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A Meeting of the **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN **MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2023** AT **7.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage

Chief Executive

Published on 22 September 2023

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

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

https://youtube.com/live/qRRxw4EHggg?feature=share

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Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of
- Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working.
- Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business.
- Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient.
- Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough.
- Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillors

Chris Johnson (Chair) Peter Dennis (Vice-Chair) Laura Blumenthal David Cornish Norman Jorgensen Pauline Jorgensen Charles Margetts Alistair Neal Marie-Louise Weighill

Substitutes

Jane AinslieAndy CroyPhil CunningtonCatherine GloverStuart MunroCaroline SmithRachelle Shepherd-DuBeyAlison SwaddleShahid Younis

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
34.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
35.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2023.	5 - 16
36.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
37.		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 this committee.	
		Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
38.		MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions.	
39.	None Specific	MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - STRATEGIC OVERVIEW To consider the strategic overview of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-27.	17 - 28

40.	None Specific	PROPOSED APPROACH FOR THE STREET CLEANING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE REVIEW To consider the proposed approach for the Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance service review.	To Follow
41.	None Specific	MTFP - RESERVES To consider the range of reserves held by Wokingham Borough Council.	29 - 40
42.	None Specific	ACTION TRACKER To consider the Committee's Action Tracker.	41 - 44
43.	None Specific	WORK PROGRAMME To consider the Committee's Work Programme.	45 - 54

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

CONTACT OFFICER

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.57 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Chris Johnson (Chair), Peter Dennis (Vice-Chair), David Cornish, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Alistair Neal, Marie-Louise Weighill and Alison Swaddle (Substitute)

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Paul Fishwick and Sarah Kerr

Officers Present

Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Sofia Charalampidou (Senior Transport Planner), Robert Curtis (Transport Planning Team Manager), Chris Easton (Assistant Director - Highways), Giorgio Framalicco (Director - Place and Growth), Matt Gould (Head of Service, Highways and Transport), Rhian Hayes (Assistant Director Economic Development and Growth) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

24. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Laura Blumenthal.

Councillor Alison Swaddle attended the meeting as a substitute.

25. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors Neal, Fishwick and Kerr declared that there were members of Cycling UK, however they had taken no part in the group's response to the draft Local Transport Plan 4

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

28. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

29. GARY COWAN HAS ASKED THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

Question:

All of us in public life share a common duty to protect our local taxpayer's interest which is critical for sound financial management and key to ensuring that every pound spent by local government is used to support the communities they serve.

At Exec I asked to see the business case for the purchase of the care home on Barkham Road including all the costs incurred by the Borough Council.

The reply I was given stated as the Borough Council had signed a non-disclosure agreement I could not have that information.

There are councils which have got into serious financial difficulties over external investment and have effectively gone bankrupt.

Keeping a tight rein on such spending would appear to be right and proper hence my interest in all external investment not just this one.

My question is how does this Council with due diligence manage its checks and balances on investments such as this to ensure the Councils are properly protected.

Answer:

Executive and Council prescribed the criteria and process, including those that must be involved in decision-making, for the use of the Property Investment Fund, known latterly as the Community Investment Fund, for acquisitions made within this programme. In all cases external professional expertise has also been used to inform the decision and the strength of Investment. This supplements the opinion of internal subject matter experts.

Performance is reported publicly through O&S performance reporting, quarterly on the Council Website and at high level through Revenue Monitoring and Capital Monitoring (e.g. an exception to expected delivery is a budget variance). Both Internal Audit and External Audit have reviewed our activity and have provided strong assurances on our approach and practices, including compliance with the arrangements approved by Executive and Council. Furthermore, there has been specific scrutiny by O&S on the investment activity.

Given the commercially sensitive nature of the negotiations on these acquisitions, at times an (often temporary) non-disclosure requirement is in place, to enable these negotiations to conclude in a timely and commercially sensitive way and ensure they represent best value to the Council. A non-disclosure agreement is currently in place with regards to the care home on Barkham Road. The purchase price for the home will become publicly available following the sale, which is expected to complete in September.

Meanwhile, I understand that the Executive Director of Adults, Children and Health has offered to talk you through the Business Case, including the cost of acquisition but this would obviously need to protect the current commercial sensitivities.

Supplementary Question:

The LGA commented on Woking Borough Council's financial position with debts of £1.8 billion and rising. The LGA went on to say that the investments failed to deliver returns, resulting in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate repayment plans and high value irrecoverable loans. The LGA also said that Local Authorities must not forget their primary purpose is regeneration, for property development it is not. The skills needed by Local Government Leaders must match the challenges and expectations of the public, not just the skills and professional capabilities of the officers but also the skills of elected Members to offer challenge and to understand risk. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountability point out in their lessons learnt from reporting previous Section 114 notices that if Members are not informed enough to make decisions and challenge effectively they are more likely to take easy routes. Members need to be engaged and financially literate to

understand all aspects of the plans and issues that come before them. If there is no challenge, then Members may not recognise how serious the situation is.

My question is, how can this be achieved when elected Members are asking questions that challenge decisions are denied requested information? I must also point out that as elected Members are not to be trusted, it would appear, is this approach a train wreck waiting to happen?

Supplementary Answer:

Thank you Gary, I will turn around and say that I do expect that this requires a further written answer, but I will make a comment. The question challenges the precept that you were informed that the information was subject to a non-disclosure arrangement, that an offer was made for you to discuss it. So I would say that you have had the opportunity to challenge the purchase and to ask questions about it, but that it can't be publicly declared at the moment.

Written Supplementary Answer:

The constitution sets out the formal governance and decision-making arrangements, which as in the case of the care home, has been followed thoroughly and included detailed reports to advise and assist the right decision. Any variances in the delivery of that decision would again be subject to the appropriate governance and decision making, including where appropriate through the Committee system.

Outside of formal arrangements, officers will meet relevant members to assist with any further detail or questions they may have – as was offered in this case. As with all commercial activity across all sectors, there will be times where detail cannot be shared more widely.

You will be aware that the Council has over a period of time sensibly and successfully invested in Borough, including the Town Centre, Housing and Leisure facilities. Performance on these investments is included in the Treasury Management reports that are reported through to Council (and as part of the Treasury Management Strategy agreed by council annually).

30. ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 15 to 30, which provided a summary of the work and achievements of the strategy to date.

The report outlined the six priorities to in order to achieve the vision:

- 1. Enhancing cultural identity and sense of 'place'.
- 2. Fostering social interaction and community cohesion.
- 3. Improving health and well-being.
- 4. Developing opportunities for children and young people.
- 5. Supporting economic growth.
- 6. Maximising partnerships and collaboration.

The Executive Member outlined that this strategy was of significant importance to the corporate vision as it brought with it significant economic and social value. Arts and Culture was what made life worth living, and this strategy was about working strategically

across the organisation and community. The Executive Member added that the first senior cultural development officer had recently started in order to progress this strategy.

Sarah Kerr (Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services), Frances Haywood (Head of Strategic Housing), and Nicola Peacock (Senior Cultural Development Officer) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- Whilst the document listed a considerable amount of activity, it was sometimes difficult to understand what the product actually was and what would change in 5 years' time. Could this be clarified? Executive Member and Officer response All work that was being undertaken was linked to the vision in the strategy and to the Council's corporate vision. The strategy would help to facilitate a range of benefits including health and wellbeing and economic benefits. An example of this was the close work being carried out in conjunction with our educational psychologists to ensure a joined up approach;
- Why was Shinfield Studios not mentioned within the document? Executive Member and Officer response – The list was not exhaustive, and officers were working closely with Shinfield Studios. By the end of the programme it was hoped that the Borough would have a strong cultural identity which would benefit the wider community. There was also a close working relationship with Shinfield Parish Council, including a community engagement strategy;
- Was there a need for more focus within the strategy? Executive Member and Officer response Whilst there was always the risk of trying to cover too much ground, it was crucial that the 'seed was sown' as quickly as possible. The Senior Cultural Development Officer post was grant funded for a set period of time, and it was vital to embed arts and culture throughout the Borough whilst building up a clear evidence base to enable further funding bids in order to deliver a legacy of arts and culture. An example of particular focus was the close working relationship with the University of Reading, whilst other areas of focus would need to be phased in over time;
- Could more detail be given regarding the libraries bid on agenda page 18? Officer response – This bid was led by senior officers including Jackie Whitney (Head of Customer Excellence) and Richard Alexander (Head of Customer Excellence). Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful and therefore this capital development could not progress in the same way;
- It was noted that it would be useful for future versions of the document to show which bids were in progress, finished, delayed or cancelled;
- How were officers engaging with the planning policy team? Officer response Officers
 were working with the Local Plan Update team to assess if contributions from
 developers towards arts and culture projects were viable. The Working Group were
 considering this at the moment and such a decision would not hold up the completion
 of the Local Plan Update;
- What challenges were envisaged moving forwards, and what effort was being made to integrate new residents to the Borough into the cultural vision? Executive Member and Officer response – The big challenge was that there could be huge scope, which could

result in the service taking on too many tasks. Officers needed to be mindful of where to focus strategically, whilst engaging with external partners and aligning the work to the Council's strategic vision. There was an integrated approach to engage all new and existing residents into the cultural vision. Additionally, it was crucial to build up a strong evidence base to demonstrate the value in putting resources into arts and culture, for example by demonstrating that children who had access to arts and culture performed better than those who did not;

