

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2016 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Other Councillors Present

Prue Bray
Andy Croy
Lindsay Ferris
Clive Jones
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

45. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Angus Ross.

46. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 28 July 2016 and the Extraordinary meeting of the Executive held on 1 September 2016 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Leader.

47. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 52, 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 52, 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.

48. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

49. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

49.1 Lindsay Ferris asked the Leader of Council the following question:

Question

With the proposed cuts in staffing and services being proposed will WBC be in a fit state to perform as an effective Council in the future?

Answer

The 21st Century Council programme offers this Council the opportunity to change and improve the way that services are delivered to our residents by taking out inefficiency, by increasing the range of transactions residents can do remotely and digitally, using leading

edge technology, by reshaping our staff team to work more across disciplines and departments, by reducing bureaucracy and the number of staff and managers. By doing these things we can protect many services that in other councils have long since been ended or cut. We can enable our staff to work differently and to advance their training and development as a direct consequence. And we can avoid the service cuts and salami-slicing you suggest in your question

So yes, I am absolutely grateful for the opportunity to confirm that by doing what we are doing we will be leaner and fitter enabling us to continue to perform as a good, strong and effective council despite the financial challenges we face.

Supplementary Question

From past history WBC has not been that good at introducing new IT services. In addition WBC has one of the highest levels of elderly people in the country. How can you ensure that these residents and others will still be able to access WBC services easily?

Supplementary Answer

As a former IT professional myself IT is always difficult to implement and I think we are no different to any other organisation. But there is a strong work ethic to make the IT work this time around. It is going to be overseen by a couple of professional IT Councillors as well to make sure that, as far as we can, we will remove any of the issues that we had previously.

In terms of access to services for the elderly and vulnerable it will not just be on the basis of IT we all know, certainly people of my age anyway, that there is a high number of elderly people that are IT literate but in two or three generations it will be virtually everyone. So we absolutely have to be able to cater for those vulnerable people who do not have IT experience.

49.2 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:

Question

You are running a Conservative Council under a Conservative Government. What is your answer for residents who want to know why Wokingham has still got such a poor deal as the worst funded unitary authority in the country?

Answer

The simple answer is that we are too wealthy and too white and therefore in the econometric model we do not do so well. But the official answer is, as you are aware, the Government has a responsibility to stabilise the dire financial situation they inherited many years ago from the Labour Government, which has been compounded by numerous international and global events over more recent times. Local Government must play its part in the Government's austerity measures and this Council is not immune from this. Indeed, we have financially managed our way through £36.5m worth of efficiency savings since 2011/12.

I agree that WBC does get a poor funding deal, compared with other authorities, which is as a result of a national funding model that has a strong bias to those areas considered to be less wealthy and less healthy than us. The more recent funding formula compounds this issue by bringing our council tax receipts into the grant reduction calculation. Council tax being an element of income we have had to increasingly rely upon as our general grant

has reduced over the years to almost nothing. We are unfortunately bound, in the same way as all other local authorities, to a national funding formula and so our room for manoeuvre and getting a better deal from the Government is often limited.

WBC is only one voice amongst the 418 local authorities in the UK and amongst these are substantially larger and higher profile authorities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and the London Boroughs. All are understandably out to protect their own interests in times of austerity. Having said this we are not without success in representing the interests of Wokingham at the highest levels in Government. In January this year the Leader and myself, working with key ministers, managed to persuade the Government to make an unprecedented rewrite of their Local Government Finance Settlement proposals issued in December. We managed to secure over £2m transitional relief grant for two years and more significantly secured a reversal of negative Revenue Support Grant up to 2018/19; and that is actually very, very, important. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark, in his statement on 8 February this year, stated that “a small number of councils were concerned that, as their Revenue Support Grant declined, they would have to make a contribution to other councils in 2017 to 2018 or 2018 to 2019. I can confirm that no council will have to make such a payment”. Wokingham was one of the councils and this had a significant impact on Wokingham, so this was a great success for us in bringing our influence to bear. The challenge now remains to secure this position, no negative Revenue Support Grant into 2019/20 and beyond and we hope all the community of Wokingham will help us in winning this key financial argument.

