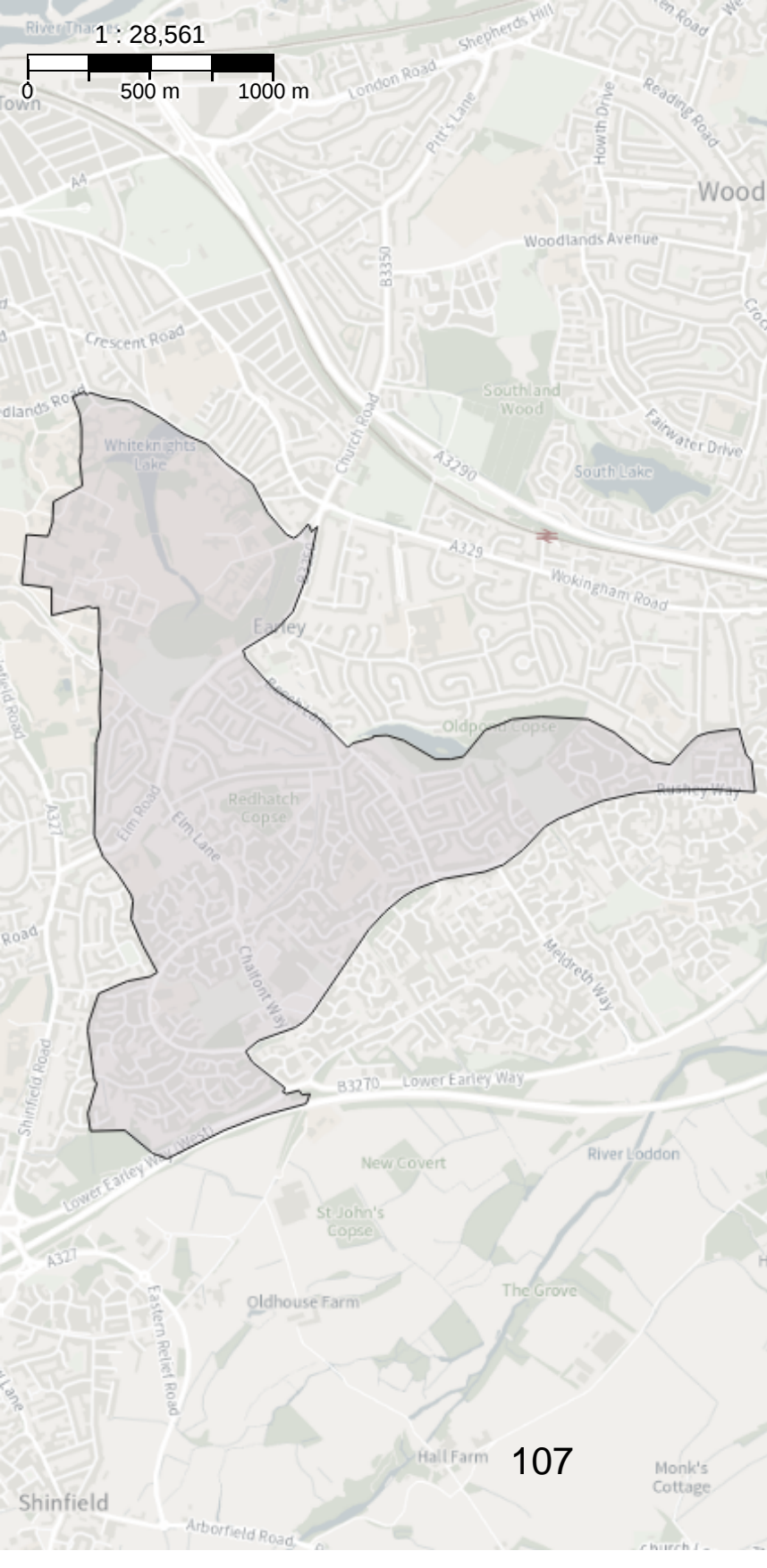
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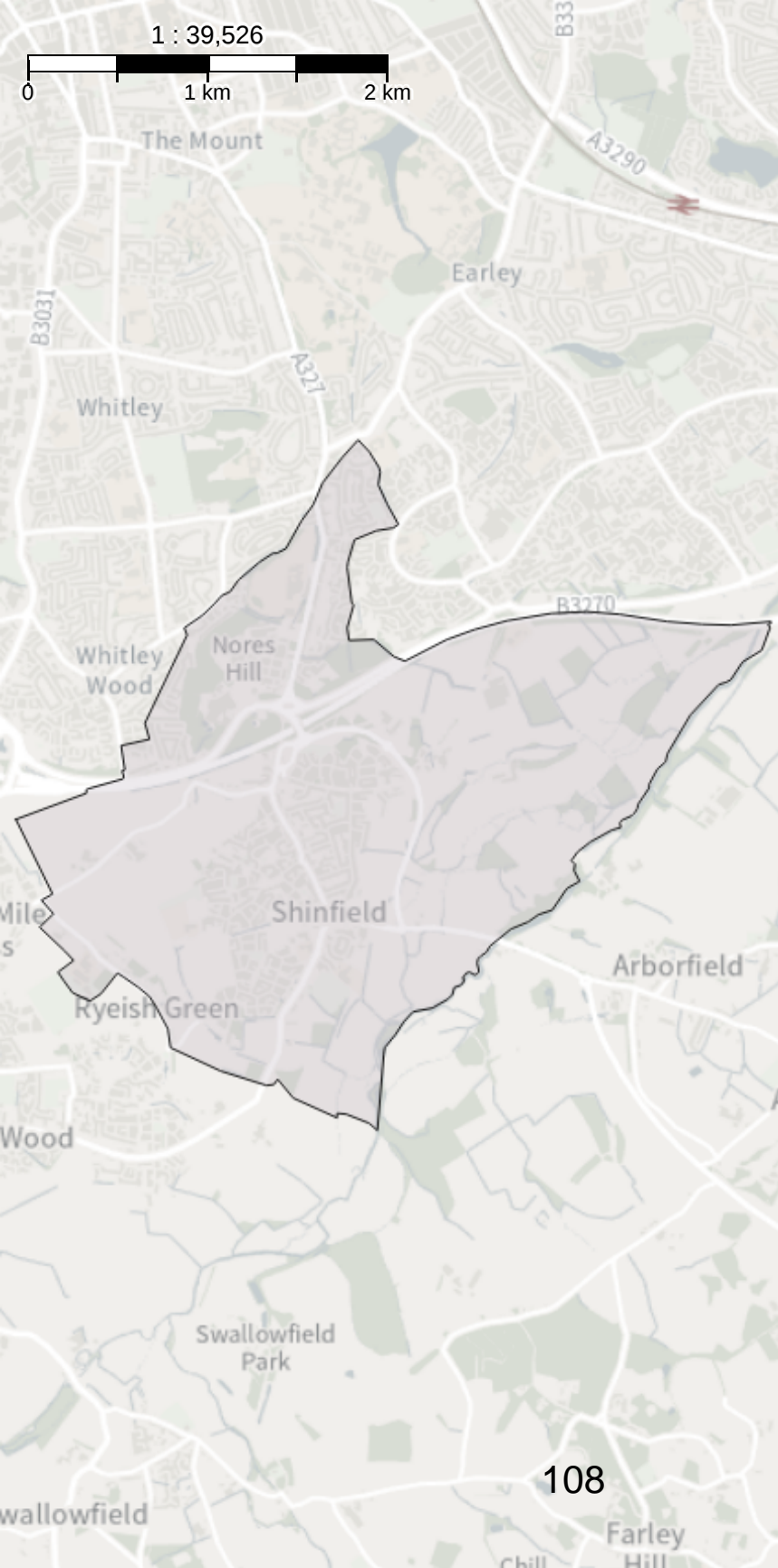
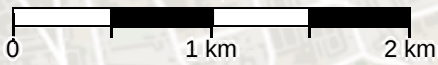
Map Reference 16

West Earley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4057
Total Electorate:	6972
CLr electorate:	2324
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



1 : 39,526

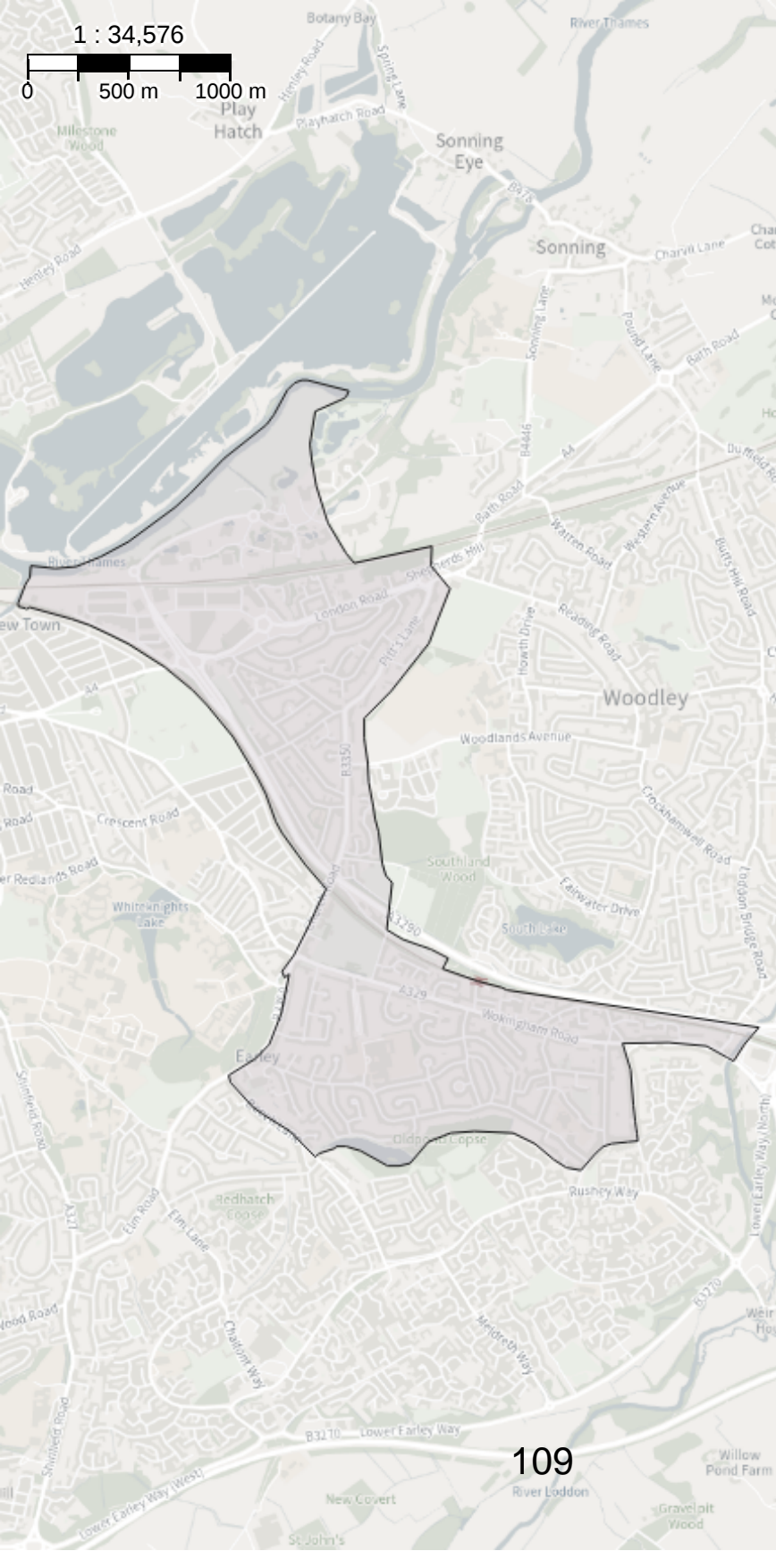
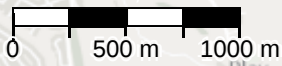


