

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2017 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.00 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

Chris Bowring
Prue Bray
Richard Dolinski
Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager
Clive Jones
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
David Sleight
Rob Stanton

85. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

86. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 24 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 90, 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 90, 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.

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 91, Optalis Ltd: Update on the Business Case for Merger with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead by virtue of the fact that he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Optalis. Councillor Pollock left the meeting during discussions and did not vote on the matter.

88. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

88.1 Lloyd Watkins asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

In February 2014 Council Officers were shown all the likely walking or cycling routes to the now Bohunt School in Wokingham. They were asked to ensure that all the routes were improved in order that the students could safely walk or cycle to school. On 1 September 2016 an Extraordinary Executive Meeting had to occur in order that some of the requested speed reductions would be in place for the school opening only 3 days later. Despite early engagement with the Council by concerned parents, not all the routes requested for safety improvements were addressed at the September Executive meeting. This leaves some routes untouched, in particular we have been repeatedly told that the route along Nine Mile Ride will be in place for September 2017 but there has been no local consultation on changes nor have any plans been published. When will the Council's plans for improvement along Nine Mile Ride be published in order that safe routes are provided by September 2017?

Answer

Development work for improvements along the Nine Mile Ride are programmed to be delivered by September 2017 and public engagement is planned for February and March of 2017.

Supplementary Question

The plans have long declared that the cycle path would extend along Nine Mile Ride extension into the new development. It is evident to most residents that there is no chance whatsoever of Nine Mile Ride extension being present for September 2017. Therefore the road will end there; at which point the road becomes a 60 mph narrow road with no passing places plus an increase in traffic. Can you assure residents that there will be provision for a safe route across what is currently a thoroughly dangerous 60 mph road, which will probably include a reduction in speed limits for that part of the road, where Nine Mile Road becomes Park Lane?

Supplementary Answer

There are a lot of points. At this point I do not have all the information to give you this evening but I will make a point of ensuring that when we have this information it will be passed on to you.

88.2 Jason Sutton asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

There is a proposal to expand Aldryngton Primary School. Aldryngton is the smallest Primary School site in Earley. Spatial availability is a key consideration when determining which schools to expand. WBC commissioned a spatial study by ERM Architecture dated 7/9/2015 to compare Loddon, Radstock and Aldryngton Primary. The study's conclusions were very clear: "Aldryngton's Primary Campus is the least attractive campus for investment - there is a substantial deficit in campus area." With a recommendation Loddon and Radstock be taken forwards to a "Stage 1 Feasibility".

On 28 January 2016, the WBC Executive met and one of the items discussed was which Primary Schools to expand. This 'Spatial Study' was not provided to the Executive. Rather 'spatial analysis' was a category presented in Annex 2 of the document "Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1" contained on page 142 of the Report to the Executive. The stated conclusion in relation to Aldryngton was however described to the Executive as, "Sufficiency of space - space for 0.5FE expansion which would be relatively

straightforward." The strategy also suggested that an activity of consultation had been performed with "parents, residents, schools and other stakeholders" with the next step being a detailed feasibility study on the selected schools. Why was the information supplied to the Council within the report not reflective of the findings of the original spatial report commissioned, was this information provided in error?

Answer

The ERMC report conclusions were on the basis of the size of the site alone, while the "Primary Strategy Implementation Plan Phase 1" recommendations were informed by a number of factors. The most important factor was the assessment of the number of places required to meet the need in Earley. The best fit with projected need was the expansion of Loddon and Aldryngton Primary Schools to provide 45 additional places per year.

The ERMC conclusions were made against the Department for Education recommended space standard for school premises (known as Building Bulletin number 103), a space standard that is not met at many outstanding and good schools, or in many new and expanded school projects in towns and cities across the country.

The Executive report noted "the site is one of the more constrained" and this was why the recommendation was "that further work should be carried out with the school to determine the feasibility of expansion with a target of September 2017". All work to date indicates that the challenges presented by the constraints identified in the ERMC report can be addressed and that expansion is feasible.

Supplementary Question

When a decision is made by the Executive based on information presented, which can be shown to be inaccurate, erroneous, misleading and not supportable through evidence, will such a decision approval made by the Executive remain valid or be re-examined?

Supplementary Answer

Evidence was produced in order to make that decision and, as I said in my first answer, the recommendation was to do some further analysis and that was done, and therefore the recommendation that went to the Executive therefore stands. So it does not change the recommendation which subsequently went forward. If, subsequently, information then changed what the original recommendation should be, ie it showed that it was completely impossible to build an extra number of classrooms etc because spatially it was completely impossible, for example, in this situation, then another recommendation could, in fact, be effective. But in this case it did not say that, it said completely the contrary. So, therefore, it showed that the expansion was feasible, so, therefore, the recommendation still stands.

88.3 David Nadar asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

There is a proposal to expand Aldryngton Primary School by increasing the intake by 15 as soon as this year. Your Committee approved the Primary School Planning Strategy 2016-2018 proposed by Children's Services on the 28th of January 2016. The Strategy included projections for the number of school places required in Earley for each year between 2015/2016 to 2021/2022 and it has been shown that the demand for both 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 intakes were overestimated in the Strategy report.