Supplementary Question

The beginning of your answer Councillor Pollock “too wealthy and too white” I think is a little bit of a strange beginning to your answer but £36m of savings means that the Officers have done an extremely good job and I am very pleased that they have been able to do that. But residents just don’t understand why you as a Conservative Council and Conservative Members of Parliament with a Conservative Government cannot actually get a better deal for Wokingham. So what more can you do than you have already done?

Supplementary Answer

As I have already said the econometric model that allocates national Government money is based on certain factors and those factors which are, as I said, the wealth or the opposite of that which is deprivation. So if you consider the deprivation statistics and you consider other needs which are often linked to immigration those are factors in the econometric model that skew the allocation of Government money to those areas that have higher amounts of deprivation or ethnic need and we do not score very well on those. Therefore we do not end up with significant amounts of money whereas if you compare us to Reading they get substantially more from the Government as far as the Revenue Support Grant is concerned and much more of their total spend is actually financed from Central Government money whereas in Wokingham we have next to nothing and that is the fundamental bit.

How do we change that? We do that every time there is a review of the formulas. We lobby for those aspects of the formula that are beneficial to us and we lobby against those aspects of the formula that we do badly in. And that is what we do and I think as I said in my answer earlier the key piece going forward is the negative Revenue Support Grant for 2019/20 and the most important piece for us going forward over the next two or three years is to ensure that that principle, that of our hard earned council tax or our hard earned Business Rates, that we do not lose even more of that than we do currently.

49.3 Rachele Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Will you include the number of schools, railway stations, park and ride locations and other such locations when considering the number of parking warden hours allocated to a town or parish rather than just the length of yellow lines?

Answer

Yes certainly.

Supplementary Question

I realise that yellow paint must be exceedingly expensive in this country and therefore that is the reason why you think that but will you please work with the local Members to work on problem areas rather than just allocating by yellow lines?

Supplementary Answer

It is not just by yellow lines it is by a whole range of factors including the ones you mentioned and more and they will of course be considered as they always are on these TROs.

49.4 Beth Rowland had asked the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing the following question but due to her inability to attend the meeting the written answer below was provided:

Question

There are care governance issues at Suffolk Lodge, a home for the elderly and people with dementia run by Optalis. These are serious enough to have been reported to the regulator. What are you doing to sort this out?

Answer

WBC co-ordinates all concerns about providers through our safeguarding triage function. It was evident that there were some concerns being flagged about Suffolk Lodge so a Quality Assurance visit was carried out on 2 August 2016, which found that improvement was needed with regard to care plans, record keeping and policy and procedures. As a precaution, and to enable Optalis time to remedy the issues, the decision was taken to suspend any further placements

Following the QA visit a risk matrix was completed and Optalis has developed an action plan to address the concerns raised.

The action plan was reviewed with WBC on 22 August 2016 and an updated action plan submitted on 26 August 2016. The Care Quality Commission is being kept informed.

Proactive joint work is on-going between the commissioner (WBC) and Suffolk Lodge and the action plan is progressing well. A further Quality Assurance visit is scheduled for 7 October 2016, which is likely to lead to the resumption of admissions to Suffolk Lodge.

It is worth noting that, as part of a strategic commissioning plan, Suffolk Lodge was asked by the Council to change its core function to cater for older people with dementia.

Consequently the resident group have higher care needs than previously and it is evident that in the change some aspects of service planning were missed. This is a lesson learned and will inform future commissioning plans. I can assure you that in the meantime those currently resident at Suffolk Lodge are as safe as they would be in any care home.

49.5 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question:

Question

The Council has put forward some areas of land that it owns for inclusion in the updated Local Plan. They are listed on p88 of the agenda and are mainly designated as “Leisure” or “Leisure/Public Open Space”. Could you please explain, site by site, how much of the land you envisage would remain open space and how much of it you are planning to use for buildings associated with leisure use?