Map Reference 10

Shinfield

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3897
Total Electorate:	7269
Clr electorate:	2423
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

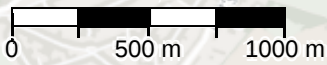
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Map Reference 7
North Earley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3883
Total Electorate:	7737
CLr electorate:	2579
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

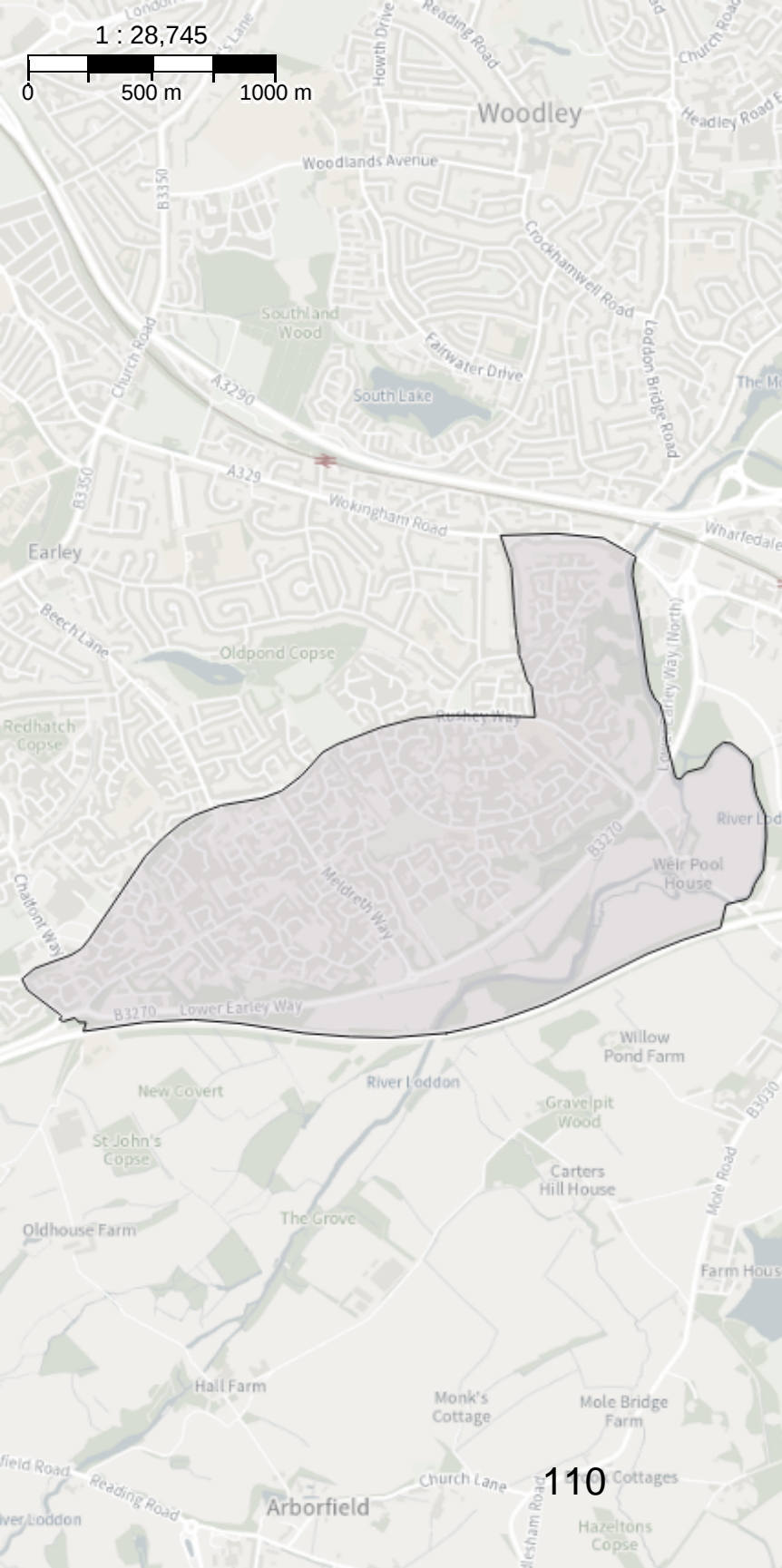
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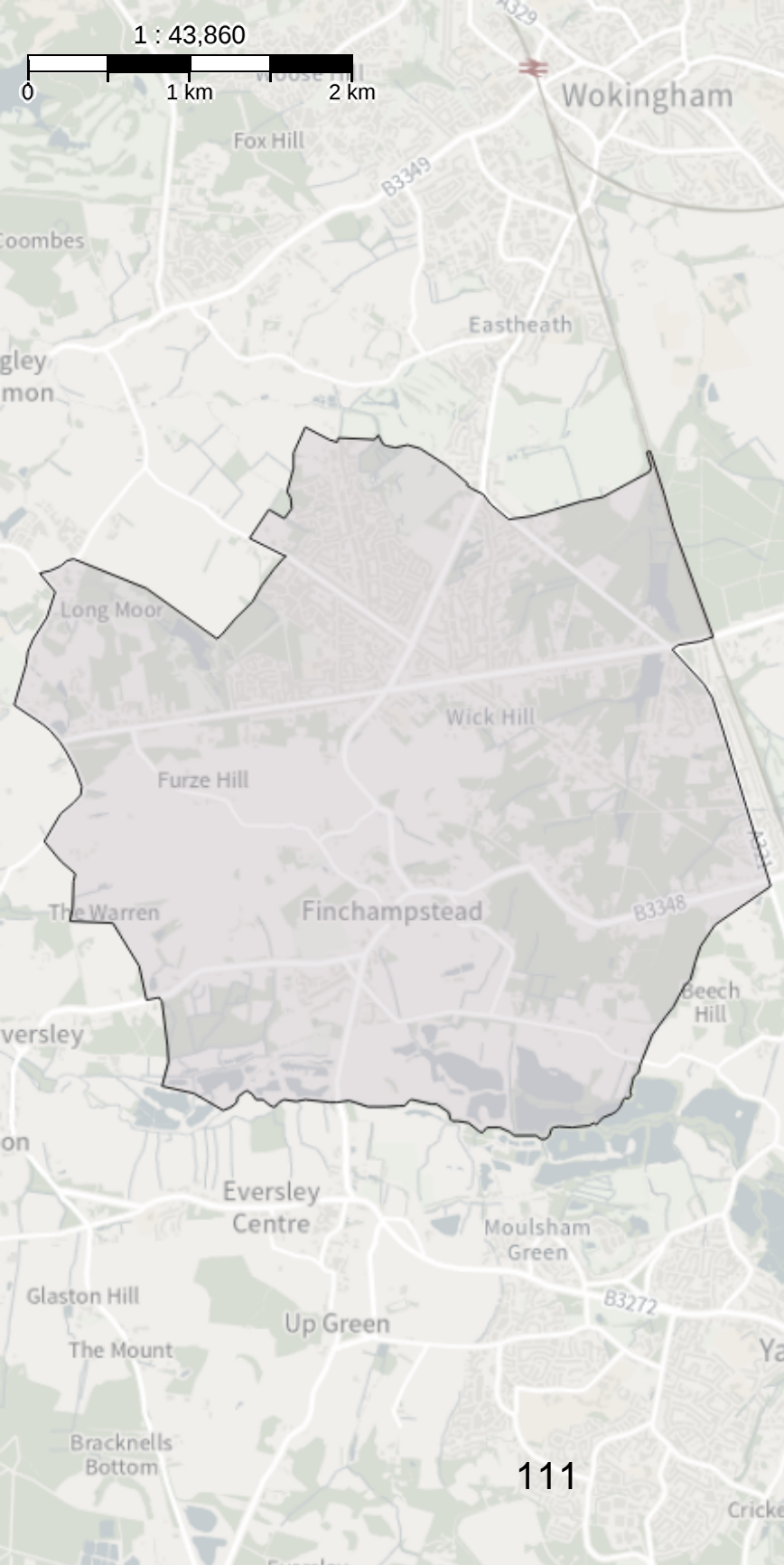
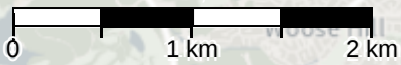
Map Reference 12

South East Earley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4391
Total Electorate:	7869
Clr electorate:	2623
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



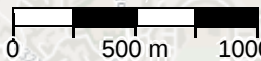
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Finchampstead

