

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 19 MAY 2016 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM

### Members Present

Councillors: Parry Batth (Mayor), Bob Pitts (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Alistair Auty, Keith Baker, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Emma Hobbs, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, Dianne King, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, David Lee, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Barrie Patman, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, Chris Singleton, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Rob Stanton, Alison Swaddle, Paul Swaddle, Simon Weeks, Oliver Whittle and Shahid Younis

### 1. MINUTE SILENCE

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Mayor paid tribute to former District Councillor Phyllis May who had passed away in April and led the Council in a minute of silence.

### 2. ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2016/17

Parry Batth, the current Mayor made a speech to the Council during which he welcomed and introduced the six newly elected Members.

The Mayor stated that he was proud to have been the first Sikh Mayor of Wokingham and that it had been a great honour for him to have been elected Mayor and thanked the Members for their support throughout the year. He paid tribute to his wife Surinder for her help and support during his mayoral year. The Mayor also thanked Bob Pitts, Deputy Mayor, Andy Couldrick the Chief Executive, Anne Hunter, Service Manager Democratic Services and Ann-Marie Bonwick, Civic Communications Officer, for the support and advice that they had provided to him over the municipal year.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that over the municipal year, approximately £12,000 had been raised for his charity, ARC, which provided advice and support for young people and their parents. Children's mental health was a priority in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and of the Children and Young People's Partnership. The Mayor had been proud to recently attend the first Wokingham Walk, organised by the Wokingham Lions, which had raised funds for his chosen charity.

The Mayor commented that he had thoroughly enjoyed his representational duties which had included visiting care homes and schools and participating in citizenship ceremonies. During the municipal year he had welcomed His Royal Highness the Duke of York, His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex and the Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex to the Borough and had also attended the Queen's Garden Party. He had been honoured to attend mock trials at Reading Crown Court which local schools had participated in. The Holt School had won the regional finals and would be participating in the national finals.

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Rob Stanton and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that Bob Pitts be elected as Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

The Mayor also supported Bob Pitt's nomination.

It was unanimously agreed that Bob Pitts should be elected as Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

**RESOLVED:** That Bob Pitts be elected as Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

Bob Pitts made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Bob Pitts thanked the Council for electing him as Mayor which he regarded as a great honour. He would do his best to uphold the traditions and values of the Council.

The Mayor commented that he lived in Ruscombe and represented Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe, one of the most northern wards. He would endeavour to ensure that the more northern wards felt more involved.

He looked forward to being an ambassador for Wokingham and would serve the residents of the Borough with enthusiasm and dignity

The Mayor commented that his chosen Mayoral charity for the municipal year would be Wokingham Mencap and all money raised throughout the municipal year would be used to fund the Wokingham Borough Family Liaison Worker to provide preventative early intervention support. The aim of the role was to stop families reaching crisis point by providing personalised emotional and practical support.

The Mayor paid tribute to Parry Bath for his support and guidance during his term of office as Deputy Mayor. He went on to thank Ann-Marie Bonwick and Anne Hunter and her team for their support. Lastly he thanked his partner Val for her continued support.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2016/17**

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Bob Pitts and seconded by Dianne King that Rob Stanton be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2016/17 municipal year.

Prue Bray indicated that the Liberal Democrat Group would be pleased to support the appointment of Rob Stanton as Deputy Mayor for the 2016/17 municipal year.

It was unanimously agreed that Rob Stanton should be elected as Deputy Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year

**RESOLVED:** That Rob Stanton be elected as Deputy Mayor for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

Rob Stanton made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Rob Stanton thanked the Council for appointing him and commented that he was honoured to take the office of Deputy Mayor. He also congratulated Bob Pitts on his appointment as Mayor.

During his acceptance speech Councillor Stanton paid tribute to his wife Maureen for her care and support.

#### **4. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Laura Blumenthal, Kate Haines, John Halsall, John Jarvis, Ian Pittock, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Bill Soane.