Answer

Your question is premature. The Council has put these sites forward in response to a call for sites within the Local Plan Update Process. These sites will be individually assessed as part of that process. This assessment will provide information to help enable any decision on the mix of buildings verses open space.

The Local Plan covers the period to 2036 which means that any such decisions can be made as needs must over the next 20 years.

Supplementary Question

I appreciate the position and I think there is more certainty about some sites in there than others. For example the Grays Farm site. I think we know where that is headed but there are some sites in there which are quite sensitive eg Dinton Pastures and the land at Woodlands Avenue in Woodley particularly. So are you imaging that you will put any buildings in there or are you primarily thinking that they are green space and they should remain largely green space?

Supplementary Answer

Again your question is premature the assessment process will follow. There is a two year assessment process in effect to build up to an Inspector looking at our Local Plan Update so the question is premature as we do not imagine anything but we have put our sites forward in good faith.

50. THE 21ST CENTURY COUNCIL: BUSINESS CASE

The Executive considered a report relating to the business case for the 21st Century Organisational Change Programme which set out the key elements of change to the shape, structure and operating model of the Council.

The Leader of Council went through the report and informed the meeting that this was effectively the first part of the Council’s contribution to making the savings that were required, not just for the coming year, but also for a three year timeframe which would be consistent with the four-year settlement due to be discussed as the next item. Councillor Baker confirmed that the proposals would lead to a radical change in how the Council operated resulting in a reduction in costs whilst improving services.

Councillor Jorgensen confirmed that that the Personnel Board had met earlier that evening and the Chairman of the Board had reported that the meeting had recommended that the Executive approve the Business Case.

Councillor Baker advised of an error in recommendation 1c)(iv) which he reported should have stated “£2.752m” and not “£2,752” as specified in the report. It was agreed that the recommendation be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the 21st Century Council Business Case be approved for implementation, including:
 - a) the anticipated staffing reductions and associated redundancy payments, in line with Council policy;
 - b) the investment, in IT and other implementation costs to enable the significant transformation the Business Case proposes;
 - c) the funding, consisting of:
 - (i) a virement from revenue contribution to capital outlay of £210k in 2016/17 and £500k in 2017/18;
 - (ii) a virement from interest on balances reserve of £500k in 2017/18 and £500k in 2018/19;
 - (iii) supplementary estimate of £998k in 2017/18 and £1,000k in 2018/19 from general fund balances;
 - (iv) capital expenditure totalling £4.329m, £2.752m in 2016/17 and £1.577m in 2017/18, to be funded initially through slippage in the 2016/17 capital programme and ultimately a first call on resources in setting the 2017/18 capital programme;
2. Officers update the Executive quarterly during the implementation; reporting on progress of implementation and revenue return on investment.

51. MULTI-YEAR SETTLEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PLAN

The Executive considered a report relating to a Multi-Year Settlement and Efficiency Plan for 2016/17-2019/20 which set out how the Council intended to meet its financial obligations and remain sustainable up to 2019/20.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance advised the meeting that on the back of the four-year settlement that had been offered to the Council one of the criteria for acceptance of the offer was the submission of a savings plan setting out how the Council intended to achieve such savings. It was noted that this would not preclude the Council from lobbying in connection with a negative Revenue Support Grant.

Councillor Haitham Taylor highlighted the loss of the Education Services Grant which was due to come into effect in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and which would result in a loss of £0.7m in each of these years. She reminded Members of the newly established Multi-Academy Trust Task and Finish Group which would be holding its first meeting next month and would address how to work in partnership with schools to find new solutions to delivering services eg schools buying-in services from the Council. It was noted that this was an important component of the savings plan.

Councillor Pollock drew Members' attention to the tabled additional recommendation 2) which proposed that the specific wording of the response, to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance as this would enable any final changes to be made to the submission. This additional recommendation was agreed.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the multi-year settlement as set out in the report be agreed and the efficiency plan be approved;
- 2) the specific wording of the response to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance.

52. 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 July 2016 and an operational update for the period to 31 August 2016.