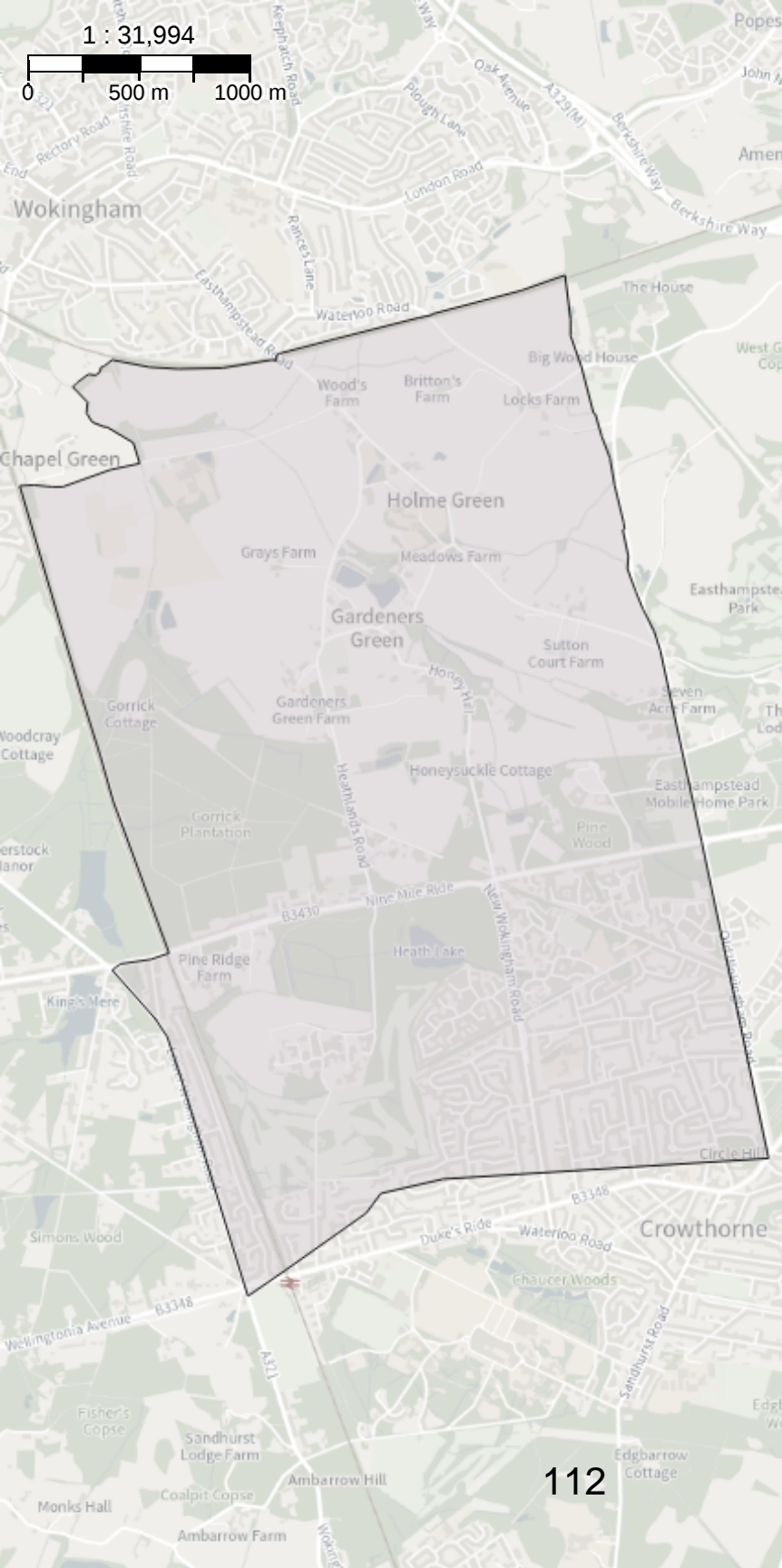
Councillors:	3
Property count:	4262
Total Electorate:	7887
CLr electorate:	2629
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

1 : 31,994

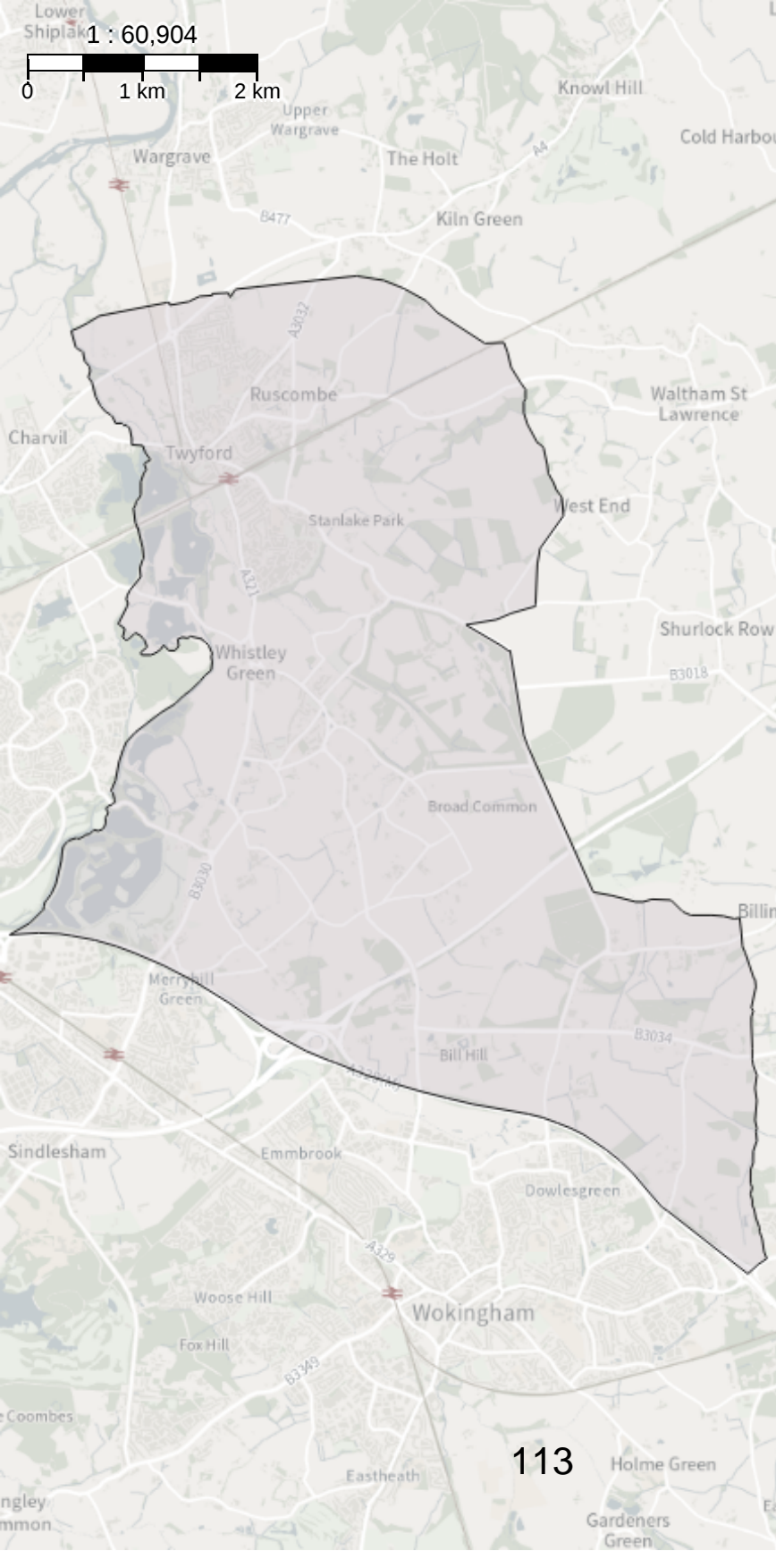
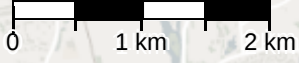


Wokingham Without Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3329
Total Electorate:	6936
Clr electorate:	2312
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45



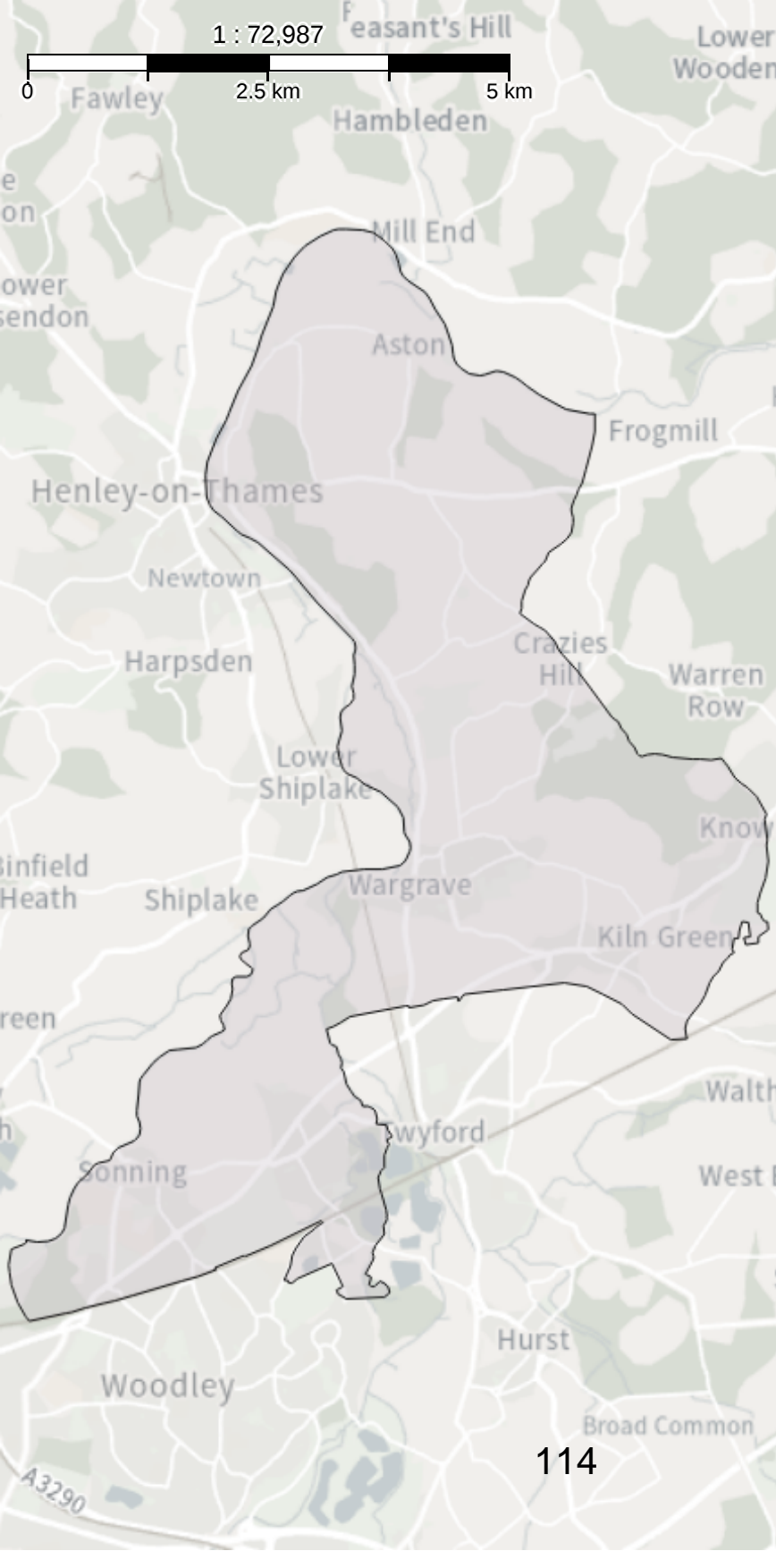
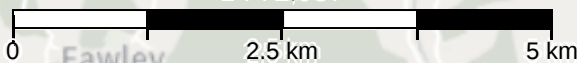
112



Twyford and Hurst

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4420
Total Electorate:	7848
CLr electorate:	2616
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