The Strategy report also shows that there will be 0.8% surplus school places in Earley this year and a 7 to 8% surplus school places in Earley for 2018/2019 to 2021/2022 without Aldryngton being expanded. Children's Services have said that the Council will make the final decision on whether to expand Aldryngton in the light of actual information on the demand for school places in 2017. However, the decision for expansion should be based on the mid-term to long term projections. Shouldn't the Committee review the decision to expand Aldryngton Primary School, which your data and projections suggests is not actually needed, based on more up-to-date data and projections before allowing a £4.8 million expansion project to go ahead?

Answer

While the information in the question concerning the roll projection data is correct, this can only form part of the picture when developing a strategy for ensuring sufficient school places. As an illustration of this, the roll projection for 15/16 appeared to demonstrate that adequate school places in Earley would be available. In reality, 30 Earley children, whose parents were hoping for a local school place, were diverted out of the area in order to obtain one.

Roll projections are very much led by numbers of live births in the area. This needs to be balanced against other less predictable factors such as housing churn where we have been seeing older families being replaced by families with younger children, the impact of which increases demand for local school places. Therefore, the Council needs to review actual demand for Earley school places in March in order to have as much contextual information as possible as the basis for the decision on whether or not to expand the school.

This decision will be taken by the end of March 2017. If the evidence does not support expansion, and subject to the granting of planning permission for the expansion, the Council will be able to implement the proposal in the next three years without incurring further design costs - if demand rises in that time, for example. Therefore there is no good case for pausing the process at this point as this could lead to hardship for Earley families if there are too few places available to meet need in September 2017 and, just an example of statistics which might be useful for you, in reception at the moment (just at Aldryngton) there are 59 students on the waiting list.

Supplementary Question

It is notable that Aldryngton Primary School has accommodated all foundation applicants from within catchment from at least 1988 with the exception of the last two years. You spoke about the housing churn; which in your report you stated was the key driver to demand. In the report a rather startling assumption is made on this point. The Council has data on the number of people aged 50-69 who moved out of Wokingham in the year prior to the report being published. 460 people left Wokingham in this age group. In your report you assumed that every single person in Wokingham in this age group that has moved lived in Earley. You further assumed that these 460 people were replaced with 230 couples each with 2 children aged 0-16, again, solely in Earley. Earley constitutes a tiny area of Wokingham and it seems plainly erroneous to assume that the area has a monopoly on this age group moving out of the Local Authority area. These inconsistencies, amongst others, raise concerns that the plans and underlying assumptions associated with the proposed expansion have not been subject to the correct degree of scrutiny. To this end residents and parents are keen to ensure that the final decision to expand the school is taken in a public forum. Please can you confirm that this will be the case?

Supplementary Answer

You may have been at the consultation event in Maiden Erlegh the other night, but as we said there and I will say it again, school place planning is not a fine art but we try and take in as much information as possible. But when you take live-birth data and project it forward, and including some of the other factors which you have mentioned (particularly in Earley), it is very difficult because as I have said a lot of older families have moved out with young families moving in; more so than in any other areas in the Borough. We have seen that we have needed many more school places there than in the other areas in a different type of context so I am saying it is not a perfect art which is why, in this particular context (which is Aldryngton), we have said that we will review this again in March when we have got the final figures that have come in and that is our promise to you.

88.4 Keith Malvern asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

The December 2016 revenue monitoring report indicates that there has been an over achievement of £40,000 in the income from car parking. Bearing in mind the introduction of Sunday and evening charges was controversial will you consider reducing those charges particularly in Wokingham town whilst it is undergoing disruption due to regeneration work?

Answer

Parking is part of the Highways and Transport portfolio and, as such, its income is used to maintain and improve highways related services – including pothole repairs. I am sure you would agree with me that using any additional income to fix more potholes is better than adjusting a few parking fees. We will continue to provide good parking and to use its extra income to do more pothole repairs.

With regard to disruption during regeneration we will, of course, monitor its impact and take any appropriate action if necessary.

Supplementary Question

My question revolves specifically around the regeneration and the link with car parking. Obviously as regeneration plans are developing, and we have heard this week that Aldi are coming to Wokingham and they will have 89 free car parking spaces available, and as we know the multi-storey car park on the Carnival Pool site is rising, even better I think it is well in-line for an architectural award. These are obviously changing the parameters to do with car parking income. You probably certainly had representations from Wokingham Town Council about this very subject and the impact that regeneration would have and I am wondering whether the opportunity that is presented by this over achievement would provide you with the opportunity, rather than deal with potholes, to make a positive gesture to the town of Wokingham – get in there early and do something. If you are short of ideas about how to deal with the income may I suggest you could re-instate free car parking at Shute End; which was a way of encouraging shopping in the centre, or no Sunday charges altogether? Will you consider any of those options?

Supplementary Answer

We are, of course, aware of all the options that could exist and we monitor things regularly. That would include looking at any disruption that may occur and what may be appropriate

to do. But pothole repairs and road surface repairs are an important part and the money is used effectively in the areas that are most appropriate.