#### **5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

##### **7.1 Jan Heard asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question which was answered by Councillor Ashwell:**

The Mid & West Berkshire Access Forum was deeply disappointed to discover recently that contrary to the advice contained in its submission to the planning application and its presentation to WBC at the Planning Meeting for Reading Football Club's Academy, a signal-controlled crossing was not made a condition of approval for this application. Furthermore, no developer funding was secured for the crossing and a feasibility study, that we were told by your Countryside Officer in November was underway, has not happened.

Explain how this situation has arisen given that RFC offered land at no cost at the Planning Meeting and that it was acknowledged that the crossing could be funded through CIL contributions, and detail the reasoning behind the decision taken by WBC not to provide such a crossing?

##### **Answer:**

This crossing location is part of the Council's ambitious Greenway project. We will be looking into the feasibility of providing a crossing for use by equestrians and other users at this location in due course as part of the project.

The matter was discussed at the Planning Committee and that resulted in Reading Football Club verbally promising to make land available to accommodate a crossing facility if a feasibility study is positive.

The Greenway project proposes several routes across the Borough which will need to be delivered in a phased approach over a number of years. The order in which these routes will be delivered is yet to be agreed and will depend on the complexities of the various routes in terms of land ownership issues, environmental constraints and overall costs.

Once we have an agreed programme for the delivery of the Greenways we will be able to provide an indication as to when the crossing could be provided. Currently there is no capital funding allocated for Greenway project but it will be in the financial year 2017/18.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for your response. Our concerns really revolve around the fact that the land is available now and of course it may not be by the time you get your plan together. I will certainly go back to the LAF with the response but to be honest it does not really answer the question that we asked about why this could not have been achieved out of the planning application. So if I can move to my supplementary now, I have spoken to Anthony Stansfield who is the Police Commissioner, as you are aware, and one of the problems with putting in a crossing is often speed limits and so on. He has told me that the Police budget will contain no money at all for enforcement on rural roads so then a speed limit becomes slightly irrelevant. You might also like to know that West Berkshire Council is installing a crossing for £20,000. This is a signal controlled crossing that is half the cost that these things usually have been. Really, what I would like is for Wokingham Borough Council to make a commitment to work with the LAF so we can find a way to actually make this crossing a reality please.

**Supplementary Answer:**

Firstly, I would like to thank you for being my first question in this role. Being new to the job I do not have the answer to that but I have made several notes. We will work on it and I will come back to you with a written answer and probably talk to you face to face.

**7.2 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

In the recent election it has been claimed that the main opposition party will commit to collection of glass recycling regardless of cost. Can you confirm the figures of looking into this proposal?

**Answer:**

Thank you for your question Guy and the opportunity you give me to further support our provision of glass recycling.

There are two ways to collect glass at the kerbside. The first is to use a completely separate vehicle and collect the mixed glass. This would be more convenient for residents but would cost the Council around £600,000 per annum to provide the service and the glass would not be recycled as glass but as mixed glass which can only be used for building and road foundations.

The second way would be to collect it in the black boxes together with the other recycling materials (often referred to as co-mingling). Although the actual collection costs would be minimal, again the mixed glass can only be reused for road and building foundations and not recycled, but in addition it would risk sustainable markets for paper and card due to the high risk of contamination and there would be significant capital costs to remodel the sorting machinery at Smallmead, something Wokingham would have to pay for unless Bracknell Forest and Reading also wanted to have this separation facility.

We have 39 Bring Banks and two household waste recycling centres which collected approximately 3,000 tonnes of glass in the last year. That is from our Borough. We accept that we need to do more to increase the collection of glass for recycling and we are working on additional sites, especially on new developments, to make it easier for our residents to access and use them. All glass collected in this scheme is recycled into new green, clear and brown glass which also saves around 450 kgs of CO<sub>2</sub> per tonne in energy and saves valuable resources.

So, we believe the majority of collectable household glass is recycled because residents are prepared to take them to our Bring Banks. So why spend £600k to collect glass that cannot be recycled as glass – a very short-sighted approach by our opposition?