1 : 72,987

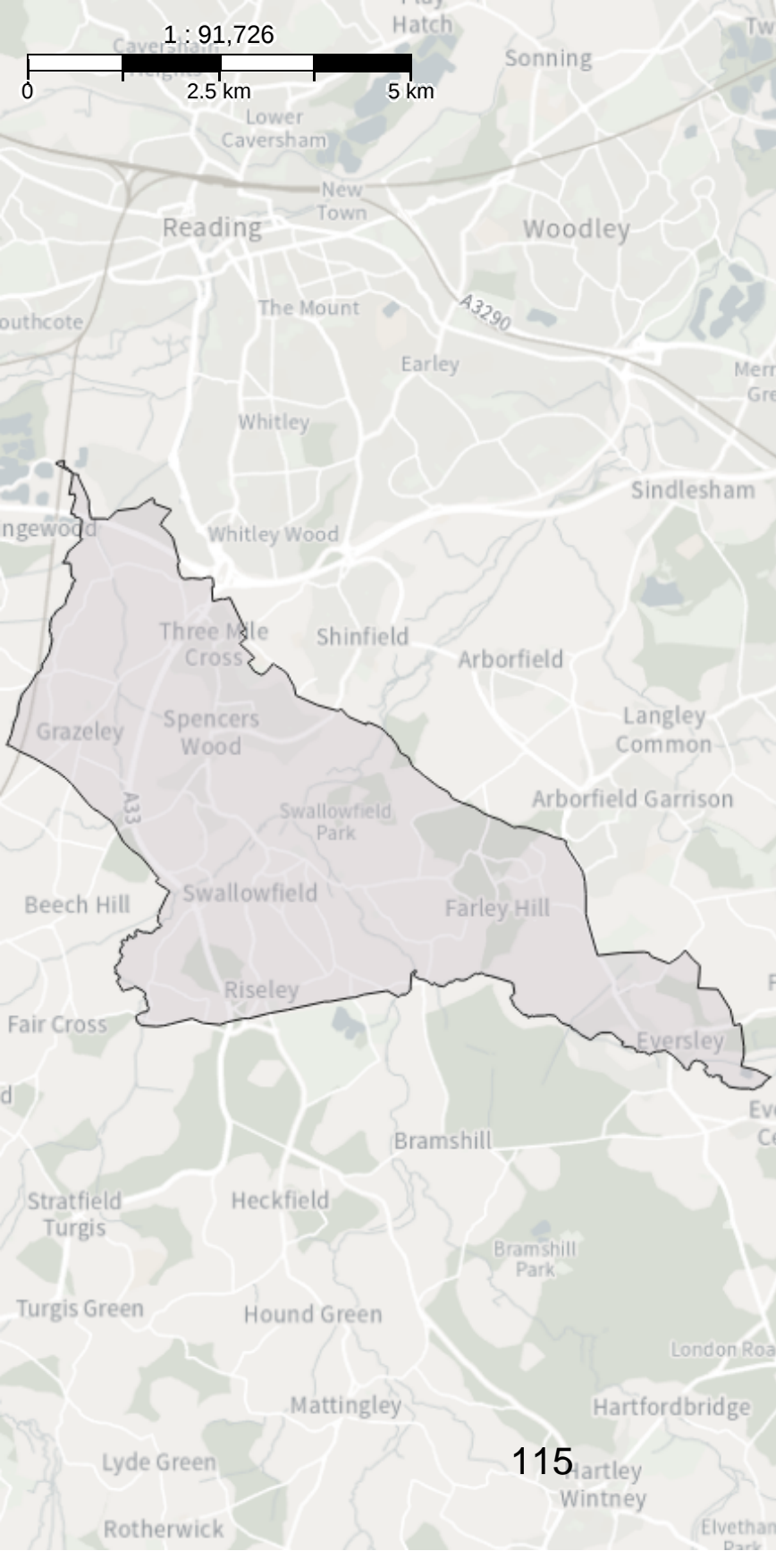
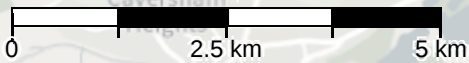


Map Reference 9

Northern

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3850
Total Electorate:	7152
Clr electorate:	2384
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

1 : 91,726



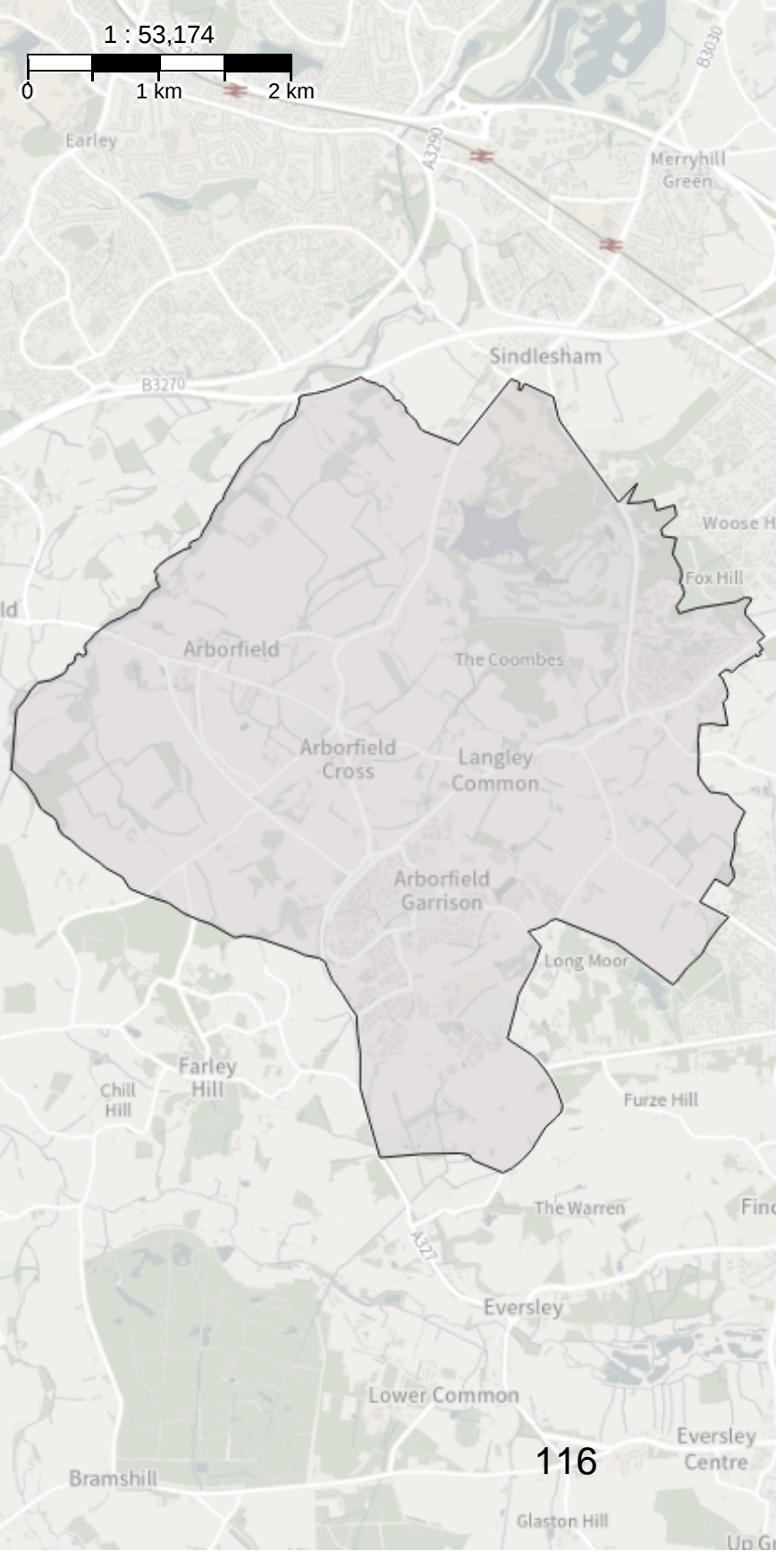
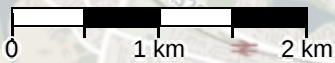
Map Reference 11a

South

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4503
Total Electorate:	7506
CLr electorate:	2502
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

115

1 : 53,174

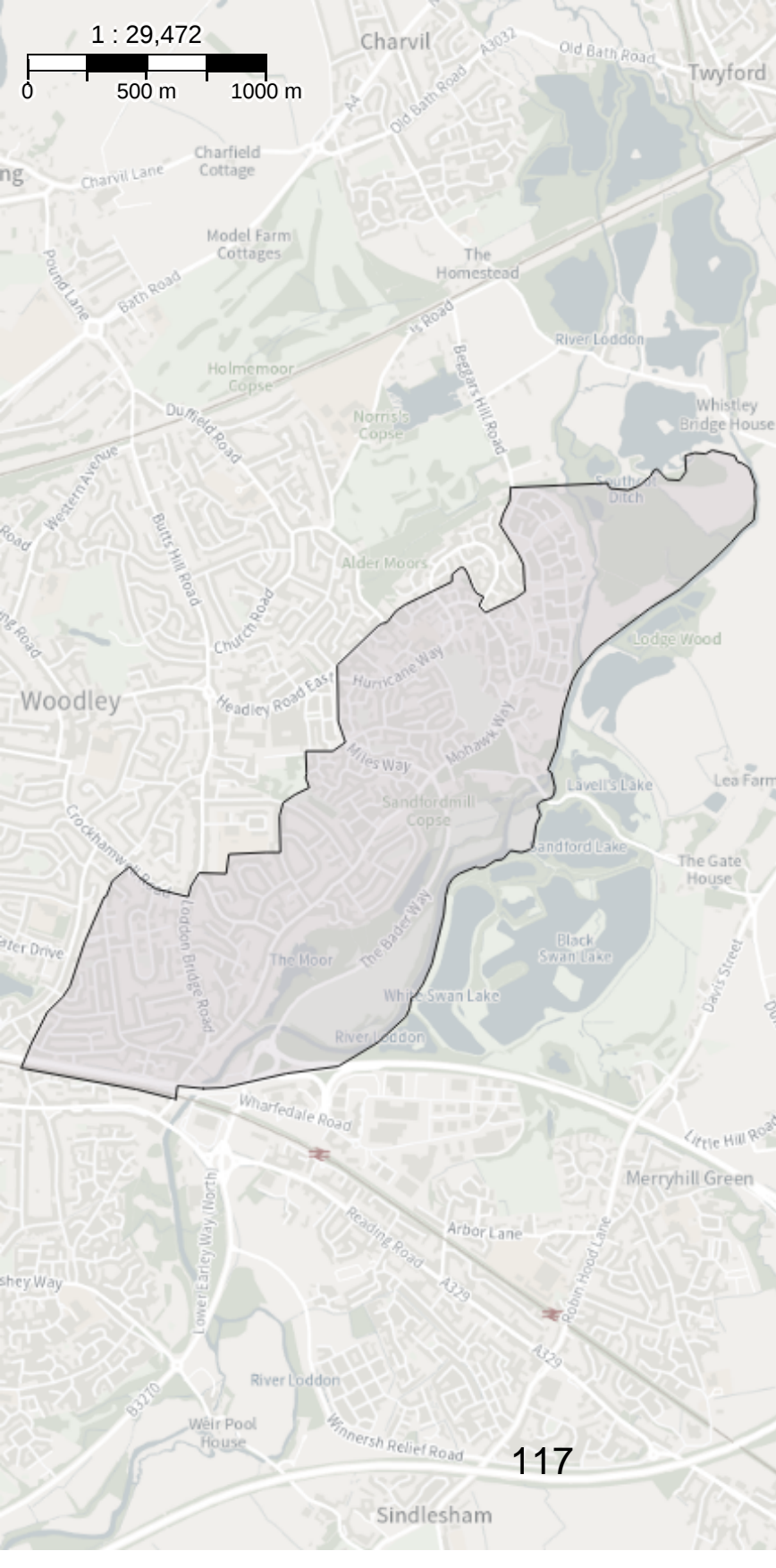
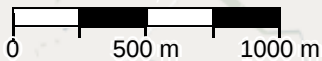