88.5 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Within the Chief Finance Officer's Report on Page 126 he refers to the Schools Funding situation in Wokingham.

Would the Exec Member comment on why Wokingham Borough's schools have been treated so poorly by the Conservative Government, so much so that it remains the lowest funded level of all local Authorities?

Answer

I am sure that you all know my views by now; that the schools funding formula is totally inequitable, unfit for purpose and long overdue its planned overhaul by this Conservative Government. We need a new system that does not just tinker around the edges. We need a new formula that will radically re-think how schools are funded, taking into account schools' autonomy, local staffing costs and recognition of differing pupil cohorts, including those with Special Education Needs and deprivation factors. How can it be equitable when one school receives £8,587 per pupil on role and ours here in Wokingham just £4,166.51 per pupil on role.

I am pleased that it is a Conservative Government that is heralding a change and has recognised that this practice of historical inequality in schools funding which has been applied over successive governments, including Labour and the Lib Dem Coalition, cannot continue. We have been in dialogue with Ministers about this, taking the opportunity of a national funding change to ensure our voice of Wokingham is heard in Westminster.

Supplementary Question

What is it that we can do to mitigate the loss of income to our schools and the effect on the staffing levels particularly, especially as the housing levels and the demand for school places are increasing? So what can we do as it stands?

Supplementary Answer

As it stands we need to continue having that conversation with Westminster whilst they are consulting about the formula because it is a huge problem for our schools. I have highlighted the differential between the City of London and here and how long does it take to get us to the City of London and our house prices and how far our staff can travel. We really need to make that strong case and continue to do so until the battle lines are drawn about where that funding will be. Everyone needs to get on the band wagon and shout about it and continue to do so.

88.6 Liz McDaniel asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Agenda Item 104 Disabled Children's Family Support and Short Breaks

Providers were audited in June last year and therefore the accounts information provided is now out of date. Has the Council taken into account that the present financial outlook for some small charities is currently very different than 8 months ago?

Answer

The information gathered last year was part of an assessment of individual providers offering short breaks. It was used as part of the information gathering on the range, scope and quality of providers.

It does not, however, have a direct bearing on the proposals set out in the report. These proposals focus on how providers are commissioned and deliver their services.

Supplementary Question

Can you please confirm what notice we, so that is the Me Too Club and other small charities like us, will get if our short-break funding is to be removed or changed.

Supplementary Answer

The proposal is to change the model of funding and there will be a consultation starting, I believe, in March and I hope that you will all take part in that. It is about changing how people with families access services like your own. Rather than doing block contracts we are talking about supplying families with pre-paid cards so they will still be able to access your services, but in a much more flexible way. It is just about changing the way that it is paid for. I hope that it will be easy for families to do that and it will mean that they will be able to have access more easily and, actually, services overall will be much better for families because some of the things we have heard in some of the surveys; and Reach did a really great survey. Actually a lot of families were not accessing services which were out there and we recognise that we need to improve advertising clubs like your own.

In terms of notice you already know about the changes that we are proposing, but I hope that you will engage with us going through these proposals and tell us what you think would work and what you think won't work because that is how we start to make things much better for all our families accessing clubs like yours. You are doing a great job.

88.7 Sandra Stubbs asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Agenda Item 104 Disabled Children's Family Support and Short Breaks

How are Wokingham Borough Council going to ensure that the views of all parents of Children with SEND, including those who currently do not access short breaks, are considered before any changes are made to the current system of short breaks?

Answer

The views of current and potential future users of short breaks are a core part of the proposals going forward.

During the reviews of individual providers during 2016 Officers met with parents and carers to discuss short breaks with a focus on their satisfaction with the services provided.

Officers also canvassed providers to seek out parents who would be willing to talk to the Council with their views on short breaks and separate discussions were had with them too.

Going forward, Reach has also presented us with a survey of parents, many of whom do not use short breaks. This will be a useful piece of evidence in determining future priorities

for short breaks provision including the provision of information on the range of services available to eligible users.

The Council will meet with parents in March to consult and build upon these proposals in the report. Further events will be arranged depending on demand.

Officers will also use the SEND network and the CAN network to communicate and consult with parents on the proposals for short breaks.

88.8 Catherine McLeod asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Agenda Item 104 Disabled Children's Family Support and Short Breaks

Families of children with SEND in the early years often struggle to cope with all the demands on them. Our families have told us that they do not want direct payments to replace short breaks funding, as they feel this would put undue extra pressure on them to manage payments. They also fear it would change the nature of their relationship with local voluntary sector providers - making it a financial transaction rather than about their children. How is the Council going to manage these concerns and the extra pressures on families and providers if there is a full shift to direct payments?

Answer

The majority of short breaks are already commissioned via a direct payment used by parents in Wokingham so we are simply looking to extend this.

It is part of a national direction of travel to move away from council commissioned block contracts and move to a more flexible arrangement offering choice and control for service users and a more personalised approach to commissioning.

However, the Council will be open to the views of parents on their preferences for how they access the short break services that are available and there is no pressure upon parents to move to direct payments. I believe that many people will prefer to take a direct payment as they will see the benefits of more choice and more control. Any arrangements adopted by the Council will enable both the Council and service users to purchase services from providers; in the event that people would prefer not to take a direct payment.