- Could additional support be made by other bodies to support the fixed term post? Executive Member response – Local Government would always have a role to play in this space as the convenors of place and people, but it was equally important to engage with a range of bodies and community groups in order to realise the full potential of the strategy. If the strategy could demonstrate less pressure on other services, for example through promotion of health and wellbeing, then it could be classified as a worthy investment;
- What support was being offered to local businesses to help deliver this strategy?
 Officer response The arts, business and culture forum had been set up to allow the arts and business sector to support each other. The economic development team was working closely with the arts and culture service to ensure support for the sector. There were already a number of job opportunities in the sector throughout the Borough, including with Shinfield Studios and with the British Museum, whilst the aim was to create even more opportunities in order to benefit the local economy;
- Did events such as Earley Town Council's COP26 events, which included events on nature and the environment, fall outside the scope of the strategy? Executive Member response – Not necessarily, as these events were embedded in culture;
- What efforts were being made to promote the strategy and vision with the University of Reading, to advertise opportunities in the sector to the next generations? Officer response – This was a key and ongoing area of focus for economic development colleagues;
- Most if not every Town and Parish Council had their own Arts and Culture Committee.
 Had the strategy been to these Committees for consultation? Executive Member and
 Officer response The original consultation document went to all Town and Parish
 Councils for comment. The Arts and Culture Forum included representatives from
 some Town and Parish Councils, whilst there were also other methods of engagement
 available. There was a dynamic relationship between the service and Town and Parish
 Councils, with some authorities more involved than others;
- How were we engaging specifically with young adults? Officer response There had been a piece of work carried out with children and young people across the Borough in terms of what they were currently participating in with regards to arts and culture, what they would like to see, and what the barriers to engagement were. This was carried out both via surveys and face to face meetings. One of the challenges, in terms of resourcing, was how we could best focus our efforts. One key theme identified through this work was the link between health and wellbeing and arts and culture. Moving forwards, there were plans to utilise the UK SPF funds to engage with more people within these age groups and to utilise funding. Members were of the opinion that this was great news, and asked for it to be publicised more broadly;

- What was the measure of success, and was there any funding for university leaders in terms of jobs? Officer response The British Film Institute were working closely with economic development colleagues, and had significantly contributed to the National Saturday Club Pass funding. It was important that the service was very clear as to what it wanted to achieve, and a range of KPIs would help understand what success looked like. Additionally, success would be embedding arts and culture across the organisation, whilst providing fantastic social value to be used as an evidence base;
- It was requested that the Chair liaise with officers, the clerk and the Executive Member
 to establish an appropriate Committee meeting to provide an update on tangible
 outputs that the public could recognise as successes of the strategy;
- It was important that the strategy had a whole Borough focus, and was not just
 Wokingham centric. As such, how many events had been delivered in the other towns
 of Woodley and Earley last year? Executive Member response The Council headed
 the strategic arm of the strategy, and was not putting on events per se but was
 enabling and empowering organisations to hold their own events across the Borough;
- It was requested that the arts and culture service plan 2023/24, an internal officer document, be shared with the Committee at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED That:

- Sarah Kerr, Frances Haywood and Nicola Peacock be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Officers consider amending any future versions of the Committee report to show which bids were in progress, finished, delayed or cancelled;
- 3) Officers consider placing additional efforts into advertising the ongoing and future work of engagement with young adults;
- 4) The Chair liaise with officers, the clerk and the Executive Member to establish an appropriate Committee meeting to provide an update on tangible outputs that the public could recognise as successes of the strategy;
- 5) The arts and culture service plan 2023/24, an internal officer document, be shared with the Committee at the appropriate time.

31. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT - CUSTOMER SERVICE, POTHOLES AND SMALL PROJECTS

The Committee considered a presentation, set out in agenda pages 31 to 52, which provided an updated on the service delivery within the Highways and Transport Service.

The presentation outlined that approximately 80 percent of works were carried out by utilities companies, whilst the service was responsible for the maintenance of around 725km of roads (including 9km of motorways, 829km of roadside footways, 53km of offroad cycleways, and 4,500 manholes.

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active travel, Transport and Highways), George Framalicco (Director of Place and Growth), Matthew Gould (Head of Service, Highways

and Transport) and Chris Easton (Assistant Director – Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- The Committee thanked the team for their hard work on delivering this service, which was not always easy at times;
- Could further details be given regarding the following points: emails received by customer services, out of hours contact, life extension roadworks projects, and conflicting communications between Reading Buses and Wokingham Borough Council regarding the park and ride parking services. Officer response Customer services received highways emails which were then processed and forwarded onto the Highways service. Regarding out of hours support, officers were aware of a specific query and were working to address this. The specific query was the responsibility of Thames Water, and officers could not do anything until the site was deemed as unsafe. officers would follow up this matter directly with Thames Water. Officers were looking to develop a standard proforma to help improve communications with regards to preventive treatment works. There was a new customer experience colleague starting who would help identify any gaps in communications and would produce a programme;
- How were 'Fix my Street' reports received and dealt with? Officer response This
 service was not affiliated with the Council and officers did not encourage reports via
 this service as it created additional points of failure. Officers had to manually gather
 the reports from this service and input them into the Volker Highways system. There
 were roughly around 200 reports a year via this service, and officers would continue to
 work with communications colleagues to encourage all users to report directly via the
 Council's system;
- It was noted that the 'Fix my Street' data did not automatically disappear when works were complete. Officers had recently contacted the service to get them to clear 14-15 years' worth of reports. There would not be capacity to continually ask 'Fix my Street' to clear specific requests;
- Did WBC have the powers to dictate where broadband providers placed their cabinets, in order to improve the experience for pedestrians? Officer response Unfortunately WBC did not have such powers. WBC tended to get notification of installation works close to the date of installation, and officers had very limited powers to object. New roads were built with wide pavements and roads whilst utilities companies were required to install their infrastructure first and to the side of the pavement;
- How could residents report damage specifically to a pavement? Officer response –
 The wording of the report function could be tweaked to reflect this;
- Members had witnessed very large HGVs performing tight turns on the Molly Millars Road, damaging the surface. Could tougher road surfaces be installed in such areas? Officer response – This would be mentioned to the team for assessment. Members were welcome to report any such incidents directly to the Service, with video or photo evidence being particularly valuable;