**Supplementary Question:**

I agree with your comments on the short sightedness. By my quick calculations that is a 1% increase in council tax on its own before any fines due to contamination etc and we cannot even recycle the glass it seems; so not very green. When doing the Budget there are more important areas to consider such as Social Care. You mentioned that there are currently 39 Bottle Banks, as I call them, in the Borough. Could you let me know how many more the Borough Council is looking to bring online and if there are any for Earley?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I agree it is short sighted to put forward the kerbside collection idea knowing the very successful arrangements we have in place for our collections and operating our recycling centres and the financial implications. As for new Bring Banks they will primarily be in areas of new development which Earley is not experiencing. However, if local residents can suggest possible new sites in Earley we will definitely investigate to see whether they are suitable and possible. We have to take account of the safe parking areas, noise to nearby residents and proximity to other Bring Banks amongst other things.

**7.3 Keith Malvern asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Councils deal with public money and need to be careful how they spend it, to make sure everything is done properly and there is no maladministration or improper spending. Please could you tell me what you would consider would be improper use of public money by Wokingham Borough Council?

**Answer:**

My focus and attentions are very much about ensuring we have systems in place to ensure we make the best possible and proper use of our Council taxpayers' money, so I am going to answer your question from that perspective. The governance and processes we have in place to ensure proper use of our resources are significant. We have a publicly agreed Constitution that sets out these arrangements. It includes giving specific resource allocation powers to the Executive, and to the Overview and Scrutiny body to call in and examine such decisions made by Executive. There is an Audit Committee that oversees our governance arrangements, which includes the use of money, and an Audit Team that supports them and alerts them to any issues of concern. The scope of the Audit Committee includes a Whistle Blowing Policy to ensure any concerns of improper use of funds can be safely investigated, together with other policies to safeguard funds such as the Money Laundering Policy and Counter Fraud Policy. Furthermore a host of financial arrangements to ensure proper use of resources is contained in the Financial Regulations and numerous financial management arrangements which fall under the responsibility of our statutory Chief Finance Officer, who is next to you, in conjunction with our Executive Lead Member for Finance. All these arrangements are of course also subject to Audit. I would say that there is a considerable amount here to ensure the proper use of money and that the improper use of money would be either not having such diligent arrangements in place or allowing them to be breached. Neither of which I would allow to happen.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for the response. More detailed than I was expecting or I can cope with really but I will look forward to reading it in the Minutes. It does not take me much further forward on the particular issue that I wish to raise with you. It relates to in February of this

year when you were considering what to do with the £2.1million transitional relief that John Redwood fought so hard to get for the Council. Did you email to suggest that 'we take a long hard look at whether we can release some of the £1.7million reserves that was earmarked to cover the shortfall to provide a boost to candidates on election year by some additional spending in some critical areas'? How do you view that suggestion now?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I do not comment on leaked documents I am afraid. Basically that did not happen and it was just something that was a suggestion. It did not happen and it will not happen.

**8. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions received.

**9. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER - BOROUGH, PARISH AND POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS - 5 MAY 2016**

The Council considered a revised report, which was tabled at the meeting, from the Council's Head of Governance and Improvement Services in his role as Returning Officer in respect of the Elections held on 5 May 2016, as set out on Agenda pages 43 to46.

It was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Alison Swaddle that the revised report be agreed.

Pauline Jorgensen thanked the Returning Officer and all the staff who had been involved in the efficient running of the recent Elections. Lindsay Ferris echoed these comments.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report of the Returning Officer be noted.

**10. MAYOR'S OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that throughout the year he intended to adhere to the Constitution and to the timings of speeches and questions.