As the report outlines, the Council will be exploring the use of pre-paid cards (already a feature within adult social care, as Julian knows) to reduce any additional burdens upon parents wishing to take a direct payment. Pre-paid cards offer a simple transaction that can be expanded to the number of people willing to look at direct payments but we will of course discuss this directly with parents and gauge all of their views.

Supplementary Question

A very quick supplementary around what you said about choice. Choice is absolutely vital, of course, and I think the big concern is if the money is given directly to families, and providers do not then have the stability of income, there is the chance that those providers may not provide the same services. So we want the parents to have more choice but it could be that if the services actually stop, because they do not have the security, parents actually end up with less choice.

Supplementary Answer

I think what we have seen so far is that there are some parents who probably would be eligible but are not actually accessing our services as well, and we want more choice because a lot of services have been telling us that there are some times of the day, for example in the morning, pre-school etc, that they cannot access services, and hopefully this will bring about some parity where services actually start to meet the needs of service users a little bit better and hopefully it will start to work. But it is not a case of doing everything all at once. This will be phased over two years and hopefully it will work for both the providers and the families who are accessing the services and it will not be a shock on day one and I think it will work. We have chosen to use Involve and they are a great resource and they should make everything, the transition, work really well. So please put in your views and they will very much inform how we go forward.

88.9 Catherine McLeod asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question on behalf of Jane Holmes who was unable to attend the meeting:

Question

Agenda Item 104 Disabled Children's Family Support and Short Breaks

Regarding the proposed withdrawal of funding to service providers for disabled children and replacing it with Direct Payments to families. What support is WBC going to put in place in order to help families navigate their way through the service provision available and to enable them to make the best decision for themselves? Without some sort of gateway support, families are at risk of being isolated, unaware and of making the wrong decision - ie accessing a service provision out of area because they're not aware it exists closer to home. This as well as being overwhelmed by the paperwork, responsibility and stress that managing Direct Payments brings. This, of course, could have the effect of increasing pressure on the statutory authorities over time.

Answer

Direct payments are already the vehicle for the majority of Wokingham's provision of short breaks.

No one will be forced to adopt direct payments and the Council can continue to spot purchase for parents if they wish.

In terms of support already available to parents to navigate the short breaks market:

- The CAN network coordinator works with families to signpost to service provision and answer questions and concerns about services to help with the choice
- The Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service is a statutory service which is run at 'arm's length' from the Council and it offers advice, information and assistance to parents.
- Within the Executive Report tonight you will see that we are proposing to develop a preferred provider list which would be quality assured by the Council, with information on the range of services available on the Council's normal information sources. As part of the consultation we will discuss with parents how this should work and other actions we need to undertake to ensure parents are informed.
- Pre-paid cards offer the benefit of reducing the requirements of parents wishing to take out direct payments. We will also discuss this directly with parents.

89. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

89.1 Gary Cowan had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question and due to his inability to attend the meeting the following written answer was provided to him:

Question

With reference to the Judgment in the case of Gladman Vs WBC case number Case No: CO/1455/2014 heard in July 2014 what were the implications of the judgement for Wokingham Borough Council both the pros and the cons.

Answer

Gladman Development Ltd (GDL) was seeking, through the High Court, to quash the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) on the basis that the Inspector who examined the MDD Local Plan did not take into account the National Planning Policy Framework, in respect of whether the housing target for the Borough was appropriate.

The implications of the judgement for Wokingham Borough Council all fall under your pros heading. The judgement agreed with the Council that:

- while the MDD did not assess housing need, it did not have to do this or to set a new housing target;
- the MDD did not have to determine whether the number of dwellings to be provided under the Core Strategy would be sufficient to meet an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN);
- The MDD should not be quashed (in whole or in part) because it only had to allocate the right amount of land to meet the Core Strategy requirements and to do this in the most appropriate sites. It only had to allocate sites for the provision with which it was dealing and did this adequately;
- the authority has a 5 year housing supply;
- the Council has a duty to review matters including Development Plan Documents and housing numbers. At the time of the decision, the Council was in the process of preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which could lead to a review of the housing need. This is the appropriate mechanism to review housing requirements;
- WBC had adopted the right version of the plan.

The judgment did not have any negative implications for Wokingham Borough Council. I therefore have nothing to list under your cons heading.

The only thing I can think of is that the MDD challenge has now been superseded by an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of our housing numbers – this was reflected in the judgement. This is a technical assessment and evidence base. The Council has not signed up to providing this estimated need. This will be a process addressed through the Local Plan review.

89.2 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Could the Executive Member for Highways and Transport explain what enhancement of services is expected this year (2017) following the platform extension at Wokingham Station?

Answer:

The platform extension at Wokingham Station is part of the £800m Wessex Capacity Upgrade programme that will make the South West franchise into a 10 car railway on the suburban lines into Waterloo and that includes the services from Reading through Wokingham. The Wessex Capacity Upgrade includes the rebuilding of the former International Station at Waterloo for domestic services, and that is for completion by December next year as well as traction power supply upgrades and platform extensions to allow trains to be extended from 8 to 10 cars and we expect the first 10 car trains to be introduced on the Reading services later this summer.

