

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 28 JULY 2016 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.20 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Keith Baker (Chairman), Julian McGhee-Sumner, Mark Ashwell, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards and Angus Ross

Other Councillors Present

Richard Dolinski
Lindsay Ferris
Beth Rowland

24. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

25. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 30 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 29, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that her husband was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 29, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Optalis. Councillor Pollock remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

27.1 Liz Slocombe had asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question but due to her inability to attend the meeting a written response as set out below was provided:

Question

Since the expense in setting up the Hearing Impaired Unit at Emmbrook Infants has already occurred and the only expense is in employing a single Teacher for the Hearing Impaired, who could do outreach work from the school if underemployed, what is the benefit in removing the Unit when the huge number of new family houses being built in Wokingham Borough makes it impossible to predict the number of children moving here who may require it?

Answer

The matter of the future of this provision will be considered at a future meeting; it has been put on hold pending further exploration of partnership models for future delivery. Partly that is indeed about finding a way to make best use of the existing facilities at Emmbrook.

The number of new homes in the planned Strategic Development Locations totals 10,000 new homes over a period up to 2026. This is expected to lead to a significant increase in the number of children in the Borough. However it has to be set in the context of over 55,000 current homes, and on this basis the increase in total child numbers could be in the order of 20% over and above what it would otherwise have been. This would point to a potential increase in numbers of children with hearing impairment of a similar percentage over this period. That has to be set against the advances in medical science that have reduced the proportion of children with hearing impairments requiring a specialist teaching resource.

In this context a 20% increase (and this over a decade) does not fundamentally affect the core analysis that there will be too few children to make the Emmbrook provision sustainable in its current scale and form, in the long term. So, expected numbers of four in September (including outreach) would not be greatly affected by an increase even if it were of 20%.

27.2 Chas Hockin asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

The proposed trial of the different car parking charges for Woodley is too short. It should be at least a year to iron out any seasonal fluctuations. Can the Council change its proposal so that the trial lasts at least a year?

Answer

The success of the trial will be evaluated primarily against financial viability. Financial modelling was used to predict income from the evening and Sunday car parking initiative which will be operating from 1st August 2016 elsewhere in the Borough. The Woodley trial proposed by the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative (WTCMI), has been assessed and Officers are recommending a trial to March 2017 on the expectation that this alternative proposal will mirror the income of the evening and Sunday parking initiative. Success will also be measured from feedback from local residents, from business, from the Members and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative during the trial period.

To ensure flexibility the trial is proposed from September to March (inclusive). Seasonal variations are mirrored across the Borough and it is anticipated that the 7 month period proposed will provide enough comparison data to enable a further Executive report, which could include a recommendation to extend the trial period from April 2017, or to make permanent current proposals, should the Council be satisfied that the trial has delivered its required outcomes.

Supplementary Question

I still fail to see how doing a period from August to March does include all the seasonal variations. You have just said it and I expect it is because of your financial year but I disagree with what you say. You should do a year at least.

Supplementary Answer

That will be noted. I can't say that we will change it, obviously, that decision is made later but we can discuss it and see what the outcome of those discussions are.

Councillor Baker responded as follows:

To add to what Councillor Richards has said the review will be ongoing and if there isn't sufficient data to prove one way or the other then the option will be to extend it to a full year or even further.

28. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

28.1 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

What success criteria have been set to enable evaluation of the Woodley car parking charging trial?

Answer

The success of the trial will be evaluated primarily against its financial viability. Financial modelling was used to predict income from the evening and Sunday car parking initiative which will be operating from 1st August 2016 elsewhere in the Borough. The Woodley trial proposed by the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative has been assessed and Officers are recommending a trial to March 2017 on the expectation that this alternative will mirror the income of the evening and Sunday car parking initiative. Success will be measured from feedback from local residents, business, Members and the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative during the trial period.

Following the evaluation of the trial a further Executive report will be presented in 2017 with an Officer recommendation for Woodley car parking from April 2017 which could include extending the trial period beyond April, or making permanent current proposals, should the Council be satisfied that the trial has delivered its required outcomes.

Supplementary Question

If successful will you offer a trial of the same charging regime to other areas of the Borough?