Map Reference 1
**Arborfield with
Barkham**

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4032
Total Electorate:	7689
CLr electorate:	2563
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	27/09/2022 09:45

116

1 : 29,472



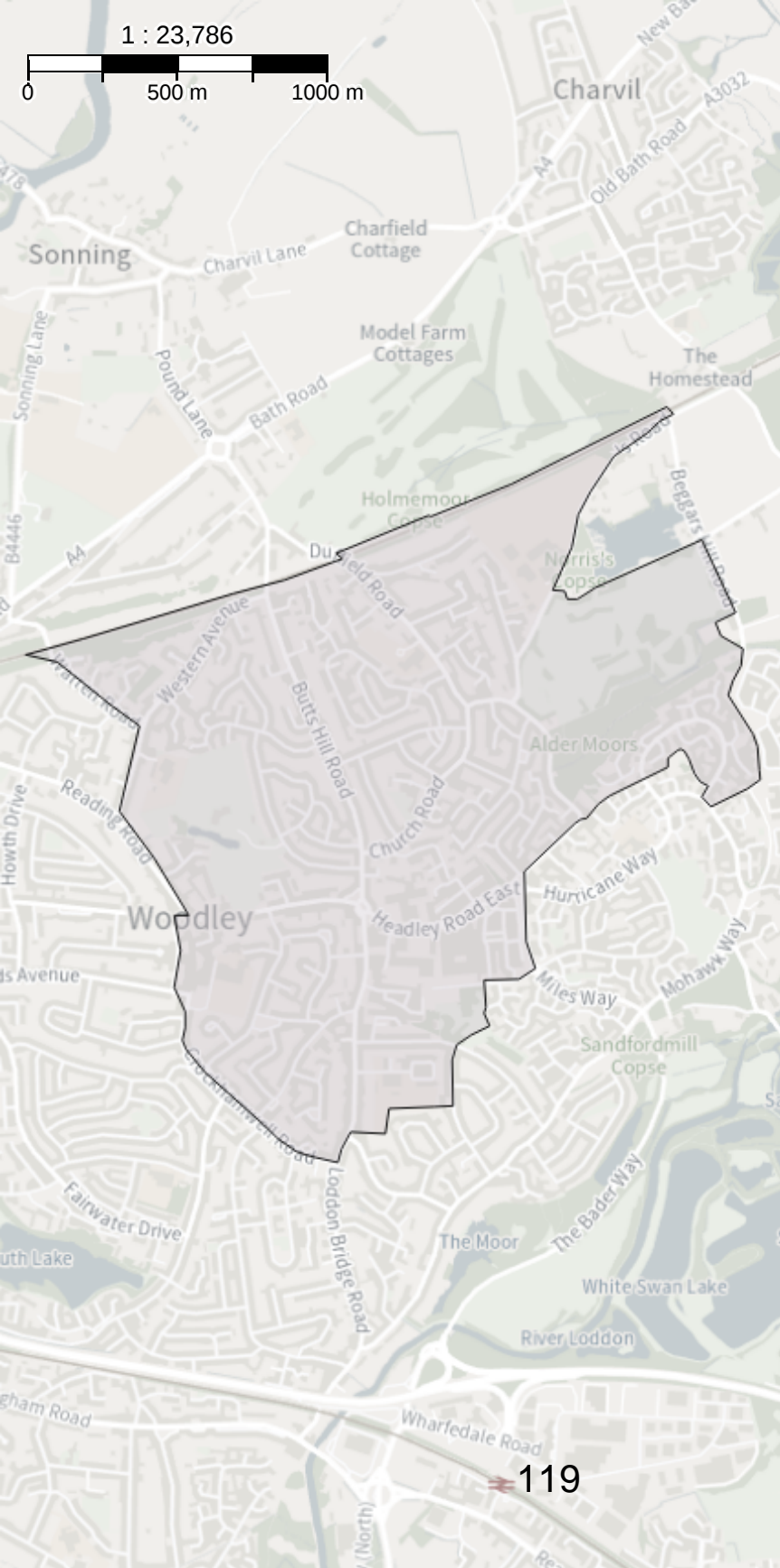
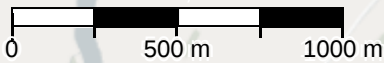
Map Reference

East Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	4176
Total Electorate:	7110
CLr electorate:	2370
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41

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1 : 23,786

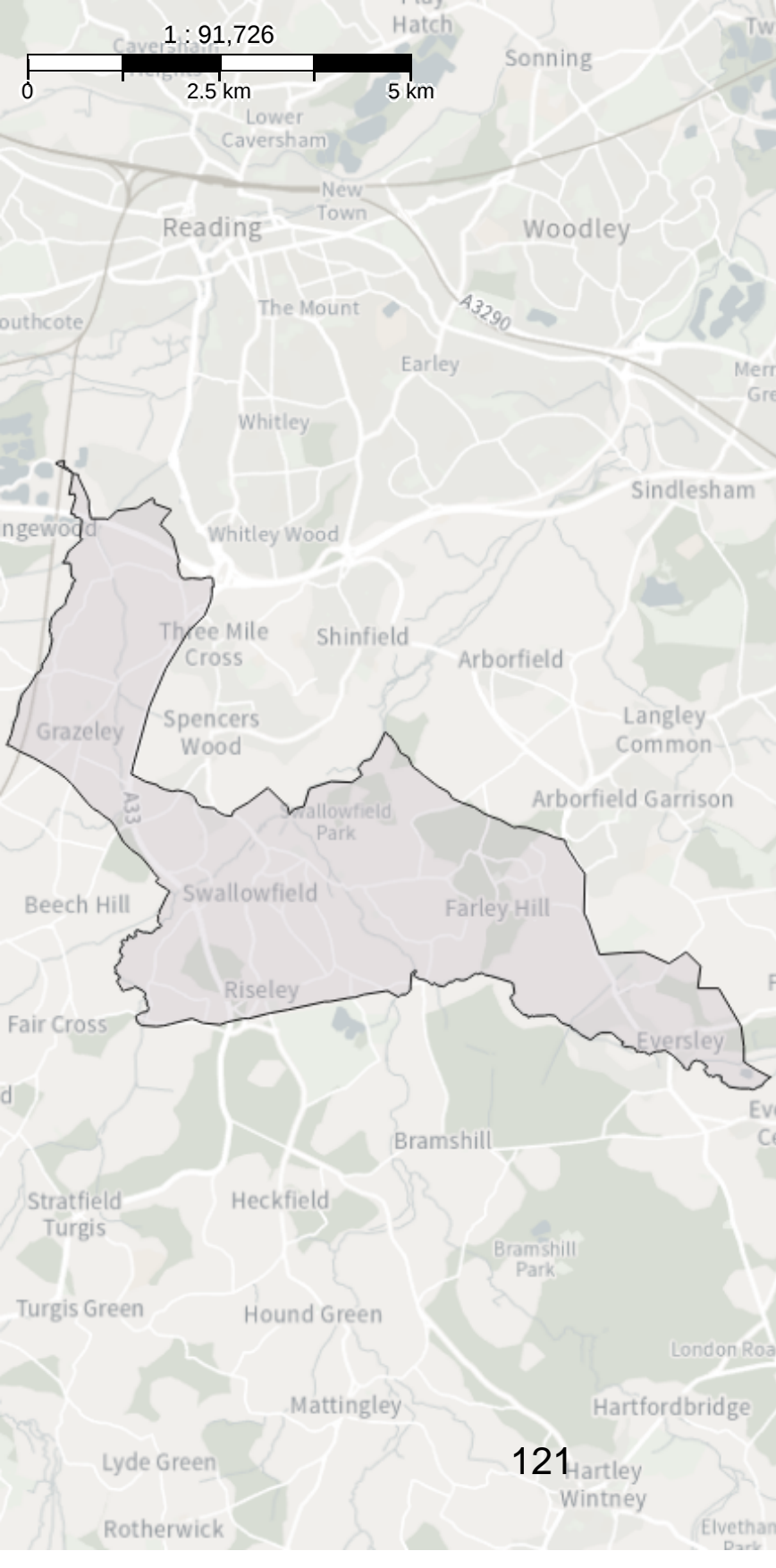
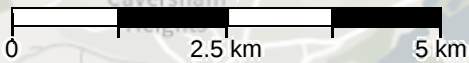


Map Reference 8b
North Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3752
Total Electorate:	6804
CLr electorate:	2268
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41

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1 : 91,726



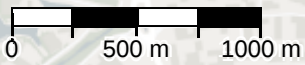
Map Reference 11b

Grazeley & Swallowfield

Councillors:	1
Property count:	1317
Total Electorate:	2303
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41