This will give us a 25% increase in carriages and something like a 35% increase in capacity but please note that capacity is measured as the number of standard class seats on a train plus the room for standing. The 10 car trains will have no more seats than an 8 car train will have as the 2+3 seating arrangement is replaced by a 2+2 seating arrangement; where they remove the bench of three that was not a popular layout. These are not new trains but they are the trains we had on the Reading services until a couple of years ago prior to their rebuilding and extension using former Gatwick Express carriages and they are now painted a new shiny blue colour.

Therefore we will get more capacity on the trains but will have to wait until December next year before the planned increase in train frequency will deliver more seats. One side effect of having longer trains will be that passengers will have to walk slightly further down the platform because it is a longer train at the station. Basically that is the information we have.

Supplementary Question:

There is a lot of mention about Wokingham here and I just wondered what about the other railway stations at Earley, Winnersh Triangle and Winnersh?

Supplementary Answer:

Those stations you named are not having their platforms extended at this time but the trains that stop there will be fitted with an automatic selective door opening so that the doors on the two rear cars of the train will obviously not open when they stop at the platform and also the passenger information system in these carriages will inform passengers that they have to move forward if they want to get off at that station. Passengers for these stations will also have an extended walk when travelling from Reading as all three of those station exits are at the London end of the platforms so you will get a bit of exercise walking further down the platform but the capacity is there.

89.3 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question:**Question**

Who within WBC (Senior/Middle Officers and Councillors (by name/role)) knew about the Application for the Grazeley Garden Settlement at the time of the submission to the DCLG in July 2016?

Answer

Just to clarify we were given four weeks to pull together an initial draft expression of interest for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and it was not an application it was a confidential expression of interest.

Councillors David Sleight, Chris Singleton, Keith Baker, Chris Bowring, Malcolm Richards and myself were alerted as Conservative members of the Local Plan Update Steering Group.

For the avoidance of doubt we need to point out that there was, and there should be, no assumption that being alerted infers that support for the expression of interest was either sought of, or given by, the Conservative members at this time. Since then Members, especially those whose wards would be affected, have been participating in the ongoing debate.

The Officers who were aware of the expression of interest were the Chief Executive (Andy Couldrick), Director of Environment (Heather Thwaites), Heads of Services within Environment (Mark Cupit, Josie Wragg, Alex Deans, Sarah Hollamby and Clare Lawrence) and relevant staff within the directorates as well. In addition a small number of staff from other Council directorates were also aware.

Supplementary Question

Who outside of Wokingham Borough Council (Senior/Middle Officers and Councillors (by name/role) and including MPs) knew about the expression of interest for the Grazeley Garden settlement at the time of the submission in July 2016? I am happy for you to give me a written reply.

Supplementary Answer

There were others outside and if you want me to give you a succinct list I will come back to you with a written reply.

Councillor Baker responded as follows: I can give you one name, because it is in the public domain, which was Tim Smith the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership as you know because it was in the document.

89.4 Richard Dolinski asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question:

Question

In their latest newsletter in Emmbrook, the Liberal Democrats are claiming that there will be 17,000 more houses in Wokingham, quote "on top of approximately 13,000 currently being built". Could the Executive Member tell me whether this figure is correct?

Answer

It is not correct and it is a gross misrepresentation of the actual situation. They claim that the identified need is for 17,000 homes on top of the 13,000 homes already planned for within the Local Plan. I can only see this as a blatant and scurrilous attempt to scaremonger just before an election.

Comparing the Objectively Assessed Need, the OAN study with the existing Local Plan, the study identified a need for approximately 200 more homes per year from 2016 on top

of the 13,000 homes currently planned for. This is a total of approximately 4,000 more homes, not 17,000, up to 2036 on top of the 13,000 already planned for.

Hopefully the electorate will hold them to task for this gross misrepresentation.

89.5 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration the following question:

Question

Recently three teams of professional people have been seen working and taking measurements around the land known as Area DD in Lower Earley. No doubt they are preparing reports for developers, Wokingham Borough Council or both. Can you explain what these people have been doing?

Answer

Area DD was always zoned for some form of development right from the start of the formation of Lower Earley. There are no proposals as to what might be put there yet and it needs to be appropriate to the site so as not to cause problems to the existing residents. The survey currently being undertaken is to look at one option which is the suitability for housing or sheltered housing for the elderly. The land is quite high and held in place by retaining walls, as you probably know, and therefore any development on the site needs to be carefully considered from structural terms, hence the surveying.

Supplementary Question

This part of Chalfont Park has been left undeveloped for 40 years. It is an important piece of green space in our community. Section 40 of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that every public body must have regard for conserving biodiversity. How is any development at Chalfont Park consistent with that statement?

Supplementary Answer

Area DD is a Council asset and like numerous others classified as surplus land and it is incumbent on the Council to ensure that they make the best possible use, or get the best possible return, on such land. So I think what you describe could be described as best possible use and it is something we would look into.

If conserving biodiversity is the best use for Area DD then we would look into it.