- Was thee ongoing two-way communications between WBC and Town and Parish Council's regarding the possible use of CIL money for smaller projects? Officer response The team were always reaching out to Town and Parish Councils and met with those who wished to do so on a quarterly basis. It was very helpful for Town and Parish Councils to input individual schemes into the system to get them logged, whilst officers would continue to push for additional engagement;
- With regards to speed limits, the Chief Constable had previously informed Members
 that enforcement of speed limits was a low priority in the area due to fantastic
 community speed watch schemes. Did this present an opportunity for WBC to use its
 own initiative? Officer response Speed limit amendments followed a statutory
 process. Should the police object to such a change, it may require a brave Executive
 Member and Council to persist with the plan, due to enforceability requirements;
- What could be done with areas of roads and cycleways which had been resprayed and reported as a rough surface? Officer response – Members and residents could report these areas, which would allow officers to ascertain whether these patches were the result of utilities works or WBC works;
- In response to a query about Member oversight of small projects and TRO feedback, officers stated that the team was working hard to improve visibility of why a TRO was or was not supported, and Members should contact the team directly if they were not receiving this information;
- It was noted that the Individual Executive Member Decision report or Executive report in relation to a TRO would contain the detail of why the TRO was being proposed, and representations received;
- It was highlighted that there needed to be an awareness that residents were customers of a monopoly when accessing Council services, and as such metrics such as call volume may not be that useful as some residents may give up prior to receiving a resolution. What could be done to improve the perception of people's concerns not being followed up? Officer response Highlighting the volume of calls was not just about determining the raw numbers of calls but also highlighted the amount of potential failure points. There was a plethora of data available for officers to utilise in order to continue improving the service, and a follow-up session could be arranged for the Committee in future;
- There were many examples of roads with new facilities and developments adjoining them, with speed limits remining at 40MPH. What could be done to push back against police objections to speed limit reductions on the grounds of duty of care? Officer response – Local Authorities were responsible for setting speed limits in line with speed limit guidance, which required consistency of speed limits with similar roads. WBC could and did push back, for example with the upcoming TRO on the Shinfield and Basingstoke Road;
- It was noted that the Local Plan Update was the opportune time for residents to feedback as to potential speed limit alterations where development was proposed.

RESOLVED That:

- Paul Fishwick, George Framalicco, Matthew Gould and Chris Easton be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Officers seek to amend the wording of the report function to specify reports to pedestrian footpaths;
- 3) Members and residents be invited to report any such instances of HGVs damaging road surfaces as a result of turning manoeuvres;
- 4) Members and residents be invited to report instances of rough patches of roads and cycleways as a result of respraying;
- 5) Members contact the Highways team directly should they not be receiving details of TROs within their Ward;
- 6) The Committee consider a follow-up session to highlight any improvements made with regards to communications and resident satisfaction.

32. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 4

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 53 to 298, which provided the draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

The report outlined that an updated LTP would be an important part of Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) ambition to make the Borough a net-zero carbon producer. The LTP would support local priorities, including a prosperous economy, improving the quality of life for residents, and reducing the environmental impact of transport.

The Executive Member highlighted that he wanted the hierarchy of road users to be included in the final document. In addition, the service was awaiting guidance from Central Government, however it was not possible for the service to wait any longer to produce this plan.

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways), George Framalicco (Director of Place and Growth), Sofia Charalampidou (Senior Transport Planner) and Robert Curtis (Transport Planning Team Manager) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- In relation to the low response rate of 0.2% population, was this a cause for concern?
 How were officers seeking to engage different groups, for example younger age
 groups? Executive Member and officer response This level of response was not
 abnormal based on previous LTP consultations. Further consultation would be carried
 out, and specific outreach would be offered to secondary schools;
- Members raised some concern as to what could be extrapolated from such a small sample size;
- It was noted that there were no proposed changes to the air quality management areas within the Borough. Members noted that the DEFRA site did not show the output or recording of these areas, and we were reliant on them telling us. Officers confirmed that they could liaise with our public protection partnership colleagues regarding this,

whilst WBC submitted annual summary reports to DEFRA with regards to two of the three areas in the Borough;

- Should the LTP4 be promoting scooting on public highways when e-scooting was currently illegal on public highways? Executive Member response – This referred to push-scooters which were allowed on public highways, however the wording could be amended to better reflect this;
- Members felt that it was very important to see the demographic data, to understand who we had reached and who we had missed. Officers stated that this could be added into the draft LTP4;
- It was noted that the Executive Member and officers would assess the data received from the consultation and place a special focus on any groups which had been underrepresented in future consultations on the LTP4;
- It was suggested that an Executive Summary be produced, outlining the conclusions and recommendations of the report to help residents to easily engage with the plan and proposals;
- It was suggested that officers explore application of more standard market research techniques, in order to reach a wider range of people and to help qualify the data;
- The Chair suggested that a further session may be required to offer additional overview and scrutiny of the LTP4 prior to its consideration at the Executive.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Fishwick, George Framalicco, Sofia Charalampidou and Robert Curtis be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Officers consider adding the hierarchy of road users into the LTP4;
- Officers consider amending the wording of the section on scooting to specify pushscooting;
- 4) Officers consider adding in information relating to demographic data from the consultation into the draft LTP4;
- 5) Executive Members and officers be requested to assess the data received from the consultation and place a special focus on any groups which had been underrepresented in future consultations on the LTP4;
- 6) Officers consider providing an Executive Summary at the beginning of the LTP4, outlining the conclusions and recommendations of the report to help residents to easily engage with the plan and proposals;
- 7) Officers consider exploration of more standard market research techniques, in order to reach a wider range of people and to help qualify the data;
- 8) The Committee consider if a further session be required to offer additional overview and scrutiny of the LTP4 prior to its consideration at the Executive.

33. ACTION TRACKER

The Committee considered their action tracker, set out in agenda pages 299 to 300.

The Committee noted that the action in relation to the Combatting Drugs Partnership had now been completed.

With regards to the draft Violence Against Women and Girl's Strategy, Members requested further details of tangible delivery dates and achievements at a future meeting.

It was noted that responses in relation to the Community Safety Partnership would be fed back directly to Members.

It was requested that a briefing note be provided, detailing the performance of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Team, including how many requests were received, how long they took to close, and what level of follow up was ordinarily required.

RESOLVED That the above points be noted.

34. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their Work Programme, set out in agenda pages 301 to 310.

The Committee were advised that the item on the Local Plan Update would need to move to one of the November meetings of the Committee.

The Committee were advised that a further update on the Violence Against Women and Girl's Strategy would now be scheduled for the January Committee. In addition, the Chair would meet with the Executive Member and appropriate officers in order to discuss the points raised earlier in the meeting with regards to tangible delivery dates and achievements.

The Chair commented that he would speak with officers with regards to potentially scheduling some currently unscheduled topics.

The Committee gave their thanks to the Clerk, Callum Wernham, who would be leaving the Council after nearly 6 years of service. The Committee thanked Callum for his hard work, in particular via his clerking of this Committee for over five years, and wished him well in his future endeavours.

RESOLVED That the above points be noted and reflected in the Committee's work programme.



Agenda Item 39.

TITLE Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-27

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

Committee on 2nd October 2023

WARD None Specific;

LEAD OFFICER Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To deliver on the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan whilst maintaining a financially viable Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- notes the unprecedented financial challenges faced nationally by Local Government and the subsequent impact on Wokingham Borough Council together with the particular challenges for Wokingham;
- 2) recognises the imperative for responsible financial management;
- 3) considers the report, challenge proposals and identify further ideas to address the financial shortfall;
- 4) notes the Reserves report included in the agenda pack and how the level of reserves are a key component to the strategic approach to financial management and the overall Medium Term Financial Plan.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council annually undertakes a budget setting process to determine its investment priorities and spending reductions in arriving at a balanced budget. The strategic context, including the budget setting approach is the first consideration for Overview and Scrutiny.

The Council along with other Local Authorities across the country continue to face unprecedented challenges in setting a balanced budget for 2024/25. Inflation has continued to cause financial challenges in a number of areas; utilities, construction, pay, contracts for services amongst many other rising costs linked to a CPI which remains in excess of 6%. However, the Council's primary source of income, Council Tax, is capped at 2.99% and other key lines of income such as car parking and leisure continue to be impacted by the long-term impact of COVID 19. Furthermore, there are also extreme pressures on statutory services as a result of numerous issues, including; refugees, a requirement supply increasing homes under the Planning Framework, the cost of living crisis and a particularly local incidence of rising SEND need. These issues will inevitably manifest into growth bids that will be presented to this Committee for consideration.

Considerable work has been undertaken already by budget managers, senior officers and Corporate Leadership Team working with Executive Members in arriving at proposals for

this Committee to consider. Some proposals may be seen as challenging or even contentious. This is inevitable given the severe financial pressures faced by the Council's requirement to set a safe and balanced budget and is imperative in responsible financial management. The Committee are asked to receive these proposals in this context and are invited to challenge and consider alternative and additional ideas to bridge the revenue budget gap of c£5m and capital funding gap of c£34m.