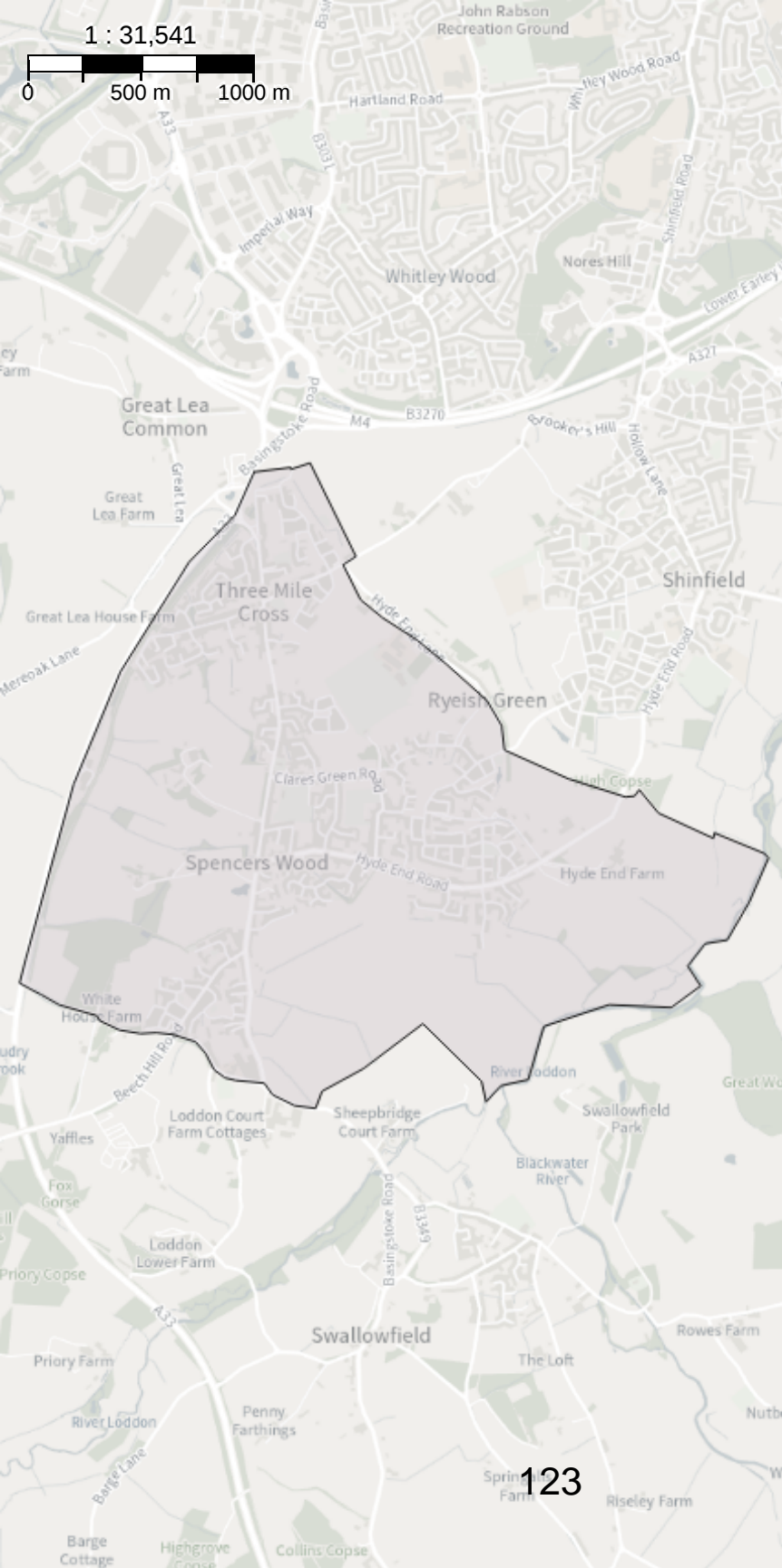
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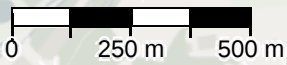
Three Mile Cross / Spencers Wood

Councillors:	2
Property count:	3186
Total Electorate:	5204
CLr electorate:	2602
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41



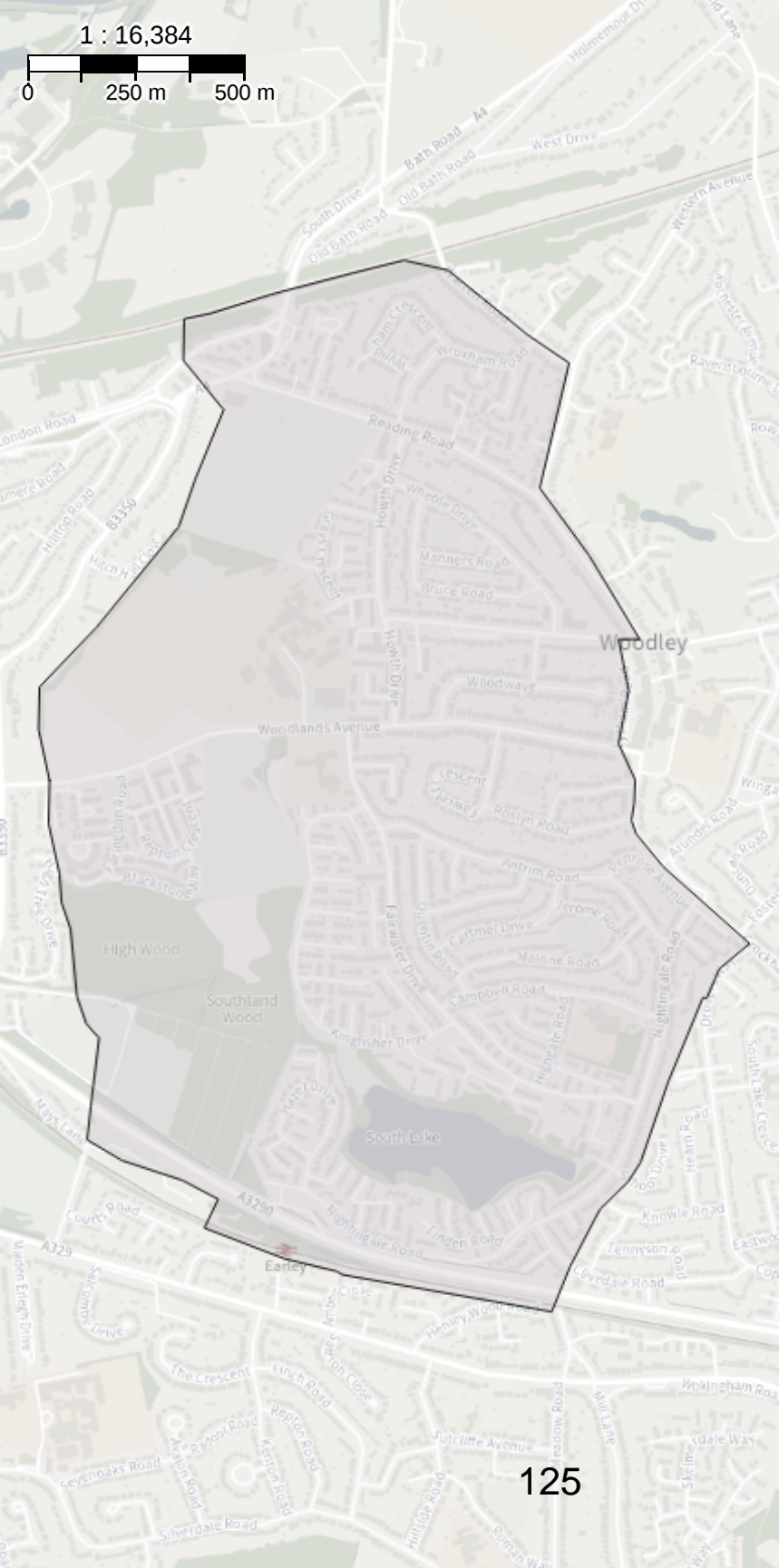
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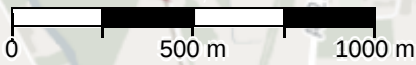
West Woodley

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3733
Total Electorate:	6708
CLr electorate:	2236
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41



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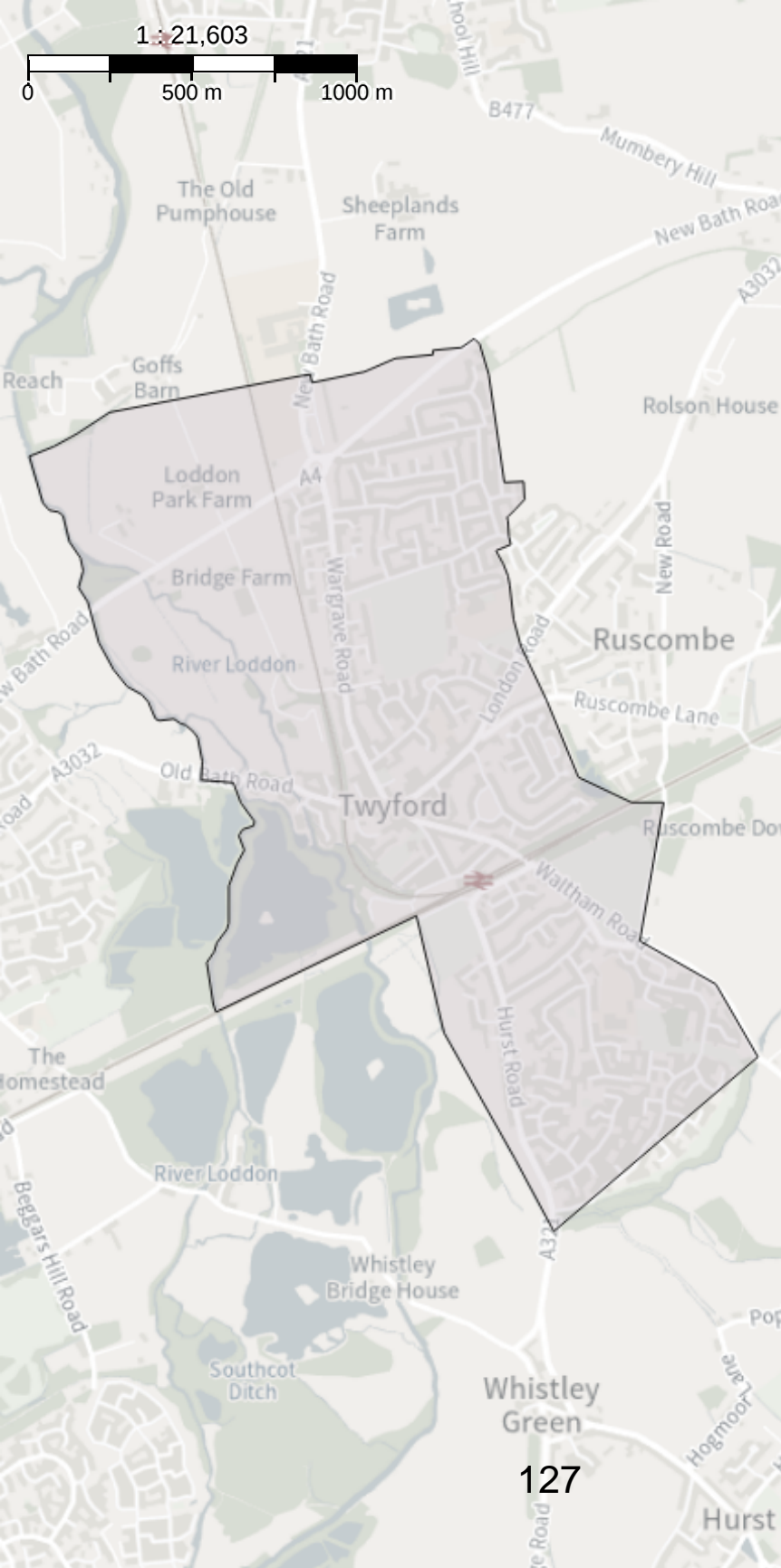
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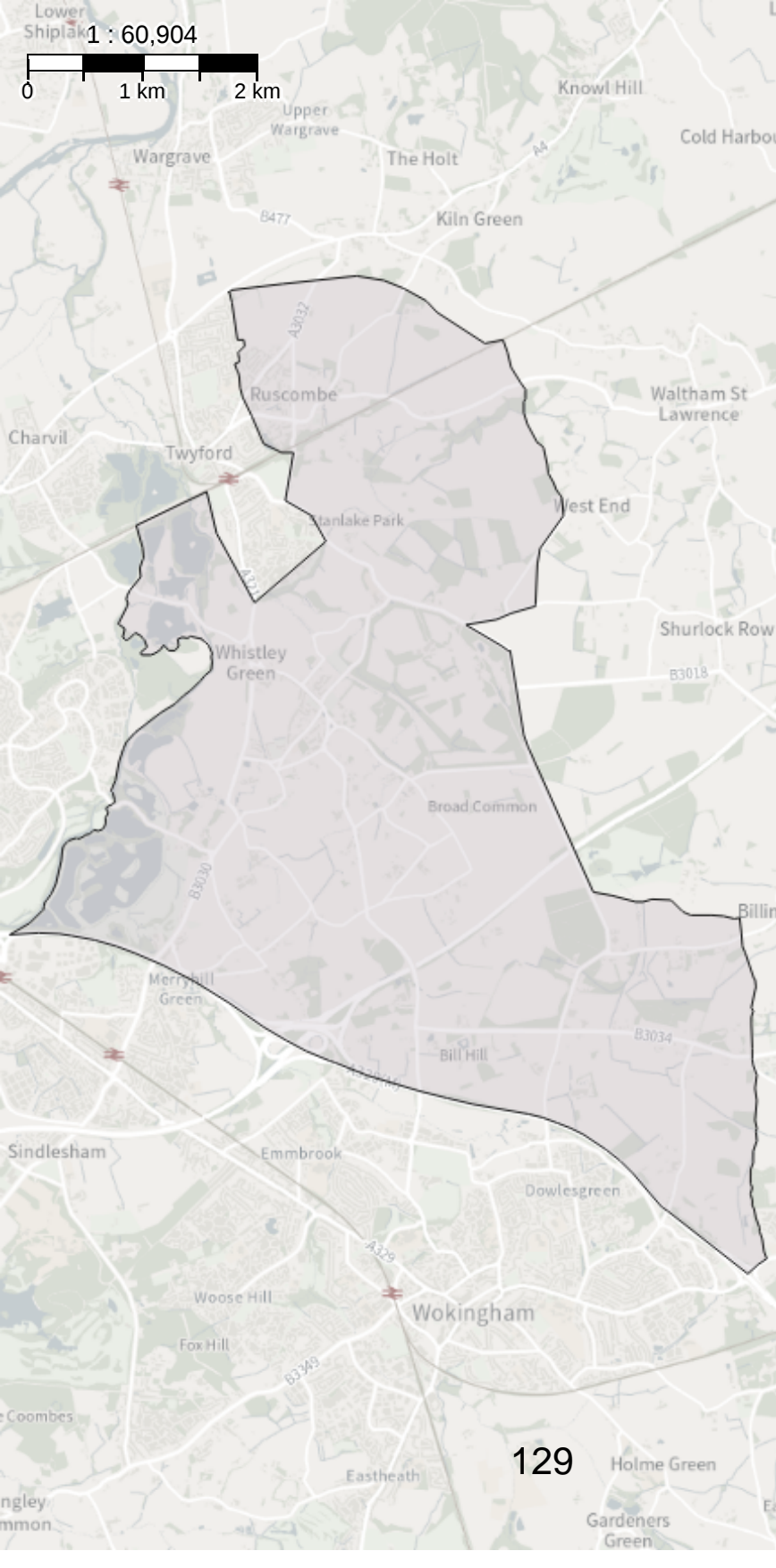
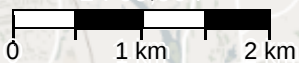
Map Reference 14b