**11. STATEMENTS FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEMBERS  
Keith Baker, Leader of the Council made the following statement:**

Before I talk about my Executive for the coming year I would like to make a few comments on recent Elections. It was a difficult set of circumstances that surrounded these Elections making it one of the most difficult campaigns for many years. The Opposition put in a huge amount of effort in the election period but despite that we were still the most successful party on the Council. As you look around the Chamber you will see missing faces. Our longest serving councillor Bob Wyatt hung up his political shoes after an amazing lengthy period of service and I wish him well in his retirement but I know that he will be keeping a watchful eye over all of us to make sure we do things properly. Mike Gore also retired and I am sure you will all join me in wishing him all the best as he deals with health issues. On the Liberal Democrat benches, the interesting character of Tom McCann who could always be relied on to make noises on the back bench is no longer with us. Nicky Jerrome is also another councillor who is no longer here. We all felt a huge degree of admiration when she spoke in this Chamber about the mental health issues she had unfortunately had and which unfortunately caused her to step down. Whilst we are on opposite sides politically I have the utmost respect for her and what she did. My final comment on missing councillors is reserved for a good friend, Guy Grandison. Guy was a young councillor who made a great contribution during the time he was on the Council.

New and younger Members are the future of this Council and all parties need to get younger people involved. I know Guy will not fade away and he will be back at the earliest opportunity. All of these missing councillors have been replaced by new councillors with a variety of backgrounds. Can I take this opportunity as Leader to welcome them all tonight and to encourage all of you to take an active part in the running of the Council.

Last year I spent some time talking about the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre. I suggested that the Opposition should be more constructive in their stance against the regeneration. This was based on the election results then. The elections this year have shown that absolutely nothing has changed. With little else of substance to say they fought this year's campaign on a continuation of their outright total hostility. To be fair to them they did produce an alternative plan, something they never do within the annual budget. The plan totals 350 words including captions and features such schemes as moving a grocery store to an industrial estate and making it online only. More worryingly it would do away with much needed new housing in Wokingham and sadly gives the impression to residents that the Leader of the Opposition who spoke so eloquently to this Council about the need for affordable housing, is determined to rob hard working people of new homes because of this obsession with a completely unworkable so called alternative plan for Wokingham.

Now let me turn to my Executive as I have made many changes to both the structure and personnel. First of all the biggest change is to split highways and planning. At the same time I have put the town centre regeneration role into the new planning portfolio. My view is that now the planning approvals have been obtained I could no longer justify a separate Executive role for this. I am extremely pleased to announce that Councillor Ashwell, the former deputy, has agreed to take on that role. This provides the continuity needed to drive the regeneration implementation forward. He will be ably assisted by Councillor Bowring who is a long standing member of the Planning Committee and brings massive knowledge to this partnership. He will be specifically looking after the creation of the new Local Plan. Councillor Mirfin, who has done an amazing job in steering all the planning applications through the hostile waters, is stepping down from the Executive and moving to a chairing role on one of the scrutiny committees. Highways will now be under the responsibility of Councillor Richards, who is no stranger to this area having been a deputy here. He will be joined by Councillor Sleight, who will continue to carry out the excellent job on railway and air transport matters, but now formalised as a deputy. Councillor Kaiser, who formerly carried out this combined role, has decided to leave the Executive and I would like to thank him here for all his efforts over the recent years. His contribution will continue in the role of Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. I have long felt that Affordable Housing was in the wrong portfolio and I have taken the opportunity to move this to the Health and Wellbeing portfolio under Councillor McGhee-Sumner. That means that everything to do with this area is now back together under a single post. He will be joined as deputy by Councillor Auty who has extensive experience in this area and is a Non Executive Director of our housing company, WHL. He will be specifically looking after the Affordable Housing part of the portfolio. These are the key changes to my Executive, with one more to complete the new structure. The Voluntary Sector has now moved to be within my portfolio. This sector is a vital participant in assisting this Council going forward. We will inevitably be looking to them to get more involved across all service areas. By putting it into the Leader's portfolio it gives it that high profile, which is required.

Whilst it is not normal to speak of any appointments outside of the Executive, there have been some changes which warrant an exception. Councillor Weeks, who has been the

stalwart of the Planning Committee, has agreed to step aside to allow his Vice Chair Councillor Holton, to take on this role. Councillor Weeks will be stepping into the role of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, where I know his skills of dissecting huge items of paperwork will be extremely helpful. I would like to thank both Councillor Holton and Councillor Norman Jorgensen, who are both stepping away from scrutiny, for all their efforts over the years. Like Simon, they have been running a variety of the scrutiny committees for a very, very long time and the time was right to hand over the baton to other councillors.