An additional paper has been provided to detail the councils position in respect of reserves. The paper provides further detail of the level of reserves against both specific and general risks as well as showing their strategic context and importance in setting the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The report explains the pressures on reserves across Local Government and how diminishing reserves place a very significant financial risk across the sector. The assurance of the sufficiency of reserves in setting a safe budget is a significant factor in ensuring the organisation is not at risk of needing to issue a Section 114 notice.

Background

The Council annually undertakes its budget setting process for all its financial activities including General Fund Revenue Account (funded by primarily by Council Tax), HRA (funded by tenants), Schools (funded by Government) and Capital (funded by various capital resources). An overview of these funds is provided in the MTFP, last approved by Full Council in February 2023.

Previous year's budget setting process incorporated and benefited from considerable consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny committee. It is intended that a similar approach is adopted again for this year's budget cycle.

Analysis of Issues

The Budget Strategic Overview (Appendix A) focusses on the General Fund Revenue Account and sets out the national and local context in which the budget will be set. It also shows the key considerable risks faced by the Council. The Council along with other Local Authorities across the country continue to face unprecedented challenges in setting a balanced budget for 2024/25. Inflation has continued to cause financial challenges in a number of areas; utilities, construction, pay, contracts for services amongst many other rising costs linked to a CPI which remains in excess of 6%. However, the Council's primary source of income, Council Tax, is capped at 2.99% and other key lines of income such as car parking and leisure continue to be impacted by the impact of COVID 19. Furthermore, there are also extreme pressures on statutory services as a result of numerous issues, including; the longer term impact of COVID-19, refugees, a requirement supply increasing homes under the Planning Framework, the cost of living crisis and a particularly local incidence of rising SEND need. These issues will inevitably manifest into growth bids that will be presented to this Committee for consideration.

Considerable work has been undertaken already by budget managers, senior officers and Corporate Leadership Team working with Executive Members in arriving at proposals for this Committee to consider. Some proposals may be seen as challenging or even contentious. This is inevitable given the severe financial pressures faced by the Council's

requirement to set a safe and balanced budget and is imperative in responsible financial management. The Committee are asked to receive these proposals in this context and are invited to challenge and consider alternative and additional ideas to bridge the revenue budget gap of c£5m and capital funding gap of c£34m. Further work is being undertaken on capital which will be updated and brought back to committee at a later date.

As a Unitary Authority a considerable element of budget is considered to be statutory which makes it more challenging to reduce expenditure and cost reduction solutions are often longer term. The Council's net Revenue Account budget requirement is approximately £157m and at least 80% of this is allocated to the provision of statutory services or the prevention in the escalation of statutory demand. Approximately £60m is for Adult Social Care and an illustration of the impact of this is that every 2% increase in prices in the care sector equates to a 1% increase in Council Tax.

To enhance the scrutiny process, all revenue items (growth, savings and special items) and capital have been included earlier in the process to allow members to have a better understanding of the interaction between bids and funding as well as revenue and capital links (e.g. capital investment to deliver revenue savings).

The figures presented in Appendix A provide the latest revenue summary position ("net") of growth pressures and savings by directorate, followed by corporate financing considerations for the next three financial years. A summary of the special items ("one off spend") has also been included. In addition a capital summary has been provided for the next three years outlining the latest capital expenditure plans as well as the capital funding plans.

As previously referenced the Year 1 2024/25 budget position for revenue shows a funding shortfall of c£5m. This is of course subject to the outcome of the Local Government Finance settlement which is unlikely to be announced until December 2023. Wokingham Borough Council remain the lowest funded Unitary Authority per head of population and the Council should do all it can to make representations for a fair Government funding settlement as early as possible, to enable effective budget planning and that it covers a duration of more than one year. Key budget risks are set out in Appendix A which will provide a vital context to the budget setting process.

The details of specific budget investment proposals, and savings will be presented to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the timetable (Appendix A). For revenue, bids will be presented for values more than £50k and for capital bids will focus on the largest (financially) schemes for each department. The bid templates will accompany the budget proposals presented to this Committee; in the way they were in recent years.

The reserves paper has not been provided in previous years but shows the level of reserves provided and the associated risks and costs they are in place to cover. The report explains how the overall level of reserves is also a key part of strategic financial planning and setting a safe Medium Term Financial Plan. Across the local government sector there is very significant pressure on reserves and in organisations where they are diminishing it is often a sign that it is moving into financial difficulties, in some cases towards the consideration of issuing a Section 114 notice.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no financial implications associated with the scrutiny process, however, the full MTFP, when submitted to Council in February 2024, will have to represent a balanced budget.

Cross-Council Implications

This is in respect of budgets across all Council services.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Not at this stage of consideration but equality impact statements will be required before specific proposals are agreed and implemented.

List of Background Papers	
MTFP 2023-26	

Contact Graham Ebers	Service Resources & Assets
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6557	Email graham.ebers@wokingham.gov.uk

MTFP 2024-27 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2 October 2023

Strategic Summary



Strategic Context

- S114 Notices becoming more prevalent
- Lowest funded Unitary Authority per head of population
- Council tax increases capped at 2.99% vs CPI in excess of 6%
- National challenges in care services (Adults & Children's)
- National SEND demand pressures impacting both the General Fund and Dedicated Schools Funding
- Rising demand;
 - Housing supply for the vulnerable
 - Cost of living crisis
 - Placement availability
 - Rising SEND need

Budget position is currently 'work in progress' and subject to considerable change including; challenging growth, seeking additional efficiencies and the impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement



Risks and Issues

- Local Government Finance Settlement
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Continued impact of COVID on service delivery
- Debt charges
- National Living Wage increases
- ⁸Interest Rates
- Inflation
- Lack of Care Leaver Accommodation
- Home to School Transport pressures
- SEND increasing numbers and availability of provision
- High levels of Agency in Social work staffing



Risks and Issues

- Increasing demand for services for Children with Disabilities
- Growing demand and complexity in Adult Social Care (ASC) services
- ASC Market sufficiency and inflation pressures
- ASC rising placements costs
- Considerable staff reductions made in 2023/24 in excess of £3m, further proposals in 2024/25 submission adding further reductions
- In 2023/24 WBC set its highest ever savings targets and we are currently struggling to manage within budget, reporting £3m overspend in year
- Major re-procurements of key services including Waste collection,
 Highways and Grounds Maintenance



MTFP Summary

11111	Yr 1 - 24/25			,	Yr 2 - 25/26			Yr 3 - 26/27		
	Growth	Savings	Net	Growth	Savings	Net	Growth	Savings	Net	
Adult Social Care	£3,200	(£2,920)	£280	£5,300	(£4,440)	£860	£7,400	(£5,540)	£1,860	
Chief Executive	£490	(£448)	£42	£490	(£498)	(£8)	£490	(£498)	(£8)	
Children's Services	£3,598	(£1,236)	£2,362	£7,052	(£2,302)	£4,750	£7,925	(£3,108)	£4,817	
Place and Growth	£628	(£3,509)	(£2,881)	£1,328	(£3,892)	(£2,564)	£1,318	(£3,942)	(£2,624)	
Resources & Assets	£1,492	(£2,489)	(£997)	£1,522	(£2,627)	(£1,105)	£1,522	(£3,007)	(£1,485)	
Total	£9,408	(£10,602)	(£1,194)	£15,692	(£13,759)	£1,933	£18,655	(£16,095)	£2,560	
Net Fr owth / savings (from above)			(£1,194)			£1,933			£2,560	
Inflation (pay award + contractual infl	lation)		£11,254			£21,200			£29,055	
Council Tax - 1.99% Core			(£2,601)			(£5,477)			(£8,466)	
Council Tax - 2.00% ASC Precept			(£2,613)			(£5,504)			(£8,508)	
Council Tax - 1.00% DSG Deficit Recov	very		(£1,306)			(£2,752)			(£4,254)	
Contribution to DSG Deficit Recovery			£1,306			£2,752			£4,254	
Additional Council Tax Base (1% / 1%	/ 1%)		(£1,258)			(£2,890)			(£4,466)	
Adult Social Care Charging Reform			£0			£3,130			£6,130	
Adult Social Care Charging Reform - Ir	ncome		£0			(£3,130)			(£6,130)	
Previous gap funded one off from PFI Reserve			£1,400			£1,400			£1,400	
Budget Gap			£4,987			£10,662			£11,575	