Supplementary Answer

The reason we did Woodley this time is that no other town or parish made requests or were interested in that trial but Woodley were and that is why we are doing the trial there. I am not aware at the moment of any request for any other town or parish to participate but presumably if that came along we would have to consider it.

28.2 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Given the Conservative Government's preference for schools to become academies, we welcome the idea of establishing a Member/Officer working group to explore the possibility of establishing a local multi-academy trust to minimise uncertainty, disruption and expense

for schools and thus to benefit their pupils. Can you please confirm that this working group will be formed on a cross-party basis?

Answer

The reasons for setting up an Officer/Member working group is to explore the emerging issues of the White Paper, look at the consequences of how our schools in partnership with the local authority and education services will function in this new legislative framework; particularly in the context of the continuing reduction in funding to the local authority which is used to deliver our educational services.

To this end, I am firming up the final terms of reference for this working group, proposed meeting dates and I will be sending these out to all Members to ask for them to volunteer to participate. Subject to the Executive approving this agenda item this evening you and other Members from your Group will receive an invitation I anticipate next week.

I will be looking for Members to sign up who are committed to exploring all possible options available to the Local Authority in the context of the national policy, as well as exploring how we can, in the future deliver the very best Virtual School model and champion pupils in underperforming schools. Members and Officers will also in the forthcoming months work with school leaders; many of whom are already engaged in this conversation. It is proposed that the working group will conclude their work in December in order to bring back recommendations to the Executive so there will be a tight timetable of meetings in order to meet this tight timescale.

29. COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES' BUSINESS

(Councillors Pauline Jorgensen and Anthony Pollock declared personal interests in this item)

The Executive considered a report setting out the budget monitoring position for the month ending 31 May 2016 and an operational update for the period to 30 June 2016.

The Leader of Council went through the report and highlighted a number of items including the fact that Optalis had appointed a new Finance Director and a Director of Quality and Delivery which Councillor Baker felt reflected the growing strength of the company. To illustrate this point Councillor Baker drew Members' attention to the business development activities of Optalis including: the Bulmershe extra care home scheme; work with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead on a proposed handover of a Learning Disability residential care home; and being accepted onto the Buckinghamshire Council framework agreement for learning disability supported living services.

In relation to Wokingham Housing Ltd Councillor Baker highlighted the progress of the Phoenix Avenue and Fosters extra care home projects.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the month ending 31 May 2016 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 30 June 2016 be noted.

30. REVENUE MONITORING 2016/17 - END OF JUNE 2015

The Executive considered a report setting out the forecast outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of forecast balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Schools' Block and the Council's investment portfolio. The report also

contained a carry forward request in the sum of £69k relating to a health and wellbeing project which was now due to start in July 2016 and not April 2016 as previously planned.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance drew Members' attention to the projected forecast overspends which were primarily due to: delays in savings relating to customer services and digitisation; issues around social worker retention, although this was being offset by savings in shared services; and issues around homelessness. Councillor Pollock also reminded Members that funds were expected from the Department of Health following the judicial review of the change in eligibility criteria; however a response from the Department of Health on this matter had been very slow.

In addition Councillor Pollock was pleased that the Schools Block and Housing Revenue Account were showing a net surplus and the latter significant balances of £5m.

The Executive Member for Children's Services was pleased to inform the meeting that the investment in recruitment and retention was starting to show benefits as the number of social workers choosing to remain at Wokingham had increased.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the forecast outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of forecast balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Schools' Block and the Authority's investment portfolio be noted;
- 2) the carry forward request as set out in Appendix B be noted.

31. CAPITAL MONITORING 2016/17 - END OF JUNE 2016

The Executive considered a report setting out the Capital budget position for the first quarter of 2016/17.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance reminded the meeting that the Council's Capital Programme, which was currently on track, amounted to £147m; with £115m being spent in the current year and £31m in the next financial year. Councillor Pollock also advised that a large number of the Children's Services' projects related to new schools, which were needed because of the Borough's growing population, and a significant amount of money was being invested in the Environment area.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Monitoring report for the 1st quarter of 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted.

32. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Executive considered the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2015-16 which had also been considered by the Audit Committee on 23 June 2016.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance went through the report and highlighted a number of areas including the fact that by owning its council house stock this enabled the Council to spend a significant amount of money on improving the stock which was of significant benefit to the residents. In addition Councillor Pollock highlighted the performance of the Council's investment portfolio and the fact that the Council was concentrating its investments mainly in UK and AAA organisations.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) it be noted that the report was presented to the Audit Committee on 23 June 2016;

- 2) Council be recommended to approve:
 - a) the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2015/16; and
 - b) the actual 2015/2016 prudential indicators within the report.

33. WOODLEY CAR PARKING TRIAL

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed car parking trial in Woodley, as proposed by the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative, which would result in an increase to the one hour daily rate parking charge.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport advised the meeting that currently parking charges covered Monday to Saturday from 8am-6pm and in order to provide funds to continue developing and maintaining the Borough's highways a decision was taken by the Executive to charge for evenings and Sunday parking. During the resulting consultation period certain groups expressed concern that the increase in charges might adversely affect some of their communities. Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative therefore put forward a proposal to increase the one hourly parking charge from 70p-80p in the four Woodley car parks as an alternative to the evening and Sunday charges. It was therefore intended to run a trial of this proposal until the end of March 2017. Councillor Richards informed the meeting that after the trial period it was intended to study the statistics, including income generated, from the trial and compare those against the statistics from other car parks in the Borough; whilst ensuring that the comparisons were fair. A decision would then be made on whether to continue with the charges in Woodley, extend the trial or bring them in line with charges in other car parks in the Borough.

The meeting was advised that following publication of the report it was found that there were a number of errors and omissions and areas within the report which required further clarification. Councillor Richards therefore tabled some additional information to address these issues. Councillor Richards went through the items on the tabled sheet and confirmed that the sheet would be attached to the minutes.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) a trial to 31 March 2017 be approved to increase the 1 hour parking charge increase in the Woodley car parks (Crockhamwell Road, Headley Road, Lytham Road East, and Lytham Road West) from 70p to 80p;
- 2) Officers be instructed to amend signage and equipment in the car parks as required;
- 3) the implementation of the evening and Sunday charging in Woodley, as agreed by the Executive on 31 March 2016, be suspended until the trial results are considered;
- 4) the results of the trial will be brought back to Executive for a longer term decision to be made regarding car parking charges in Woodley.

34. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) REGULATION 123 LIST CLARIFICATION

The Executive considered a report relating to Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List Clarification which addresses the learning from adopting the original regulation 123 list; provided information on proposed clarifications to it; the justification for these changes; and sets out the next steps towards making these changes in terms of consultation. It was noted that the consultation would start on 1 September 2016 for a period of six weeks.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration advised Members that the CIL Regulation 123 list, which was adopted in February 2015, was a list of projects that could or might be funded by CIL and this was its first review. The proposed changes effectively provided insurance that there would be no double counting of CIL and S106 planning obligations and they would also help ensure that site specific obligations were secured.

The Leader of Council congratulated Officers on the layout of Appendix A as he felt that specifying the reasons for the proposed changes was particularly informative.

RESOLUTION: That the Draft Regulation 123 List Consultation Document, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks from 1 September 2016.

35. ST CRISPINS SCHOOL AUTISM UNIT

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposal for the development of a new Special Education Needs (SEN) Resource unit for high performing children with autism at St Crispins School.

Members were advised by the Executive Member for Children's Services that the proposed unit would be of great benefit to the intended students as currently a large number of them were unable to access suitable education in the Borough and therefore had to travel further afield. If the unit was approved this would mean that their travelling times would be reduced and there would be the ability for them to be educated with their local peers.

Councillor Haitham Taylor advised that the unit would cater for up to 25 pupils and there was already a building earmarked at St Crispins that could be adapted and utilised for this purpose. Currently the 6th form occupied the building but the proposal was to move them into another building which would allow for the 6th form to be expanded at a later date if required. The proposal was also for a separate access into the school via Rances Lane.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) authority to determine the decision on the creation of the St Crispins Autism unit for high performing children from 1 September 2017 be delegated to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services;
- 2) the following also be agreed:
 - a) a permanent entry from Rances Lane to a new car park on the school site, when required to support school expansion;
 - b) future capital investment from 2018/19 to complete the Autism unit in a timely manner;

- c) the allocation of section 106 receipts required to fund the 'St Crispin's - New Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit and Sixth Form block' as approved in the medium term financial plan for 2016/17.