Finally, a word about the way forward. None of us can deny that we face difficult times ahead but this Conservative Group has a positive plan to take the Council in to the next decade and beyond; one that will see services that meet residents' needs without robbing every penny from their pockets. Two years ago I had the privilege of being elected Leader. We started on a journey then. Let's all of us, Members on all sides, go together to complete that journey to build a flagship authority that we and our residents can be proud of.

**Prue Bray, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group made the following statement:**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to start by congratulating both you as the new Mayor and the new Deputy Mayor. I would also like to welcome back all those councillors who held their seats this time, but in particular obviously Lindsay Ferris and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, the Liberal Democrats. Also, welcome to all new councillors of all parties and I hope they will enjoy their time, but obviously particularly Clive. It was interesting as he used to sit at the front and ask questions and this time it was Guy in that role, so we look forward to that. I would also like to pay tribute to the councillors who either lost their seats or stood down this time and in particular I think Council will not feel the same without Tom McCann's frequent interjections. To move on from that, if the Conservative leadership on this Council think that having a large majority means residents support whatever the Conservatives choose to do, they should think again. The Liberal Democrats got well over a quarter of the vote across the Borough. We won Twyford, Winnersh and Hawkedon at a gallop. We had a huge leap forward in our vote share in Evendons and came within a whisker of gaining Emmbrook. At some point, perhaps when the bulldozers go into the Rose Street car park on to Elms Field, you will finally realise that your plans for Wokingham Town Centre do not have public backing. We will continue to campaign for alternative proposals which are considerably longer than 350 words and on regeneration which fits Wokingham as a market town. We will continue to work on the other issues that we know residents think are important. We have five priorities. We fought the Election on them and those are the priorities that will guide us this year. Using money wisely; listening to residents; looking after the vulnerable; protecting green spaces; and standing up for residents wherever they live. In light of what I am going to say next I would ask you to bear those priorities in mind.

We are all used to spin, after all why would someone not present the facts in a way they feel best suits their case? But there is a step between spin and distortion and a further step from distortion to misinformation and from there it is only a tiny hop to out and out lies. The tactics used by the Conservatives in Emmbrook both in the local elections and in the Town Council by-election in February, in our view, crossed the line from the acceptable to the unacceptable and I know there are Conservatives, some in this Chamber, who share that view. Politics and politicians have sunk very low in the public's opinion and this kind of behaviour just reinforces that view. The public then disengage. In the long run democracy is damaged and politics matters. Every decision made in this Council effects someone's life. All politicians need to do better. It is my belief that most Conservative



councillors and our new Labour colleague would agree with the Liberal Democrats that we are all elected to serve residents and I think it is perfectly possible to disagree but to work together for the good of those residents, and perfectly possible to look for political advantage but still keep a moral compass. However, earlier this evening a question was raised about the moral compass of the Leader of the Council. The Leader's response to Keith Malvern's supplementary was to say that he did not comment on leaked documents. I do not think that he is going to get away with that response for long. In my view the only way that the email he sent on 10 February, can be interpreted, is that he wanted to spend Council money so as to give Conservative candidates an advantage in the elections. Whether any such spending took place is neither here nor there. That email sends a clear message. The Leader of the Council thinks that the interests of the Conservative party come above the needs of residents. Given that he also signed what we consider a very disingenuous and misleading letter, which was sent out as part of the Conservative campaign in Emmbrook, we believe Keith Baker's conduct has fallen below the level that should be expected of a councillor, let alone the Leader of the Council. Seven days notice is required to call a vote of no confidence in the Leader so we cannot do it tonight. However, I can tell you that we have made a formal complaint to the Standards Committee, which I have given to Andrew Moulton earlier this evening. We think Keith Baker should stand aside. This Council should have a Leader who puts the needs of the residents of the Borough first, not the interests of his own political party.