Special Items

Special Items	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	700	500	500
Chief Executive	254	52	0
Children's Services	1,625	1,000	850
Place & Growth	1,465	269	0
Resources & Assets	280	0	0
Net	4,324	1,821	1,350



<u>Timetable</u>

	Budget Consideration	<u>cco</u>	<u>Executive</u>	<u>Council</u>
Ţ	Strategic Overview	2 nd Oct 23		
77	Revenue and Capital: Corporate	30 th Oct 23		
	Revenue and Capital: Place & Growth	14 th Nov 23		
	Revenue and Capital: Adults & Children's	19 th Dec 23		
	Revenue and Capital: Final items/confirmation	16 th Jan 24	Feb 24	Feb 24



Capital Summary

Year 1 - 2024/25			Υ	ear 2 - 2025/2	26	Year 3 - 2026/27			Total	
	Reprofile from 2023/24	MTFP / New Bid	Total	Reprofile from 2023/24	MTFP / New Bid	Total	Reprofile from 2023/24	MTFP / New Bid	Total	Three Years
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	12	4	16	0	4	4	0	1	1	21
Children's Services	1	38	39	0	22	22	0	10	10	72
Chief Executive's Office	0	3	3	0	2	2	0	2	2	7
Place and Growth	69	22	91	14	16	30	0	15	15	137
Resources & Assets	145	17	162	13	35	48	0	27	27	237
Total Capital Expenditure	228	84	312	27	80	107	0	55	55	474

Funded hv.

. ota: oap:ta: ranamb	(=03)	(101)	(43)	(440)
Total Capital Funding	(289)	(102)	(49)	(440)
SWDR Funding*				
General Fund Borrowing	(16)	(3)	(2)	(21)
Supported Borrowing	(169)	(65)	(30)	(263)
Capital Receipts	(17)	(5)	(0)	(22)
Capital Grants	(53)	(26)	(18)	(96)
Developer Contributions	(34)	(3)	(0)	(38)
i unipeu by,				

Funding (Surplus) / Gap

23

34

6

Work ongoing to address funding gap, including reducing scheme costs, seeking additional income and reprofiling to later years

Notes

- *South Wokingham Distributor Road discussions ongoing to explore options for additional funding to support delivery of scheme
- Income/funding is shown in brackets
- Annual figures are **not** cumulative (cumulative figures in col on far right)

Agenda Item 41.

TITLE Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-27 - Reserves

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

Committee on 2nd October 2023

WARD None Specific;

LEAD OFFICER Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To deliver on the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan whilst maintaining a financially viable Council.

RECOMMENDATION

The committee are asked to:

- 1. note the reserves position in the context of setting the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2024/2025 mindful of the strategic approach.
- 2. note the table of reserves, which enhances the annual disclosure in the MTFP.
- 3. seek assurance of the sufficiency of reserves in setting a safe budget for 2024/25.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information regarding the Councils financial reserves.

The term "reserves" applies to both the General Fund reserve and earmarked reserves. Earmarked reserves are reserves allocated to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover specific risks. In some cases, these reserves will be built up over a period to cover a specific expenditure the Council expects in future years, in order to smooth the revenue impact. The General Fund reserve is to cover more general risks that may be faced across the council. The Housing Revenue Account has its own separate reserves. There are also reserves associated with the Dedicated Schools Grant.

It is part of the role of the Chief Finance Officer to assess whether the level of reserves is adequate, which they will do in conjunction with relevant lead officers. The Chief Finance Officer has a statutory duty to ensure the council's finances are fit for purpose under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1974.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Financial reserves should be set in the context of the authority's risk register and mediumterm plans and should not focus exclusively on short-term considerations. Balancing the annual budget by drawing on general reserves may be viewed as a legitimate short-term option. However, it is not prudent for reserves to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure. CIPFA has commented that councils should be particularly wary about using reserves to deal with shortfalls in current funding. Where such action is to be taken, this should be made explicit, and an explanation given as to how such expenditure will be funded in the medium to long term. Advice should be given on the adequacy of reserves over the lifetime of the medium-term financial plan and should also take account of the expected need for reserves in the longer term.

The CFO has a duty to report on robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003) when the authority is considering its budget requirement. Section 28 of the Act also requires budget monitoring 'from time to time' and take action to deal with any deterioration. As part of the medium-term financial plan, section 2 sets out the reserves and balances, providing details regarding the use of the reserve and estimated balances. A further breakdown of the reserves is provided in the table later in this report.

These requirements are reinforced by Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which requires the chief finance officer in England and Wales to report to all the authority's councillors if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the authority will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.

The report details the overall position and considerations taken in respect of reserves and how the financial values required are set strategically to balance the level of risk from across the organisation's operations and approach to investment.

Like most local authorities across the Country, Wokingham have faced and will continue to face significant financial challenges and risks. Some of these risks are within the control of the Council and therefore action can be taken to mitigate against risks however a number remain outside the Councils control (e.g. future local government funding settlement, inflation, interest rates, demand for statutory services such as adults and Childrens social care) and require prudent financial management to protect against these risks. Where strong financial management fails, Councils can have little choice other than to restrict non-essential spending which can lead to significant impacts for the residents and businesses in those areas.

The Council have embarked and delivered on an ambitious capital programme including regenerating Wokingham town centre, delivering much need housing through our strategic development locations, invested in commercial assets, care homes and affordable housing working with our subsidiary companies and future investment planned in solar farms. As expected, there are risks associated with all of these areas, some risks are higher than others and some risks will reduce over time. The Council have taken a careful approach to ensure appropriate levels of reserves are held to protect against these risks. Over a number of years Wokingham have maintained a responsible level of reserves whilst still protecting services to residents.

Background

The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 31A, 32, 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

There are also a range of safeguards in place that help to prevent local authorities over committing themselves financially. These include:

- Setting a balanced budget (Sections 31A, 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended)
- Chief finance officers' duty to report on robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003) when the authority is considering its budget requirement (England and Wales); Section 28 of the Act also requires budget monitoring 'from time to time' and take action to deal with any deterioration.
- The legislative requirement for each local authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the chief finance officer/proper officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Council are required under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. The legislative requirement for each local authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

While it is primarily the responsibility of the local authority and its chief finance officer to maintain a sound financial position, external auditors will confirm that there are no material uncertainties about going concern. It is not an auditor's responsibility to prescribe the optimum or minimum level of reserves for individual authorities or authorities in general.

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a critical member of the leadership team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the organisation's strategic objectives sustainably and in the public interest. The CFO role is one of 3 statutory roles which together oversee the finances and governance of the council, the other two being the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer. The CFO must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the organisation's financial strategy. The CFO must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole organisation of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively.

CIPFA's Prudential Code requires chief finance officers in local authorities to have full regard to affordability when making recommendations about the local authority's future capital programme. Such consideration includes the level of long-term revenue commitments. Indeed, in considering the affordability of its capital plans, the authority is

required to consider all the resources available to it estimated for the future, together with the totality of its capital plans and revenue forecasts for the forthcoming year and the following two years.

Impact on Cash Management and Borrowing

Holding usable reserves allows the Council to invest cash to generate investment returns or avoid the need to externally borrow thus reducing interest payments.

As highlighted in the treasury management outturn report presented to Executive on 28th September, the Councils borrowing requirement (known as Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)) is £453m at 31st March 2023, £371m for the general fund and £82m for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Due to strong cash balances (reserves + working capital), the Council are able to support this borrowing requirement through internal borrowing and limiting external borrowing to £182m. This helps minimise external interest costs which is important at a time when interest rates are high and very volatile. Interest rates on external borrowing costs will always be higher than interest rates achieved on investments.

It is important that the Council maintain strong cash balances to support the total borrowing requirement (CFR). As set out in the treasury management strategy, the Councils CFR is prudent and affordable however does come with financial risk with regards to interest rates and repaying down the CFR. An important mitigation to this risk is maintaining reserves which can support the need to limit external borrowing. The current CFR is expected to reduce each year through debt repayments such as capital receipts, income generation, developer contributions, subsidiary loan repayments and minimum revenue provision (MRP) payments.