Twyford

Councillors:	2
Property count:	2931
Total Electorate:	5208
CLr electorate:	2604
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41



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Map Reference 14c
Hurst & Ruscombe

Councillors:	1
Property count:	1489
Total Electorate:	2642
Electorate Status:	Balanced
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	2202 - 2692
Submitted:	29/09/2022 10:41

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TITLE	Changes to the Constitution
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council, 20 October 2022
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Reviewing the Council's Constitution on a regular basis ensures that it is relevant and fit for purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agree the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Monitoring Officer via the Constitution Review Working Group that:

- 1) The following proposals relating to the following areas of Council Rules of Procedure be agreed:
 - a. sections relating to Member and public questions as set out in paragraphs 1.1-1.4 of the report;
 - b. that Rules 4.2.1.1 Timing and order of business [Annual Council] and 4.2.2.1 Timing and order of business [Ordinary Council meetings] be amended as set out in paragraph 2 of the report;
 - c. that Rule 4.2.13.13 Motions on Expenditure or Revenue be deleted and Rule 4.2.11.2 be amended as set out in paragraph 3 of the report;
 - d. proposals relating to statements by the Leader of Council etc and from the Council Owned Companies being incorporated into the Minutes of Committee and Board Meetings and Ward Matters agenda item as set out in paragraph 4 of the report;
 - e. that Rule 4.2.2.1 Timing and Order of Business (Ordinary Meetings be amended as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
 - f. that Rules 4.2.9.5, 4.2.10.5, 5.4.29 and 5.4.37 – Scope of Public and Member Questions be amended as set out in paragraph 6 of the report;
 - g. Rules 4.2.8 Duration of Meetings, 4.2.8.1 Consideration of Motions and 4.2.12 Motions without Notice be amended, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
- 2) that it be noted that Rule 5.2.10.4 [Responsibilities of Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure] as set out in paragraph 8 of the report, will be amended;
- 3) it be noted that Rule 5.2.7.17 [Responsibilities of Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing] as set out in paragraph 8 of the report, will be added;

- 4) that Rule 5.4.19 Timing of the [Executive] meeting be amended as set out in paragraph 9 of the report;
- 5) that Section 6.2 Overview and Scrutiny, be amended as set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report:
- 6) changes to Chapter 8.2 – Planning Committee Procedure Rules as set out in paragraph 12 of the report;
- 7) changes to Chapter 8.3 – Planning Member Guidelines on Good Practice as set out in paragraph 13 of the report

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Chapter 1.1.4 of the Council's Constitution states that the Monitoring Officer will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that its aims and principles are given full effect.

The report contains revisions to several areas in the Constitution which were agreed by the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) for recommendation to the Monitoring Officer, at their meetings on 12 August 2022 and 7 October 2022.

Background

Chapter 4.2 – Council Rules of Procedure

At its meeting on 12 August 2022 the Constitution Review Working Group considered several proposed amendments including a number relating to the Council Rules of Procedure.

1 4.2.10 Questions by Members

1.1 Currently Members ask their questions and receive the answers at the relevant meeting. They are then allowed to ask a supplementary question, which must relate either to the question they asked or the response they were given.

It is proposed that the answers to all Member questions should be uploaded onto the website by noon of the day of the meeting and only supplementary questions be allowed to be asked at the meeting. This provision would not apply to urgent questions submitted after the meeting agenda had been published.

The following amendment is proposed:

4.2.10.6 Response [Member Questions]

An answer may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;*
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or*
- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, (including where such an answer would require the disclosure of exempt information) a written answer circulated later to the questioner within seven working days of the meeting, and included in the Minutes of the meeting.*

Please note this deadline does not apply to supplementary questions, which can take longer to respond to, due to the often complex nature of the subject matter.

Answers to Member questions that are included in the agenda will not be answered at the meeting but will instead, be uploaded onto the relevant agenda page on the Council's website by noon of the day before the meeting. Member questions i.e., those that relate to items on the agenda, received after publication of the agenda will still be answered at the relevant meeting.

No person answering a question shall speak for longer than two minutes.

1.2 It is also proposed that Executive and Deputy Executive Members should not be permitted to submit questions to Council meetings as they have the ability to contact their Executive Member colleagues direct. They should instead be raising their question with Members of the Executive outside of the meeting.

The following amended wording is proposed:

4.2.10.2 Questions on Notice to Council

Subject to Rule 4.2.10.4 a Member of the Council* may ask a Member of the Executive, a Deputy Executive Member, the Chairman of any Committee or Board, the Council's representative on an outside organisation one question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough
.....

****Members of the Executive and Deputy Executive Members are not entitled to ask questions of other Executive Members or Deputy Executive Members. Please note this rule applies only to meetings of Council.***

1.3 It was felt that it could be made clearer that members of the public asking questions at committee should be treated with respect.

The following amendment is proposed to Rule 4.2.9.11 Response:

4.2.9.11 Response:

...When answering a question, all questioners should be treated with respect.

1.44.2.9.9 Written Answers

The Working Group considered proposals regarding written responses to supplementary questions.

The following amendment is proposed:

4.2.9.9 Written Answers (public questions)

~~....Please note that the written reply does not apply to supplementary questions, which can take longer to respond to, due to the often complex nature of the subject matter and such replies will not be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.~~ **Please note that supplementary questions may take longer to respond to due to the often complex nature of the subject matter, therefore it may not always be possible to include written responses to supplementary questions in the draft minutes. If this is the case, then the response will be uploaded onto the relevant agenda page on the Council's website as a background document.**

2. 4.2.1.1 Timing and order of business [Annual Council] and 4.2.2.1 Timing and order of business (Ordinary Council meetings)

A Member of the public has highlighted that an incorrect reference has been made to Rule 4.2.2.1. It is proposed that this be amended to read '4.2.2.2.'

3. Motions on Expenditure or Revenue

The current wording of this rule is as follows:

4.2.13.13 Motions on Expenditure or Revenue

Any motion which would result in a significant increase in capital or revenue expenditure, a significant reduction in the revenue of the Council, or involves the disposal of a significant asset, shall when seconded stand adjourned without discussion to the next meeting of the Executive, with a report back to the next ordinary meeting of the Council. This Rule does not apply to any Motion proposed

at the Budget meeting of the Council. A significant decision is one that involves spending or receiving £1,000 or more.

Although Members recognise that there should be some mechanism to prevent a motion being agreed, that commits the Council to spending unbudgeted funds or would lead to a reduction in revenue, it is felt that the current wording of 4.2.13.13 does not work.

It is therefore proposed that in future once a motion has been received by Democratic Services it will be sent to the Chief Finance Officer who will provide a statement on any financial implications associated with the motion. This information will then be included with the motion in the relevant Council agenda.

It is proposed to delete Rule 4.2.13.13 and instead amend the first paragraph of Rule 4.2.11.3 Motion set out in Agenda as follows:

4.2.11.2 Motion Set out in the Agenda

Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the agenda in the order in which notice was received, unless the Member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it at a later meeting or withdraw it. ***A statement from the Chief Finance Officer, setting out the financial implications of the proposal(s) contained in the motion, will also be included in the agenda.***

4. 4.2.10.9 Questions in Relation to the Minutes of Committee and Board Meetings and Ward Matters

It is proposed that in future items shown under Rules 4.2.2.1p) (to consider any statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members) and q) (to receive statements from the Council Owned Companies) should be included under Rule 4.2.2.1o) (to receive Minutes of Committees and Sub-Committees and to deal with Ward matters, subject to the provisions of Rule 4.2.10.9).

The intention is that statements under p) and q) above would be provided 6 clear working days in advance of the meeting and included in the Minute volume, which is published as a background document to the Council Agenda.

Given the additional items being incorporated into Rule 4.2.2.1o) it is proposed that the time for this agenda item be extended from 20 minutes to 30 minutes.

The following changes are therefore proposed to the Constitution:

- a. Rule 4.2.2.1o) be amended as follows:

To receive, ***subject to the provisions of Rule 4.2.10.9:***

- i) Minutes of Committees and Sub-Committees and to deal with Ward matters, ~~subject to the provisions of Rule 4.2.10.9;~~
- ii) ***Statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members (subject to 4.2.2.1p);***
- iii) ***Statements from the Council Owned Companies.***

- b. Amend Rules 4.2.2.1p) as follows and delete 4.2.2.1 q), with the remaining items renumbered accordingly.