89.6 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:

Question

When the Revenue Monitoring report appeared in the agenda for October's Executive meeting, there was a projected overspend of £494,000. The Executive Member for Finance is recorded in the minutes as saying that "it was hoped that some of this overspend would be clawed back by the end of the year." In January's agenda, the Revenue Monitoring report shows the projected overspend has reached £812,000, 65% higher than in October. What has the Executive Member for Finance done about the overspend, other than just hoping for the best?

Answer

The reason for the increase in forecast overspend to £812k is explained by the fact we are now clearer that the Department of Health do not intend to pay us the income we were led

to believe we would receive. In October's Executive monitoring report we were still hopeful that we would receive the £722k from the Department of Health that we had applied for and we had good grounds for considering that they would give us and it was therefore included in our income projections. We did however note that there was a risk that it may not be forthcoming and this is what has happened. If this figure was treated in the same way in both reports the £812k reported in January would be reduced to £90k; which is actually an 82% reduction in the overspend reported in October.

Supplementary Question

The actual projected overspend in Health and Wellbeing isn't £722k it is £1.663m which is more than twice as much so why should we have any confidence in the figures in next year's budget when this meeting is admitting defeat on controlling this year's spending and you are adding another £722k of spending which you haven't got?

Supplementary Answer

You asked me about the overall position and as I said the overall position is reduced significantly from what we reported in October. Within that there are obviously swings in different budgets and we have pressures in adult social care that are significant as you are well aware and we will continue to monitor that but there are people who need our services and we will deliver services to those people who need them. We will make savings elsewhere if we have to in order to fund the services that we have to provide to people in need in that particular area.

As I said the main issue has been the Department of Health funding but we do have significant pressures. It is a demand led budget and therefore there are aspects of that budget that we cannot control because there are people who need our services and we are here to provide them.

89.7 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

Does WBC plan to require all new SUDS systems given to WBC to be provided with the necessary funding, or require the operator to pay for yearly inspections by WBC?

Answer

Wokingham Borough Council requires a developer to pay a commuted sum to the Council on the adoption of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) feature to cover its future maintenance requirements. Commuted sums are financial contributions made by third parties to the Local Authority as compensation for taking on the future maintenance responsibility for newly created highways and drainage improvements. They are usually secured through legal agreements made with the developers and landowners under sections 38 or 278 of the Highways Act 1980 and is a single payment that is invested over an agreed period of time.

For SuDS features that are not adopted by the Council, arrangements need to be made with other Risk Management Authorities (such as Thames Water or town and parish councils) for the adoption of the SuDS or the developer will be required to make arrangements for a management company to conduct regular inspections and maintenance.

The SuDS Strategy requires developers to submit information to the Council clearly defining the maintenance of the SuDS for the entire lifetime of the development, as well as the agreements demonstrated to be in place to ensure these arrangements do not lapse.

An example of where this strategy has recently been implemented is the proposed system of attenuation ponds which make up part of the drainage for the Nine Mile Ride extension. Wokingham Borough Council will be adopting these features and an appropriate commuted sum has been agreed to cover the cost of future maintenance.

Supplementary Question

Since all of us don't necessarily wish to tread water in these places if they do flood and depending on the number of houses, depending on how the maths goes, whether they are the same numbers or not the same numbers how are we going to make sure that they are actually cleaned as well if during these inspections we find they are not being done how can we make sure that they are being cleaned?

Supplementary Answer

That is a very good question and all SuDS owners, including the Council, risk management authorities including Thames Water, private landowner or management companies have a duty to inspect and maintain their SuDS systems in perpetuity. For further assurance we as a lead local flood authority, something that was given to us under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, will place SuDS that are in private ownership on the Council's asset register to ensure they are inspected and maintained as necessary.

90. 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 30 November 2016 and an operational update for the period to 31 December 2016.

RESOLVED That:

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

91. OPTALIS LTD: UPDATE ON THE BUSINESS CASE FOR MERGER WITH THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

(Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item)

The Executive considered a report setting out the progress of the work to effect the merger of Optalis Ltd with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) whereby Optalis would deliver RBWM's adult social care services and RBWM would acquire a 45% shareholding in the company.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing advised the meeting that one of the intentions when setting up Optalis was to widen it to include other partners and working with RBWM was the first step towards this aim.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the progress of the work to effect the merger be noted;
- 2) the business case enabling the implementation work to continue be approved;

- 3) a further update be provided at its March meeting on the progress of implementation;
- 4) the virement of £40k from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead shareholder payment be approved and an increased debt of £55k for the Holding Company, to fund the costs of implementation, be agreed.

92. REVENUE MONITORING 2016/17 - DECEMBER 2016

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 Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance highlighted the £812k overspend in Health and Wellbeing; which was as a result of the Department of Health renegeing on their promise to provide additional funding of £722k to offset the additional costs as a result of the change in eligibility criteria. The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing went through the background to the issue and advised that despite all the Council's best efforts the Department of Health had finally responded before Christmas to say that they would not be providing any additional fund. The Council, in association with West Berkshire Council who was similarly affected, were currently looking at other options that might be available to pursue this matter.