Types of Reserves

There are a variety of different reserves which consist of;

- General Fund Balance Reserve (GFB) held to provide a general contingency to
 offset any impact from unexpected events or emergencies. In addition, it provides
 some stability to support longer term planning.
- Earmarked Reserves unringfenced and held for specific purposes such as developer funding for future maintenance of assets, grants received in advance and equalisation funds to smooth annual changes on demand led areas such as waste and recycling. Other reserves include interest equalisation and forward funding which are linked to the capital programme where infrastructure is delivered ahead of receipt of developer funding.
- Housing Revenue Account Reserve similar to the general fund reserve however ringfenced for the housing revenue account.
- Schools & Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves* ringfenced reserves relating to schools funding for investment in future expenditure within schools. The DSG deficit reserve is required to be treated as an unusable reserve under accounting requirements, currently until 31st March 2026. This does not remove the financial

risk / impact of having a reserve in a deficit position and the uncertainty of what will be required post March 2026.

In addition, the Council will hold reserves that are held and restricted for capital purposes, these include the capital receipts reserve, capital grants reserve and major repairs reserve (ringfenced for the HRA)

Earmarked Reserves

When reviewing medium-term financial plans and preparing annual budgets local authorities should consider the establishment of earmarked reserves. These will be held for a number of purposes:

- a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies
- a means of building up funds to meet known or predicted requirements.
- a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing.

There are a number of budget assumptions which can have an impact on need for earmarked reserves, these include;

- Volatility in inflation and interest rates.
- Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts.
- The treatment of demand led pressures.
- The treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains.
- The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments.
- The availability of reserves, government grants and other funds to deal with major contingencies and the adequacy of provisions.
- The general financial climate to which the authority is subject (local government finance settlement, government spending reviews).
- Reductions of income.
- New service demands and responsibilities (e.g. demographic changes, accommodating refugees)

It is possible and allowable within the overall balance of earmarked reserves to have some individual reserves that hold debit balances. For example, equalisation reserves where costs outweigh income in the early years of an asset operational life and over time, income exceeds costs, and the deficit reserve is brought into balance.

Part of the risk management process involves taking appropriate action to mitigate or remove risks, where this is possible. This in turn may lead to a lower level of reserves being required, and it would be appropriate to consider reducing the level of balances held where appropriate action to mitigate or remove risks has been successfully undertaken. A balance will need to be found between maintaining adequate levels of reserves and investing in risk reduction measures.

Wokingham's Strategic Approach

The overall relatively high level of Reserves is consistent with a relatively high CFR. This is because the higher CFR has been required to fund the Council's strong Capital investment ambition over many years, including: Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration, Strategic Development Locations, and Affordable Housing delivered through its

companies. Such an ambition clearly exposes the Council to greater financial risk, requiring stronger financial safeguards and required funding mechanisms through its Reserves. This is one of the key contextual considerations taken by the CFO in determining a safe and required level of overall reserves for the Council.

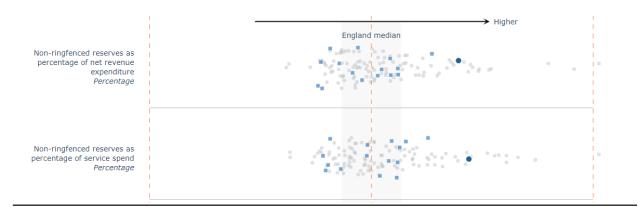
A further strategic context is that the current and potentially future nature of the Local Government Finance Settlement leaves the Authority particularly exposed to potential drastic detrimental movements in funding and/or significantly underfunded transfers in responsibilities that may result from any changes to the methodology for calculating perceived need and subsequent allocation of resources across Local Authorities.

A final consideration on Wokingham's strategic approach is the overall reserve balance position in the context of deficit balances, in particular, the Dedicated Schools Grant. The financial reserves are monitored closely and considered against the financial risks the Council face. The level and types of risks will change over time with new emerging risks arising. Holding a prudent level of reserves provides the Council the ability to review and adapt the reserves it holds which is a vital strategic financial control.

A recent data analysis tool has been made available by the Office for Local Government (Oflog) providing a number of metrics across a subset of service areas, including finance (the data is drawn from the latest Revenue Outturn returns made by all local authorities). These show clearly how the Council is currently balancing its level of debt and the repayment of that debt with a level of reserves.

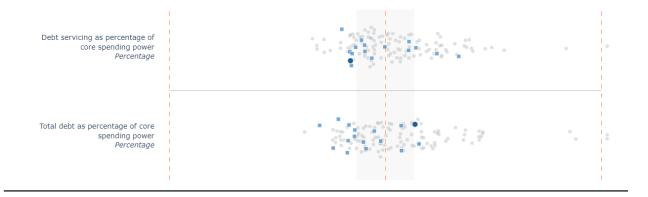
The tables below compare Wokingham (round mark) with it local neighbours/similar authorities (square mark) and all other authorities.

The first two tables show how Wokingham's non-ringfenced reserves compare and show a high level against most other local authorities



The next two tables show how the comparatively higher level of reserves are being used to manage the risk from the current strategy of lower debt servicing and relatively high level of debt compared to other Councils. i.e. the relatively higher level of reserves balances the level of risk the Council faces from its relatively higher level of debt and lower level of debt servicing





Association of Local Authority Treasurers Societies (ALATS) Review

Earlier in the year, ALATs led an analysis of local authority reserves across all forms of local government in response to DLUHC comments about the levels held and the purposes. Some of the key outcomes highlighted from ALATs is set out below.

Reserves must always be a matter for the Section 151 Officer's professional judgement as set out in Statute that it is for the s151 Officer to advise their respective council. Where these are deemed insufficient then there are further statutory duties to take action under s114. As such as part of s25 duties all s151 officers carry out regular reviews of the level and use of their reserves.

Broadly the data, received from 144 authorities (just under 50% of all local authorities), shows some consistency of trends and patterns across all types of authorities. The data is also consistent with Revenue Out-turn (RO) returns, Revenue Budget (RA) returns, and Accounts produced. This data identifies that those surveyed have a level of reserves greater than one year savings but that these are declining and over a longer period this is not sustainable. In such cases without significant financial restructure this will quickly lead to risk of a S114 notice where reserves can no longer support the annual revenue gap.

It should be noted that cash reserves are invested under CIPFA's Treasury Management code and forms a key part of all council's income streams. Any use of these to fund settlement shortfalls simply adds to pressures from a loss of investment income.

Table of Reserves

Earmarked Reserves are unringfenced however are held for specific purposes and to mitigate future risks. These can be broken down as follows;

Earmarked Reserve Type	Justification for Reserve	Estimated Balance 31st March 2024	Financial Risk / Exposure
Insurance	Required to fund insurance claims below excess limits in insurance policies. Higher excess limits reduce annual premiums payable by the Council however means WBC must absorb more costs when claims are made.	£2,680,000	£250k - £300k drawdown per annum expected based on claims history and excess limits. Council insures c£1billion of assets.

			In additional, unforeseen historic specific claims
Renewals Funds	Required to ensure future funds available to fund the anticipated replacement cost of the items over their expected life. The need for these sinking funds (e.g. 3G pitches / tennis courts) are often required under the conditions of certain grant funding.	£1,220,000	Future replacements costs in excess of £2m + conditions of grant funding
Equalisation Funds	Required to smooth the annual impact on the revenue budget and avoid fluctuations each year on key areas which are subject to market conditions and have deficits in early years which are repaid once assets operational and generating income. Examples include Solar Farm, Leisure Contract	£2,540,000 Deficit	Deficits will increase in short term as planned and then return to balanced / surplus position subject to income levels, etc.
Waste Equalisation Fund	Required to smooth the annual impact on the revenue budget and avoid fluctuation each year across all waste and recycling activities which are subject to external factors such as recycling rates, levels of waste, etc. The reserve is also held to mitigate risks from future implications of the waste PFI arrangement which expires in 2031/32.	£1,990,000	Waste PFI contract ends 2031, high risk as costs unknown, contract arrangements unknown, WBC have no land asset. c£15m-£20m estimated as WBCs share (37%) of original capital costs. Dilapidations & Capital costs likely to be required at contract renewal.
Interest and Debt Repayment	Required to mitigate the impact on the revenue budget where fluctuations in market conditions may have an adverse impact on interest costs on new borrowing and refinancing of existing borrowing when historic loans mature. Reserve is also required to help offset any impact from changes in government policy around debt repayment (e.g. minimum revenue provision).	£12,820,000	A 1% impact from long term higher interests against the general fund capital financing requirement of £276m (at March 2023, excluding town centre) could equate up to £2.76m per annum in additional interest costs (depending on timing on borrowing / level of cash balances, etc). Impact from new MRP guidelines alone are expected to be £1m to £2m per annum equating to £5m to £10m over 5 years.