36. ESTABLISHING A WOKINGHAM MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposal to explore the feasibility of establishing a Wokingham Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

The Executive Member for Children's Services went through the rationale for setting up an MAT which included the recent White Paper, the inevitable change to the role of the local authority going forward and proposed changes to the funding formula and changes and reductions to educational grants. All of these changes would lead to funding implications for the Council and would result in not enough revenue being available to support all the services that were currently provided to schools.

Councillor Haitham Taylor advised that the Council had been in discussion with local schools and currently 30 schools had expressed an interest in potentially joining a MAT in Wokingham. Areas that could potentially be included within the MAT were school improvement and traded services, some safeguarding functions, the virtual school which looked after the education of children in care and some special educational needs and disability functions.

In relation to the governance of a MAT it was noted that only 20% of the local authority could be part of the Trust although it was acknowledged that there was flexibility within it and also charges could be levied to pay for some of the services it would provide.

Councillor Haitham Taylor informed the meeting that there was a substantial cost in transferring schools from a local authority school over to an academy and it was estimated that it would cost in the region of £400k if all the current schools transferred. This figure was dependent on how many schools actually converted. A letter had been written to the Secretary of State expressing the Council's concerns over the extra cost and burden of schools converting to academies and asking for additional funding to be provided.

There was also a potential loss of £1m in business rates due to the fact that when schools converted to academies they acquired charitable status; which meant that they paid lower business rates.

The areas that the task and finish group would focus on were set out in the report and it was intended that their recommendations would be reported back to the Executive potentially around December time.

RESOLVED: That the process of establishing a Wokingham Multi Academy Trust be initiated with relevant exploration undertaken by a Member/Officer Working Group and recommendations from that group being reported to the Executive for sign-off as appropriate.

37. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

The Executive considered a report setting out an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) which includes the Council's programme for producing planning policy documents.

It was noted that the Council had produced a new version of the LDS in September 2015 however due to further review of the stages required for an effective Local Plan, and additional issues as set out in the report, a further revision was being proposed which essentially lengthened the consultation phase and the whole scheme by about 12 months. Although the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration advised that this delay was not ideal as the Council wished to put its new plan into place as soon as possible it was essential that the consultation was adequate and legal advice received stated that this was a sound move towards a successful examination of the local plan update.

Councillor Ashwell also advised that this also provided the opportunity to incorporate the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and also update the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Members were informed that Hampshire County Council was being commissioned to produce a Minerals and Waste Local Plan on behalf of Wokingham and three other neighbouring local authorities and to this end a joint Berkshire-wide committee, involving the relevant authorities, would be set up to oversee the development of the Plan.

Councillor Ross was pleased that Wokingham was joining with other Councils and was using Hampshire Council's experiences to assist in the production of a Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

RESOLVED: That the updated Local Development Scheme be approved to be effective from 29 July 2016.

38. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE - ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The Executive considered a report relating to a Local Plan Update – Issues and Options Consultation. The intention of the Local Plan Update was to replace some of the policies in the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and this would be informed by the Issues and Options consultation which would seek peoples' views on the production of the Update, including what the vision and objectives should be and what topics the Plan should cover.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration informed the meeting that this was the first opportunity to gain public opinion on how the Borough should develop to 2036. It was noted that the consultation would run for an eight week period from 5 August-30 September 2016.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Issues and Options report be approved for consultation for an eight week period together with publishing supporting documents;
- 2) the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, be authorised to agree minor changes to the Local Plan Update Issues and Options stage and other supporting documents prior to consultation. (Any minor modifications would consist of non-material alterations such as rewording and correction of typing errors).

39. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Executive considered the Health and Safety Annual Report 2015/16 which sets out the internal health and safety performance covering both the Council and schools during that period, highlighting the main achievements over the year and outlining key priorities for the current year.

The Executive Member for Resident Services advised that in order to make the report clearer data on school incidents had been separated out. Although there was an increase in the number of incidents reported in schools it was believed that this was due to better reporting and not an increase in actual incidents. Also the number of serious incidents in schools was actually decreasing.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the corporate health and safety performance for 2015/16 be noted; and
- 2) the approach described and the health and safety priorities for the current municipal year be endorsed.