## **12. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

### **12.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

As Reading Football Club has made an offer of land to facilitate a crossing on the B3030 what action has the Council taken to date to secure the land for future use?

#### **Answer**

The matter was discussed at Planning Committee and that discussion resulted in Reading Football Club verbally promising to make land available to accommodate the horse crossing facility if required.

Only once a feasibility study is complete will the Council know what land is required to accommodate the proposed horse crossing on either side of the B3030. Consequently we are not in a position to approach Reading Football Club or other landowners to secure any land at this time.

#### **Supplementary Question:**

I refer to the reply that the Executive Member for Planning gave earlier on to Mrs Jan Heard in which he said the offer of land for the crossing was conditional on the feasibility study, but this is clearly not the case. If you watch the Planning video you will see that the offer was from Barton Willmore and Reading Football Club. Her question also mentioned a survey which was supposed to be underway last November but I contacted Officers recently and they said that no survey at all had been carried out. I was told that it was not the correct thing to say. My question is how can residents have any confidence in a planning system that is content to break its own planning rules and system at the expense of residents it purports to support? Could that perhaps explain the disappearance of the Council's Vision on the Planning Committee's agendas?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I am not able or willing to consider what the Planning Committee itself, as a quasi-independent legal body decided at that evening. What was made clear by my colleague in the answer to Jan Heard's question was that the project and the feasibility of this is included in the consideration of the feasibility of the Greenways project and it would be only right and proper for it to be included in that so that the whole process is integrated. We will be working together on ensuring that does happen.

**12.2 Alison Swaddle asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question which was answered by Councillor Richards:**

Could the Member please provide an update on the Council's transition to Civil Parking Enforcement?

**Answer:**

An Executive report is being prepared for the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016, which will ask for approval required to make the application to the Department for Transport (DfT) and then Parliament to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) throughout the Borough.

The Traffic Management Team are revising the lines and signs throughout the Borough and ensuring the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are correct, which is a requirement of the application. In addition, the Team are mapping the parking restrictions so that the restrictions can be more easily viewed and understood by the public. This work will conclude in Autumn at about the same time the DfT application is submitted.

The Traffic Management Team will consult with the public on small changes to the TROs and allowing maps to replace the text based TROs.

Once the Council approves this, officers will start to prepare for taking on the duties of Civil Parking Enforcement to go live in May 2017.

**Supplementary Question:**

When CPE starts how will the public know what and where the new parking rules are?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Prior to the activation of CPE there will be a considerable amount of public information in terms of newspapers, adverts, notices, public posters and on the website and in various other places. In addition there will be new road markings, road signs and post signs advising of the parking zones and the local parking rules. So they will be known in advance.

**13. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING**

At this point in the meeting 8.50pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 9pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. This was proposed by Bob Pitts and seconded by Rob Stanton.

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

**14. MEMBERS QUESTION TIME CONTINUED****14.1 Tim Holton asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Can the Member confirm that our Council's Constitution specifically prevents a petition

being debated at Council if it relates to a live planning application?

**Answer:**

Yes you are absolutely correct. The Council's Constitution states petitions will not formally be accepted if they in anyway relate to a planning decision; and this includes both current and proposed planning applications.

If a petition is submitted which refers to a current or proposed planning application it will be referred to the Development Management Team and will be considered as part of the representations received for that particular planning application.

**Supplementary Question:**

In light of that answer does the Member agree that it was highly misleading of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group to say in the Wokingham News on a petition relating to Elms Field and to quote 'it is not valid for the Council to suggest that they cannot take the petition', and therefore Councillor Bray should apologise to this Council and the residents of Wokingham Borough?

**Supplementary Answer:**

In light of the attack on myself it is amazing that Councillor Bray is not prepared to apologise, but in answer yes absolutely she should apologise.

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

Could the Member provide an update on the Council's response to the Government's roll out of academisation of authority-controlled schools?