Pension Contributions	Required to mitigate the annual impact on the revenue budget when the pension contributions are set every three years by the Berkshire Pension Fund including an annual contribution to reduce the pension deficit. Contributions currently agreed up to 31/03/26.	£6,240,000	Annual deficit payments will vary however are in the region of c£3m - £4m (£3.42m 23/24, £3.56m 24/25, £3.7m 25/26) . A base budget is in place however variances against this budget will be covered through this reserve. Overall pension liability is £120m at 31/03/23.
Town Centre Regeneration	Required to mitigate the annual impact on the revenue budget where fluctuations in market conditions may have an adverse impact on annual rental income (e.g. long term covid impact, national / local economy, etc). Reserve is also required to mitigate risks associated with the long-term capital financing costs of the regeneration (interest and debt repayments).	£9,350,000	Debt position at 31/03/23 was c£95m. Rental income required to fund interest costs and debt repayment costs. Overall position to be reviewed upon completion.
Fairer Funding Review	Required to mitigate unknown risks from future local government finance settlements including removal of new homes bonus, impact from levelling up agenda, reduction in core spending power, risk of negative revenue support grant, etc.	£19,920,000	New Homes Bonus - Currently £2.2m assumed in base budget. Allocation for 23/24 only £1.9m. High risk scheme will end meaning c£2m shortfall per annum or £10m over 5 years. Core Spending Power (including Council Tax) is £161.9m for 2023/24. If the government reduce this and / or increases are behind inflation, a 3% impact would equate to c£5m per year, or £25m over 5 years. Total potential impact of the above over 5 years is £35m.
Commuted Sums	These are amounts received from developers for the maintenance of open spaces, parks and natural greenspaces (SANGs). These are secured through the planning process to ensure long term funding for the maintenance of these areas. Also includes section 38/278 highways agreements.	£24,360,000	This is for infrastructure and will be draw down annually over long term into revenue budget. During 2023/24, c£1m expected to be drawdown into revenue.
Forward Funding	Required to offset capital financing financial impact where there are timing differences between capital investment costs and receipt of developer contributions.	£22,410,000	Forward funding debt at 31/03/23 was c£30m. Based on 5.5% interest, c£1.7m drawdown per

			annum until developer funding received. Furthermore, there is potential shortfall in capital funding over the mediumterm capital programme.
Other	Various smaller reserves held across departments to support ongoing projects, efficiency and improvement works over medium-term plan.	£1,360,000	Required to support specific service pressures (such as winter maintenance) and supporting efficiency and transformation programmes.
Children Services	Held to support current and future risks around children services, demand management, transformation and efficiency programmes.	£1,080,000	Children Services facing significant pressures in current year.
Building Control	Building control service is required to operate an independent trading account which is ringfenced. Reserve is held to support investment in building control service and ensure trading account holds a rolling three-year break-even position required under the CIPFA regulations	£230,000	Required to support building control to ensure trading accounts operates a three-year rolling break even position.
Adult Social Care	Held to support current and future risks around adult social care, supporting the market and providers, development of WBC care company, impact of national living wage, demand management.	£3,590,000	Required to support delivery of savings and efficiencies. Financial Impact and timing from longer term care reforms
Property portfolio	Required to mitigate the annual impact on the revenue budget where fluctuations in market conditions may have an adverse impact on annual rental income (e.g. long term covid impact, national / local economy, etc).	£1,000,000	Rental income c£5m per annum (excluding town centre regeneration).
Business rates	A CIPFA recommended held reserve required to mitigate number of risks associated with business rates from changes in collection rates, level of appeals and bad debt, changes in government policy on rates payable. Reserve also required to offset annual fluctuations created from complex statutory collection fund accounting for business rates.	£5,020,000 (net of collection fund deficit)	Level of retention (currently 49%), tariff payment payable by the Council. c£62m collected during 2022/23, a 2% impact would equate to c£1.25m per annum. Central government only protect 92.5% of retained business rates (known as safety net), remaining 7.5% required to be funded by WBC if NNDR income falls below government set target. Equates to £960k per annum.

Revenue Grants	Relate to a number of revenue grants received across all services which are planned to be spent in short / medium term in line with grant requirements. These includes areas such as Ukraine Funding, new burdens funding, homelessness, school improvements, council tax support schemes, etc.	£3,480,000	Individual services will plan to utilise 2024 to 2027.
Public Health Grant	Ringfenced grant held to support public health objectives and initiatives in line with requirements of annual grant funding	£780,000	24/25 grant allocation confirmed with only 1% inflation uplift on current level. Reserves to cover the shortfall from this increase for the continuation of the public health statutory services
Carry Forwards	Required to fund and deliver the carry forwards agreed by Executive previously as part of revenue monitoring outturn reports.	£2,300,000	

DSG Deficit	Statutory account required to account for the deficits created where ringfenced expenditure is greater than ringfenced income across maintained schools, early years, and high needs services.	£21,000,000 deficit after £8m government contribution	Deficit forecast expected to increase to almost £50m over 5 years before safety value contribution.
DSG Equalisation Fund	1% Council Tax contribution each year from 2023/24 to contribute to deficit and fund safety value programmes	£300,000	Reserve to be monitored and reviewed alongside safety value programme

The appropriate level of all reserves is monitored continually, and a full review is undertaken as part of the develop of the Medium-Term Financial Plan that will be put before council in February 2024

Risk of Depleted Reserves

More recently, an increasing number of local authorities have raised warnings about their financial health and sustainability. Some Councils have already issued a section 114 notice meaning the local authority are unable to balance its budget and are effectively bankrupt. These include;

- Birmingham City Council (September 2023)
- Woking (June 2023)
- Thurrock (December 2022)
- Croydon (November 2022)
- Slough (July 2021)
- Northamptonshire (February 2018)

Nb, the most recent example prior to Northamptonshire was London Borough of Hackney in 2000

More recently, there are councils who are publicly issuing warnings that they face the real risk of needing to issue a section 114 notice on almost a weekly basis.

There are a number of reasons those authorities have found themselves in that position, including non-delivery of efficiency savings, poorly delivering investments and increased demand/costs (with Childrens social care most frequently cited). However they have all found themselves in a position where they do not have sufficient reserves to balance the budget whilst they resolve any ongoing revenue pressures/gaps. The need therefore for sufficient and robust reserves at this incredibly difficult financial time is absolutely critical to manage the short, medium and longer-term position.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial	See other financial	Y	Both
Year (Year 1)	implications		
Next Financial Year	See other financial	Y	Both
(Year 2)	implications		
Following Financial	See other financial	Υ	Both
Year (Year 3)	implications		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no financial implications associated with the scrutiny process, however, the full MTFP, when submitted to Council in February 2024, will have to represent a balanced budget.

Cross-Council Implications

This is in respect of budgets across all Council services.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Not at this stage of consideration but equality impact statements will be required before specific proposals are agreed and implemented.

List of Background Papers	
None	

Contact Graham Ebers	Service Resources & Assets	
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Agenda Item 42.

Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Action Tracker 2023/24

Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 May 2023			
Agenda Item	Action	Update	
Minutes of Previous Meeting	• Agreed	Completed	
Flood Risk Management	 Officers aim to send follow-up emails to Members once flood risk management works had been completed in their Wards; Written answer re manhole covers; 	• Completed • Completed	
	 Lower Earley peripheral road issue – officers to liaise with relevant Ward Member; 	Completed	
	 Members to encourage residents to 'bulk' report issues to Thames Water. 	Completed/Noted	
Combatting Drugs Partnership	 Datasets re relapses, 6 & 12-month programme successes for the Borough be circulated; 	Ongoing	
	 Officers to ascertain if the police operation over Christmas was random or intelligence based; 	Ongoing	
	• Schedule agenda item re oversight of the delivery group – end of 23/24 municipal year.	● March 2024	
Active Travel Task and Finish Group Appointments	•Information be provided to the Group re funding allocation and any Government preferences to suggested WBC schemes.	Completed	
Work Programmes	• Chair, Vice-Chair and S151 officer to meet re earmarked reserves item;	Completed	
	 Arts and Culture strategy to be scheduled; Officers liaise with Highways colleagues re scheduling items for September 2023 meeting; 	• September 2023 • Completed	
	 Schedule item on the Local Plan Update; Arrange item on planning/strategic planning/enforcement services via the Chair; 	October 2023Ongoing	
	 Arrange work programme by 'topic'; Consider inviting representatives from housing management companies to the Committee. 	Completed Ongoing	

Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 July 2023			
Agenda Item	Action	Update	
Minutes of Previous Meeting	• Agreed	Completed	
Draft Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	Comments and feedback from the Committee be fed into the development of the strategy;	Completed	
	 Further update to be scheduled. 	January 2024	
Directorate Priorities – Resources and Assets	 Informal Working Group to be stablished to develop a model business case template, supported by Graham Ebers and Sally Watkins, comprising of Councillors David Cornish, Peter Dennis, Norman Jorgensen, and Pauline Jorgensen; 	Ongoing	
	 Note the priorities, opportunities and challenges. 	Completed	
Directorate Priorities – Place and Growth	•Note the priorities, opportunities and challenges.	Completed	
Community Safety	 Member Comments be fed back to the CSP; 	 Completed 	
Partnership Update	 Further information be provided on specific issues raised at the meeting; 	Completed	
	•The Council's ASB team be congratulated on their achievements over the past year.	Completed	
Wokingham Anti- Abuse Charter Update	 Progress relating to the Anti-Abuse Charter be reported to Members in conjunction with the annual Community Safety Partnership update report. 	Completed	
Work Programme	• The work programme be amended to reflect the point raised by Members;	Completed	
	• The Chair and Vice-Chair discuss the possibility of additional meetings in order to ensure the effective scrutiny of items on the work programme.	Ongoing	

Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2023			
Agenda Item	Action	Update	
Minutes of Previous Meeting	• Agreed	Completed	
Member Question Time	Provide written supplementary answer to Cllr Cowan and publish in the Minutes.	Completed	
Arts and Culture Strategy Update	 Officers consider amending any future versions of the Committee report to show which bids were in progress, finished, delayed or cancelled Officers consider placing additional efforts into advertising the ongoing and future work 	Noted Noted	
	of engagement with young adults; • Chair to liaise with officers and the Executive Member to establish an appropriate meeting to provide an update on tangible outputs that the public could recognise as successes of the strategy;	Ongoing	
	Arts and Culture Service Plan (internal document) be shared with the Committee at the appropriate time.	Ongoing	
Highways and Transport – Customer Service,	 Officers seek to amend the wording of the report function to specify reports to pedestrian footpaths; 	Completed	
Potholes and Small Projects	 Members and residents be invited to report any such instances of HGVs damaging road surfaces as a result of turning manoeuvres; 	• Noted	
	 Members and residents be invited to report instances of rough patches of roads and cycleways as a result of respraying; 	Noted	
	Members contact the Highways team directly should they not be receiving details of TROs within their Ward;	Noted	
	•The Committee consider a follow-up session to highlight any improvements made with regards to communications and resident satisfaction	Ongoing	
Local Transport Plan 4	 Officers consider adding the hierarchy of road users into the LTP4; Officers consider amending the wording of 	Completed Noted	
	the section on scooting to specify push-scooting;		
	 Officers consider adding in information relating to demographic data from the consultation into the draft LTP4; 	Noted	

	Executive Members and officers be requested to assess the data received from the consultation and place a special focus on any groups which had been underrepresented in future consultations on the LTP4;	Noted/Ongoing
	Officers consider providing an Executive Summary at the beginning of the LTP4, outlining the conclusions and recommendations of the report to help residents to easily engage with the plan and proposals;	● Noted
	Officers consider exploration of more standard market research techniques, in order to reach a wider range of people and to help qualify the data;	Noted
	The Committee consider if a further session be required to offer additional overview and scrutiny of the LTP4 prior to its consideration at the Executive.	● Noted
Action Tracker	Briefing Note on Freedom of Information Requests be produced and circulated to the Committee.	• Ongoing
Work Programme	LPU item to move to November;VAWG strategy updated to be scheduled for	Completed
	January. Chair to meet with Exec Member and appropriate officers to discuss tangible delivery dates and achievements;	Completed
	Chair to speak with officers with regards to potentially scheduling currently unscheduled topics.	Ongoing

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
9 October 2023 (Extraordinary)	Local Transport Plan 4	To consider the draft LTP4.	Committee request	Robert Curtis
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
30 October 2023	Medium Term Financial Plan	To receive details of proposed bids within the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
14 November 2023	Medium Term Financial Plan	To receive details of proposed bids within the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Local Plan Update	To receive an update on the development of the Local Plan Update	Work Programme	lan Bellinger
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
28 November 2023	Medium Term Financial Plan	To receive details of proposed and updated bids within the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

	DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
	19 December 2023	Medium Term Financial Plan	To receive details of proposed and updated bids within the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
		Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
		Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services
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DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
22 January 2024	Enforcement and Safety Service	To scrutinise the delivery of the Council's enforcement and safety service	Work programme	Narinder Brar
	Planning Service	To scrutinise the delivery of the Council's Planning, Strategic Planning and Planning Enforcement services	Committee request	Trevor Saunders
	Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	To consider an update on the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.	Committee Request	Narinder Brar
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
4 March 2024	Police and Fire Services	To receive an update on the work of the Police and Fire Services	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Flood Risk Management	To receive the annual update on the Council's delivery of the flood risk management strategy	Work Programme	Boniface Ngu
	Combatting Drugs Partnership	To receive a report on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership Delivery Group	Committee Request	Narinder Brar
	Action Tracker	To consider the Committee's action tracker	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2023-24	Standing Item	Democratic Services

Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

	MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN	Scheduled or Considered
1.	Scrutinising the development of the Council's Budget for 2024/25	Oct 2023 onwards
	COMMUNITY ISSUES	Onwards
2.	Reviewing the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the effectiveness of local policing and fire and rescue services	July 2023; March 2023 Police/Fire
3.	Scrutinising delivery of the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	July 2023; January 2024
4.	Scrutinising delivery of the Anti-Abuse Strategy	July 2023
5.	Scrutinising delivery of the Drug and Alcohol Misuse Strategy	May 2023; Delivery Group March 2024
6.	Scrutinising the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Strategy	Ongoing
7.	Scrutinising measures to develop closer working relationships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector	Ongoing
	PLANNING, LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENT	
8.	Scrutinising progress on the Local Plan Update and the Council's Five Year Land Supply	November 2023
9.	Scrutinising performance of the in-house Enforcement and Safety service	January 2024
10.	Exercising the Council's flood risk management responsibilities by monitoring flood risk activities and partnership working with Towns and Parishes	May 2023; Update March 2024
11.	Scrutinising burial capacity across the Borough and the Council's plans to ensure adequate future capacity	Via email May 2023

	ACTIVE TRAVEL, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT	
12.	Scrutinising service and policy developments relating to the Council's public facing services and its in-house support services	Ongoing
13.	Reviewing highways and transport issues including highways contracts, customer service, car parking, Bus Strategy and cycling infrastructure	September 2023
14.	Considering the report of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group	Ongoing
15.	Scrutinising the Borough-wide Parking Management Strategy	Ongoing
	OTHER STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND OVERVIEW	
16.	Scrutinising the Council's Arts and Culture Strategy	September 2023
17.	Scrutinising the Council's Housing Services to ensure that the needs of local residents and communities are being met	Ongoing
18.	Scrutinising the operation and performance of the Council-owned companies and shared service arrangements	Ongoing
19.	Considering a progress report on the adopted recommendations of the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group.	Ongoing
20.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate	Ongoing

Task and Finish GroupsActive Travel Task and Finish Group

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