The Leader of Council went through the report and highlighted a number of items including that Optalis was continuing to take on new work on behalf of other councils which was to be applauded as it reflected the quality of the Company. In addition he advised that Wokingham Housing Limited was making good progress on two major projects; Phoenix Avenue and Fosters Extra Care home.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the month ending 31 July 2016 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 31 August 2016 be noted;
- 3) the operational funding facilities for Wokingham Housing Limited and WBC (Holdings) Ltd of £1.49m and £1m respectively, charged at base rate plus 5.5%, be approved.

53. INTRODUCTION OF CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT POWERS

The Executive considered a report on proposals for the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement Powers which would enable the Council to enforce parking restrictions within their area of responsibility.

Members were advised by the Executive Member for Highways and Transport that currently the police undertook parking enforcement in the Borough and the proposal was for the Council to take this over. The current stage in the process was the submission to the Department of Transport for the Council to undertake civil parking enforcement in the Borough. Councillor Richards drew Members' attention to the list of resolutions defined by the Department of Transport and also informed the meeting that so far 92% of local authorities had applied for Civil Parking Enforcement powers.

Councillor Jorgensen stated that she was disappointed that the Council had to take on the cost of parking enforcement because the police were not fully undertaking this role and this was not fair on local council tax payers.

RESOLVED: That the resolutions contained in the report be approved, which would allow the submission of the application to the Department of Transport for undertaking Civil Parking Enforcement.

54. COUNCIL SITES FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

The Executive considered a report setting out potential Council owned sites for submission and consideration as part of the Local Plan Update.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration went through the recommendations and confirmed that detailed assessments of the sites would be brought back to the Executive for approval as part of the Local Plan process.

The Leader of Council queried whether local Members would be actively encouraged to be involved in the process of considering the sites and their sustainability etc which was confirmed by Councillor Ashwell.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Council sites submitted to the local plan be acknowledged and accepted;
- 2) authority for the submission of a detailed assessment as part of the Local Plan process be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources and the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration;
- 3) sites, following detailed assessment, will be brought back to Executive for approval as part of the Local Plan process.

55. SHINFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Executive considered a report which included modifications recommended by the Independent Examiner to be made to the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan prior to the holding of a local referendum.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration commended Shinfield Parish Council for their effort and commitment into delivering the Neighbourhood Plan which had followed a very long process. Councillor Ashwell highlighted the results of the independent examination and the comments that had come forward. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, which was the first in the Borough, would be held on 8 December.

Councillor Haitham Taylor, ward member for Shinfield South, hoped that the press would give the Referendum as much attention as possible in order to encourage people to vote.

RESOLVED That the following be agreed:

- 1) the report of the Independent Examination into the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan published on 22 July 2016 be accepted by the Council and that the modifications recommended by the Independent Examiner be made to the plan prior to a local referendum being held;

- 2) the referendum version of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan, as modified in accordance with the recommendations following Independent Examination, meets the basic conditions and complies with the provisions of Paragraph 8 (1) (a) (2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Localism Act 2011). A statement to that effect will be published on the Council's website as well as the 'Referendum Version' of the Plan; and
- 3) a local referendum be organised and conducted on 8 December 2016 in the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood area. This will allow all eligible persons that are registered on the electoral roll to vote on whether the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan should be used by Wokingham Borough Council to help it determine planning applications (as well as other applications such as Listed Building Consent) in the Neighbourhood Area.

56. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WOKINGHAM SACRE (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)

The Executive considered a report which set out proposed amendments to the Constitution of the Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Councillor Haitham Taylor advised the meeting that SACRE was made up of members of the Council, teachers and teaching unions and members of faith groups. The remit of SACRE was to monitor and support the delivery of religious education and collective worship in schools and also provide a locally agreed syllabus of religious education which was revised every five years. The SACRE Constitution had not been reviewed since 2009 and therefore the new Chairman had decided that a review was required. Members noted the proposed amendments which were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the amendments made to the SACRE Constitution, as set out in the report, be approved.

57. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL RECOVERY SERVICE

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals for the re-procurement of the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service which would, amongst other things, enable residents to recover in the community and protect children and families from potentially problematic/dangerous situations associated with substance misuse.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised the meeting that two different options, as outlined in the report, had been considered. Option 2, which was to commission a provider to manage all the Council's operational and demand led services eg needle exchange and supervised consumption, was the preferred option as it had many benefits including stabilisation of the budget and driving up the performance of the service. It was noted that the contract, which would start on 1 April 2017, would initially be for two years with the ability for up to three one year extensions which would provide greater flexibility.

Councillor Haitham Taylor highlighted the types of service users and the need within the Borough, as set out in the report, and the fact that the proposal could provide savings in the region of £20k in years two and three.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the re-procurement of substance misuse services for Wokingham Borough be signed-off;
- 2) option two, as set out in the report, be agreed as it offers the most efficient use of Officer time and financial resources.

58. DISBANDING THE COMMUTED SUMS ADVISORY PANEL

The Executive considered a report proposing that the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel be disbanded. The Advisory Panel had been in existence for over a year however it had only been called upon to meet once and because its recommendation was above the £100,000 threshold the final decision had to be made by the Executive. It was therefore felt that the Panel process was duplicating the work of the Executive and thereby delaying decisions on the release of commuted sums for the delivery of much-needed affordable housing.

RESOLVED: That the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel be disbanded with immediate effect.

59. WOKINGHAM HOUSING LIMITED (WHL) DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - GENERAL FUND SITES

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals to select Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL) as the development partner for housing schemes at three general fund sites.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Wokingham Housing Limited, the Council owned Local Housing Company, (or a subsidiary of WHL) be selected as the development partner for housing schemes at the following sites:
 - Land adjacent to 6 Norton Road, Wokingham;
 - Land adjacent to 62 Finch Road, Earley; and
 - Land between 74-78 London Road, Wokingham.
- 2) the Norton Road, Finch Road and London Road sites be transferred to Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL), or a subsidiary of WHL, on terms to be agreed by the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
- 3) the sites subject to Recommendation 1 above are appropriated for planning purposes under section 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- 4) the proposed funding model be approved, including the allocation of up to £2,495,028 Section 106 receipts for the provision of affordable housing on these sites and funding on commercial terms for the private housing, in accordance with the Part 2 Report;
- 5) the development brief for these sites be approved, including the proposed tenure mix;
- 6) the transfer of land and funding for the Finch Road and London Road developments will be subject to WHL securing a planning consent for the schemes.

60. WOKINGHAM HOUSING LIMITED (WHL) DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) SITES

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals to select Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL) as the development partner for housing schemes at five Housing Revenue Account (HRA) sites.

Following a query by the Leader of Council it was confirmed, as set out in recommendation 6, that the transfer of the land and funding would be subject to WHL securing planning consent for the associated schemes. The purpose of the report was to enable WHL to take the proposal to the next stage. However if WHL subsequently felt the project was not appropriate or viable then building on the land would not go ahead.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Wokingham Housing Limited, the Council owned Local Housing Company, (or a subsidiary of WHL), be selected as the development partner for affordable housing schemes at the following sites:
 - Land adjacent to 52 Elizabeth Road, Wokingham;
 - Land adjacent to 86 Emmbrook Road, Wokingham;
 - Land adjacent to 9 Middlefields, Twyford;
 - Land between 68 and 69 Orchard Estate, Twyford; and
 - Land between 24 and 25 Gorrick Square, Wokingham.
- 2) Council transfers the above sites to Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL), or a subsidiary of WHL, on terms to be agreed by the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
- 3) the sites subject to Recommendation 1 above are appropriated for planning purposes under section 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- 4) the proposed funding mode be approved, including the allocation of up to £3,054,123 Section 106 receipts for the provision of affordable housing towards these sites in accordance with Part 2 Report;
- 5) the development brief for these sites be approved, including the proposed tenure mix;
- 6) the transfer of land and funding for the Emmbrook Road, Middlefields, Orchard Estate and Gorrick Square developments will be subject to WHL securing a planning consent for the schemes.
- 7) the transfer of land and funding for the Elizabeth Road development to WHL will be subject to attracting grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

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