**Answer**

Planning had been undertaken before and then subsequently following the White Paper announcement of the aspiration for a full academisation programme. Prior to the White Paper the Council's Executive Committee had voiced broad support for the national agenda for academisation, proposing a Member task and finish group. Just a couple of days ago I wrote to the Secretary of State about financing these moves.

Officers have been in dialogue with schools, with academisation being the subject of a workshop with Headteachers and chairs of governors on 3 May, and the focus of a School Business Managers' briefing on 11 May. The Heads' briefing later this month will take the agenda forward in the context of a likely mixed economy of maintained and academy schools, following a clarification of government policy. What is known from the information thus far is that the Secretary of State had re-asserted the aspiration for all schools to be academies, but wished to respect emerging views about the appropriateness of compulsion for good or outstanding schools to convert to academies.

Areas discussed include academies and multi-academy trusts, encompassing:

- educational focus and purpose;
- quality standards;
- possible school groupings and the make-up of multi-academy trusts;
- constitutional, financial and change processes; and lastly;
- the potential role of the Local Authority as commercial partner, a champion of pupils and/or the instigator of a larger-scale multi-academy trust.

**Supplementary Question:**

I understand that some of the schools currently have licensed deficits and just in case those schools become academies, what will happen to those budget deficits?

**Supplementary Answer:**

If a school is forced to become an academy because it is considered to be coasting under the new provision definition in the White Paper, which will not be applied until Autumn 2016, or the school is judged to be in Special Measures, then the Council would be liable for keeping that debt. There is a just a very small handful of schools in this Borough that would apply to and the Council would still be able to negotiate with the Schools Funding Agency to ask them to keep the debt on the transfer of that school to becoming an academy. The vast majority of schools in this Borough are judged to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and are much more likely to choose to voluntarily convert to becoming academy trusts.

Lastly, it is useful to understand that licensed deficits come out of the designated schools grant reserves and are limited to 40% of these reserves. As the designated schools grant reserves shrinks as more schools become academies so does the proportionate size of the 40% shrink also, therefore limiting the ability to make available further licensed deficits.

**14.3 Pauline Helliard-Symons asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

Can the Member provide an update on the situation at Southfields School?

**Answer**

Ofsted confirmed the judgement of Special Measures for Southfield on 26 April. This followed an unannounced inspection in March and the lengthy Quality Assurance process involved. Southfield had received a Good Ofsted judgement in 2013. However, late in 2015 concerns grew, and the local authority subsequently issued the school with a warning notice. These findings were also endorsed by the inspecting HMI on behalf of Ofsted. Issues focused on the management of pupil behaviour and site safety. Pupil Outcomes and Teaching, Learning and Assessment were each judged 'Require Improvement', but the overall judgement was 'Inadequate'.

**Supplementary Question:**

Can I ask then what the Authority has done about these findings?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Since the inspection several actions have taken place. Dialogue continues to be maintained with parents and other local authorities whose pupils have a place at Southfields. Parents have broadly been supportive of and understanding of the need for improvement. Some school sessions were closed, particularly at the beginning, for a short time, with priority being placed particularly on the youngest and oldest pupils. Pupils were returned in phases and parents were kept informed. The local authority has withdrawn the governors' rights to a delegated budget and effectively assumed responsibility for the finance and human resources, under powers which are resulting from the statutory 'Schools causing concern' guidance. Now the school has a new interim and experienced Headteacher and she started on 9 May. Post Ofsted planning with the local authority is ongoing and being monitored and is being taken forward with the school for their next HMI monitoring inspection which will take place either late summer or in the autumn term.

Lastly, the Regional Schools Commissioner issued an academy order which is consistent

with the new Education and Adoption Act. This will require the parties to collaborate in moving the school in this situation to becoming a sponsored academy. Work is in hand between Wokingham, the Department for Education and also the Commissioner to identify a suitable sponsor.

**14.4 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

Does the Executive Member for Children's Services share my relief that the government seems to have suspended plans to force all our primary schools to become academies?