4.2.1.1 p) *to consider any statements by the Leader of the Council that are urgent or constitutionally required e.g. changes to the composition of the Executive and reporting on special urgency decisions taken etc. The Leader will speak for no more than 5 minutes* ~~Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members;~~

- c. Rule 4.2.23 (Statements by the Leader of Council, Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members) be amended as follows and Rule 4.2.24 (Statements from the Council Owned Companies) be deleted and the remaining items to be renumbered accordingly.

2.2.23 Statements by The Leader of The Council, ~~Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members~~

At each Ordinary meeting of the Council, provision shall be made for the Leader of the Council, ~~Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members~~ to make statements to the Council that are urgent or constitutionally required e.g., changes to the composition of the Executive and reporting on special urgency decisions taken etc. The Leader will speak for no more than 5 minutes.

~~These statements shall primarily be to advise the Council of items of interest which have been dealt with by the Executive recently or are due to be dealt with in the near future. Speeches of a party political nature will not be allowed.~~

~~When making such a statement, no Member, except with the consent of the Council, shall speak for more than 5 minutes.~~

~~The time allowed for statements under this rule shall not exceed 20 minutes.~~

5. 4.2.2.1 Timing and Order of Business (Ordinary Meetings)

The Working Group proposed that those business items under 4.2.2.1 j-m) which are only to note should have a time limit of 10 minutes for debate. This would only apply to meetings of Council and Special Council Executive. The following amendment is proposed.

Each item considered under j)-m) will have a time limit of 30 minutes for debate. Where the item is only 'to note' it will have a time limit of 10 minutes for debate [please note that this Rule only applies to meetings of Council and the Special Council Executive Committee]

6. Rules 4.2.9.5, 4.2.10.5, 5.4.29 and 5.4.37 – Scope of Public and Member Questions

The above rules state that a question may be rejected if it “is substantially the same as a question which has already been put at or submitted to the meeting or at a meeting of the Council or Executive or any other Committee in the past six months.” The Working Group proposed the following amendment:

c) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at or submitted to the meeting or at a meeting of the Council or Executive or any other Committee in the past six months;* or

*

Should a question be rejected under section c) questioners will be informed that the same question or substantially same question has been received in the past six months and will be provided with a copy of the answer that was previously provided.

7. 4.2.8 Duration of Meeting

The Working Group considered proposals regarding the duration of meetings. Members have proposed the following:

It is proposed that normal Council meetings conclude after a maximum of 3 hours unless business remains on the agenda, in which case it would automatically be extended by 30 minutes. Meetings of Annual Council would conclude after a maximum of 2.5 hours unless business remains in which case it would automatically be extended by 30 minutes.

4.2.8 Duration of Meeting

In the case of ordinary Council and Special Council Executive Committee meetings, if it has not concluded after 3 hours from the start of the meeting and business on the agenda remains outstanding, the meeting will be automatically extended by a further 30 minutes, after which the meeting by 10.30pm will adjourn immediately. In respect of the Annual Council Meeting, if it has not concluded after 2 1/2 hours from the start of the meeting and business on the agenda remains outstanding, the meeting will be automatically extended by a further 30 minutes, after which the meeting will immediately adjourn. the conclusion time at which the meeting will adjourn is 9.00pm. If, once a Motion to continue the meeting under [Rule 4.2.12\(m\)](#) has been proposed and seconded, (which can only be done up to 30 minutes before the conclusion time of the meeting) the majority of Members present vote to continue, the meeting will continue for a further period not exceeding 30 minutes from the specified conclusion time of the meeting ie until 11.00pm or 9.30pm for Annual Council.

Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Mayor/Chairman. This does not include motions, which will be deemed to have fallen if time does not permit consideration of them, see [Rule 4.2.8.1](#). If the Mayor/Chairman does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting, unless there is agreement between the Group Leaders that there are no matters for decision outstanding.

In respect of meetings of Council Committees and Sub Committees, unless the majority of Members present vote for the meeting to continue, any meeting that has not concluded by 10.30pm will adjourn immediately. Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chairman. If the Chairman does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting, unless there is agreement between the Group Leaders that there are no matters for decision outstanding.

4.2.8.1 Consideration of motions

A motion cannot be moved if there is only 15 minutes remaining before the meeting is due to conclude, be it 10.15pm or 10.45pm. If at the time the meeting is due to conclude ***within 15 minutes***, be it 10.30pm or 11.00pm, a Motion is under discussion, the debate on that Motion will cease immediately and the Mayor will put the Motion to the vote without further discussion.

4.2.12 Motions without Notice

~~m) to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm (or 9.00pm for Annual Council) in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.8;~~

Renumber remaining items under this Rule.

8. Chapter 5.2 – The Executive – Composition and Areas of Responsibility

8.1 Rule 5.2.10.24 currently states:

To develop and manage the Council's approach to:

- *Travellers*
- *Flytipping*
- *Vermin*
- *Noise*
- *Bonfires*

It is proposed that the word “travellers” be deleted and replaced by “***unlawful encampments***”.

8.2 The Working Group noted a request to add the following to the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing’s list of responsibilities:

5.2.7.17

To lead on the relationship between Town and Parish Councils.

9. Section 5.4.19 Timing of the [Executive] meetings

It is proposed that 5.4.19 be amended as follows –

Insert

e) the Chair of the meeting may give a speech of up to 5 minutes;

Subsequent sections to be renumbered.

10. Section 6.2 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference

At its meeting on 5 October 2022 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to propose the establishment of an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to Full Council. The Constitution Review Working Group noted this proposal.

It is proposed that the terms of refence be added at Section 6.2.5 and that the subsequent sections be renumbered.

The Working Group also considered the following resultant changes to Section 6 as set out below.

6.1.2 Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee shall comprise 12-non-Executive Members of the Council appointed at the Annual Council Meeting subject to the rules of Political Balance.

The Management Committee must include the Chairman and ~~Vice Chairman~~ of any Scrutiny Committee who will report back on the working of the relevant Committee.
The Vice Chairmen of each of the Scrutiny Committees must either be a member of the Management Committee or one of its substitutes.

Following the proposed establishment of an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is proposed that not all scrutiny Vice Chairmen be required to be full members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (if not full committee members they must be a substitute). Should this change not be made then given the number of members on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and the number of other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, then this could lead to some Chairmen being required to be Vice Chairmen on other committees.

6.2.1 Appointment of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Council shall establish the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

d) Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee – size of which to be determined at Annual Council.

This amendment references the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a committee.

11. The Working Group also considered additional proposed amendments to Section 6 which are detailed as follows:

6.1.2 Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee shall be comprised of 12 non-Executive Members of the Council. The size of the Committee will be determined at, and the appointment appointed of Committee Members will take place at the Annual Council Meeting subject to the rules of Political Balance.

This amendment is proposed to highlight that the size of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is subject to the rules of Political Balance and will be determined at the Annual Council meeting.

6.2.1 Appointment of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Council shall establish the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

a) Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 8 Members size of Committee to be determined at Annual Council

b) Community and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 8 Members size of Committee to be determined at Annual Council

c) Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 10 Members size of Committee to be determined at Annual Council

It is proposed that section 6.2.1 be amended to reflect that the size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be determined at the Annual Council meeting.

6.2.1.1 Substitutes

~~Two substitute Members from each Political Group for each Committee shall be appointed at Annual Council for the forthcoming Municipal Year. Substitute Members from each political group shall be appointed at Annual Council for the forthcoming Municipal Year. Each political group will be entitled to the same number of substitutes as it has Members on the Committee.~~

It is proposed that 6.2.1.1 be updated reflect current practice.

12. Chapter 8.2 - Planning Committee Rules of Procedure

The Working Group considered the following proposals to Rules of Debate [Planning Committee] which was previously considered by the Planning Committee.

8.2.8 Rules of Debate

Debates at the Planning Committee shall take place as follows:

- a) *The Officer will put forward his/her recommendation prior to the application being debated. **Following the debate a member of the Committee will either propose the Officer recommendation or an alternative proposal, both of which will need to be seconded. The Officer recommendation or alternative proposal will then be voted upon.** ~~any proposal (Motion) which is different to or negates the Officer recommendation must be moved and seconded before the recommendation is voted upon. Should no alternative proposal be proposed and seconded the Committee will proceed straight to the vote on the Officer recommendation.~~ Any amendments to the **Officer recommendation decision**, for example to remove a refusal reason, to remove or vary conditions, or to add an additional informative, should be voted upon prior to the close of the debate;*
- b) *~~If a Member wishes to put forward a different recommendation to that contained in the report, then this may be formally proposed and seconded as a Motion. If the amendment is carried, it becomes the substantive Motion; if lost, a vote is taken on the original recommendation;~~*
- c) *If a Member wishes to make a proposal to negate the Officer's recommendation, they may formally propose a Motion if nothing has yet been moved. If proposing the refusal or approval of an application against the Officer recommendation, clear planning reasons for the proposal must be given in order for it to be acceptable. This applies equally to proposals to defer the application for a site visit. If such a Motion is passed it becomes the Committee decision. If defeated, then another Member may propose the Officer's recommendation;*
- d) *A Member may propose an amendment to vary the decision, for example, to remove a refusal reason or remove/vary conditions. The usual rules relating to voting on an amendment apply*
- e) *It is important to note that, if a Motion to refuse an Application is proposed, seconded and defeated, no further Motion to refuse may be moved. This also applies if a Motion to approve is defeated;*

- f) *In the rare event that Motions to approve and refuse an application are both declared lost, the application will be deemed to have been determined in accordance with the Officer recommendation.*

13. Chapter 8.3 – Planning Member Guidelines on Good Practice

The Working Group considered the following proposed amendment from the Chairman of the Planning Committee who wanted to ensure that any decisions made by the Committee were done so on the facts presented in the agenda etc and at the meeting and not on political lines. The following proposed amendment was considered by the Planning Committee:

8.3.12 Decision Making

8.3.12.2

~~Do come to your decision only after due consideration of all of the information reasonably required upon which to base a decision.~~ ***When making any decision you must only consider the planning merits of the application against the Local Plan, adopted local and national planning policies and any other material planning considerations relevant to the proposal being considered. Ordinarily, this information is within the planning officers report, the submitted planning documentation, information presented at the meeting or at the site visit (if applicable) and planning considerations presented by the public speakers and members of the committee. All other matters are not relevant and should not considered in the decision making process. In essence, every member of the committee must exercise their planning judgement solely based upon planning merits.*** If you feel there is insufficient time to digest new information or that there is simply insufficient information before you, request that further information, if necessary, seek to have the application deferred.

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 relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Cross-Council Implications

None

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.
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List of Background Papers

Council's Constitution

Contact Madeleine Shopland	Service Democratic Services
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Telephone No 07783 828176	Email
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	madeleine.shopland@wokingham.gov.uk
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