**Answer:**

My understanding is that the Government has re-affirmed its commitment to a full academy system for schools. In terms of how that happens it has been judged that a statutory requirement is currently unnecessary.

The Executive Committee has adopted a broadly positive stance on academisation, recognising some outstanding questions about capacity to support the change process, and costs, and you heard me talk about that earlier about writing to the Secretary of State. Those questions are likely to be eased by a more permissive, laissez-faire approach to academy conversion, which I welcome.

**Supplementary Question:**

Given that there is no evidence that academies improve the outcomes for pupils why should we be wasting money converting our schools to academies?

**Supplementary Answer:**

The drive for this policy comes from central Government as you know. We have taken a paper through our Executive and will be supporting our schools to move towards academisation over potentially a four year period and we will support the best way we can, but we always believe that the standards are the important thing and the children's education is at the absolute foremost. Whether they are academies or whether they are local authority schools, the children's education is the most important thing. I think sometimes the title is irrelevant and can sometimes be overlooked.

**15. POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL AND ALLOCATION AND APPOINTMENT TO SEATS ON COUNCIL COMMITTEES/PANELS/BOARDS**

The Council considered a report on the political balance of the Council and the appointment to the Council's Committees/Panels/Board in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.

The report set out a number of recommendations which the Council was asked to consider.

It was proposed by Keith Baker and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1) having reviewed the representation of the political groups on the Council, confirms that it has 48 Conservative Group Members, 5 Liberal Democrat Group Members and 1 Labour Member (as set out in Para 1.1);
- 2) approves the appointment and composition of Committees and Boards as set out in Para 2.1;
- 3) approves the allocation of seats on Committees and Boards on the basis that, of the 86 seats (as set out in Para 3.5), 76 be allocated to the Conservative Group and 10 be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group;
- 4) approves the proposals submitted by the respective Group Leaders and that those Members be appointed to the Committees and Boards as set out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes;
- 5) agrees that the principles of proportionality be applied when Members are appointed to Sub Committees, Panels or Working Groups;
- 6) notes the appointment of the Independent Persons to assist the work of the Standards Committee and the co-opted Parish/Town Council Representatives as set out in Appendix 1;
- 7) notes the elected Member representatives on the Health and Wellbeing Board, as set out in Appendix 1, as nominated by the Leader of Council in accordance with Section 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

#### **16. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND BOARDS 2016/2017**

The Council considered the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Council Committees/Panels/Boards, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 2.

It was proposed by Keith Baker and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council Committees/Panels/Boards be agreed, as set out in Appendix 2 to these Minutes.

#### **17. APPOINTMENT TO PANELS/WORKING GROUPS/JOINT COMMITTEES AND VARIOUS BODIES 2016/17**

Members were asked to refer to a list of nominations to various Panels, Working Groups, Joint Committees and Various Bodies, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 3.

It was proposed by Keith Baker and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Members be appointed to the Council's Panels/Working Groups/Joint Committee and Various Bodies as set out in Appendix 3 to these Minutes.

## **18. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2016/17**

Members were asked to refer to a list of nominations to various Outside Bodies, as circulated at the meeting at Appendix 4.

Where more nominations had been received than places available, individual votes were taken.

It was proposed by Keith Baker and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Members be appointed to the Outside Bodies as set out in Appendix 4 to these Minutes.

## **19. PROTOCOL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL AND CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Council considered a report regarding a protocol for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen and proposed changes to the Council's Constitution, as set out within the Agenda on pages 69 to 78.

It was proposed by Julian McGhee-Sumner and seconded by Pauline Jorgensen that the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Prue Bray drew Council's attention to the proposed changes to the Constitution.

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen of Wokingham Borough Council as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) and as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- 2) it be noted that an Extraordinary Council meeting will be held on 9 June 2016 to consider a nomination that has been received for the role of Honorary Alderman;
- 3) the amendment to Rule 4.2.8 Duration of Meeting as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report be approved;
- 4) comments made by the Constitution Review Working Group concerning the rules of procedure relating to the length of motions as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report be noted.

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