In addition Councillor Pollock went through the report and highlighted a number of areas including: pressures in demand led services, including Health and Wellbeing and Children's Services, and underspends in a number of areas including Environment and Finance and Resources. Councillor Pollock was pleased to advise the meeting that there was still £9m in reserves and the investment portfolio was healthy.

In relation to the Children's Services budget Councillor Haitham Taylor commented that a reduction in costs should be forthcoming as a result of the new Special Educational Needs resource at St Crispins and also that an innovation bid had been put forward to the Department of Education which if successful would assist with the Council's new recruitment and retention strategy within children's social care.

Councillor Pollock paid tribute to Officers for the work they had undertaken on the budget in what was a difficult financial climate.

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 potential carry forward requests, as per Appendix B to the report, be noted;
- 3) a supplementary estimate for Health and Wellbeing in the sum of £722k be approved.

93. CAPITAL MONITORING 2016/17 - END OF DECEMBER 2016

The Executive considered a report setting out the position of the Capital budget as at the end of December 2016; which showed a £164k underspend variance forecast against budget.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Capital Monitoring report for 3rd quarter of 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- 2) the release of £1,600k originally profiled in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2017/18 into 2016/17, due to acceleration in the build of Arborfield Secondary School, be approved.

94. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S (CFO) REPORT

The Executive considered the Chief Finance Officer's report which set out the major financial issues facing the Council for consideration during the budget setting process. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer to report to Members, when setting the Council Tax, on the robustness of the budget presented and adequacy of reserves.

RESOLVED: That the Chief Finance Officer's (CFO) report and the issues contained within, including the local government finance settlement and the sections on key risks, be noted when setting the council tax for 2017/18 and agreeing the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

95. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2016/17

The Executive considered the Treasury Management mid-year report which summarised the treasury management operations during the first six months of 2016/17.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance went through the report and explained that the document connected the capital programme to investments and borrowings. Councillor Pollock highlighted the low level of external borrowing, the investment in fixed assets i.e. the building of new schools and the regeneration of Wokingham town centre.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the mid-year Treasury Management report for 2016/17 be noted;
- 2) the actual 2016/17 prudential indicators within the report be noted;
- 3) the report be recommended to Council for approval.

96. 21ST CENTURY COUNCIL - UPDATE

The Executive considered a report relating to the implementation progress of the 21st Century Council Programme.

The Leader of Council highlighted a number of the elements within Phase 1 of the programme which included establishment of the reconfigured senior leadership team, Strategy and Commissioning and Support Services and the implementation of the key IT improvements and integration. It was noted that there had been significant Member engagement in the programme including the Member/Officer Group which was supporting the implementation and the Sustainable Finance Group which was monitoring the associated finances.

Members were informed by the Executive Member for Resident Services that one of the key things in integrating all the IT was to make sure that it was focussed on the provision

of services. Councillor Jorgensen thanked the group of Members who had been assisting with the IT element of the programme.

RESOLVED: That the progress in implementing the 21st Century Council programme be noted.

97. LEISURE STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report relating to responses received to the consultation on the Leisure Strategy.

The Executive Member for Environment confirmed that the Strategy would help inform the upcoming leisure contract specifications and the playing pitches strategy. An eight week consultation had been carried out on the Strategy and 139 responses had been received. It was noted that although all the responses were valuable and useful a number related to the facilities and activities provided by the Council and were not actually relevant to the Strategy. These responses would however be taken into account when any future provision was considered.

RESOLVED: That the Leisure Strategy, which has now been supported by feedback from an eight week period of public consultation, be ratified and endorsed.

98. SUDS STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report relating to the consultation responses to the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Strategy which sets out the long term vision for the use of SuDS within the Borough with a focus on managing flood risk and improving the water environment.

The Executive Member for Environment confirmed that the Strategy would enable developers and planning officers to find the most appropriate SuDS for a particular development at the earliest stage of a planning application. The 13 responses received to the consultation had led to some small improvements being made to the Strategy. Councillor Ross thanked all those who had responded to the consultation and gave particular thanks for the work undertaken by Fran Hobson who had produced the Strategy.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the SuDS Strategy Public Consultation Summary be noted and the approach and amendments detailed in Appendix 1 be agreed;
- 2) the amended SuDS Strategy provided in Appendix 2 be approved.

99. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY REGULATION 123 LIST CLARIFICATION

The Executive considered a report summarising the representations received to the consultation exercise on the Draft Regulation 123 List and the Officer responses to these.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the consultation responses to the Draft Regulation 123 List Consultation Document (attached at Appendix A to the report) be noted; and
- 2) the updated Regulation 123 List Document as amended (attached at Appendix B to the report) be adopted.

100. REQUEST FOR THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF FOOTPATH 4 REMENHAM (PART)

The Executive considered a report relating to the temporary closure of part of Footpath 4 Remenham to allow the Henley Festival to be organised and run in a safe manner whilst enabling residents and visitors to continue to use the footpath via a short detour. It was noted that only one objection had been received to the application this year.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the making of an Order for the closure of Footpath Remenham No 4, for a closure of an 80m section of the footpath for the set up and de rig of the Festival stage from Monday 3rd July to Wednesday 5th July 2017 inclusive and from Monday 10th July to Tuesday 11th July 2017 inclusive be approved;
- 2) to include within the closure a 488m section for evening performances from Wednesday 5th July to Sunday 9th July 2017 inclusive and an afternoon performance on Sunday 9th July, under Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, subject to the receipt of the requisite consent of the Secretary of State for Transport.

101. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed Enterprise Risk Management Policy and supporting guidance which would provide the framework for sustaining effective management of risk at the Council.

Members were informed by the Executive Member for Resident Services that under the Council's Constitution there was an obligation to take the Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Guidance to Executive every year whether or not changes were proposed. It was therefore proposed, in accordance with the Audit Committee's wishes, to ask the Constitution Review Working Group to consider amending the Constitution in order that the document only needed to be reviewed by the Executive if changes were put forward.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Guidance be noted; and
- 2) the Constitution Review Working Group be recommended to consider amending the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee as set out in the report.

102. SHINFIELD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Executive considered a report relating to the outcome of the referendum on the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan which took place on 8 December 2016.

The Leader of Council advised the meeting that this was the first neighbourhood plan within the Borough and congratulated the team in Shinfield who had worked extremely hard to produce the plan.

Members were informed by the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration that of those who voted 87% voted yes to the question of whether they wished the plan to be used to help determine planning applications within the Shinfield Parish area. As a result of the referendum result the Council was now under a legal duty to bring the plan into force.

Members paid tribute to members and officers of Shinfield Parish Council for their commitment and dedication over a long period of time to produce the neighbourhood plan; particularly when taking account of all the challenges they had to face.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan be “made” (brought into legal force) to form part of the statutory Wokingham Borough Development Plan pursuant to Section 38A(4) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; and
- 2) the form, content and publication of the Decision Statement (set out in supporting document (Appendix A) pursuant to Regulation 19 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the Regulations”) be agreed to give effect to the above recommendation.

103. THAMES VALLEY ADOPTION

The Executive considered a report relating to plans to set up a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) across the Thames Valley Region.

The Executive Member for Children’s Services advised the meeting that Wokingham was already part of Adopt Berkshire, which had been set up in 2014 and consisted of Bracknell Forest, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and West Berkshire Councils. Following new legislation the Government had stated that they expected every local authority to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020. The proposal therefore contained in the report was for Wokingham to move into a RAA with Oxford County, Swindon and Reading Councils as well as with those authorities currently part of Adopt Berkshire and two voluntary adoption agencies Barnardos and PACT.

Councillor Haitham Taylor emphasised that the proposal would improve services for children, particularly those that were hard to place, and adopters as there would be a larger pool of adopter families to choose from. The proposal would be cost neutral and a grant of £200k, shared between all the authorities, had been provided to set up the new shared service. It was also envisaged that the shared service would assist with post-adoption services as there would be an opportunity to share services. Oxford County Council was the only authority to express an interest in hosting the shared service and it was noted that there was an intention to have a base for Berkshire in Wokingham.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Wokingham’s shared service arrangements being extended to become Adopt Thames Valley Regional Adoption Agency be supported. The new shared service is to be hosted by Oxfordshire County Council, with a base for Berkshire in Wokingham;
- 2) the final decision on details be delegated to the Director of People Services and Lead Member for Children’s Services;
- 3) the Lead Member for Children’s Services being a member of the new governance board be supported.

104. DISABLED CHILDREN'S FAMILY SUPPORT AND SHORT BREAKS

The Executive considered a report relating to proposals for a new commissioning infrastructure for the provision of disabled children's family support and short breaks.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised the meeting that the Disabled Children's Family Team currently supported approximately 200 children and families and within the Borough the CAN network supported about 928 families and as demonstrated in the recently carried out Reach survey it was understood that many of those families did not actually access all of the services offered.

As a result of parents identifying gaps in services eg more weekend breaks, overnight stays and early morning term time support the proposals therefore were to move towards a new commissioning model which would mean that families would have a personalised budget and pre-paid cards. This proposal would provide families with much more control about how they spent their funds, provide broader choice, help to address some of the gaps in service and be more efficient. It would also increase the opportunities for the market to develop to meet the needs of families leading to increased choice and innovation.

Members were informed by Councillor Haitham Taylor that the intention was for the transition to the new arrangements to be phased over 2 years and it for INVOLVE to provide support to providers.

An opportunities fund was planned within the proposal in order to try and mitigate issues for providers; particularly for smaller groups trying to transform into a commissioned service with a pre-paid payment system.

Councillor Haitham Taylor advised that the intention was to go out to consultation in March and it was hoped that as many families and providers as possible would respond to the consultation.

Councillor McGhee-Sumner advised that Adult Social Care had been through a comparable exercise 18 months ago when similar concerns were expressed about direct payments and pre-paid cards and he felt that these concerns had been ironed out and it had been found that this system had led to more control and more choice.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the development of a new short breaks preferred provider list leading to more effective quality assurance and market management be approved;
- 2) the 2-year period of phased transition from the existing arrangements to the new model, to enable change whilst not impacting service delivery, be supported;
- 3) the phased introduction of pre-paid cards to enable families to take control of the purchasing of short breaks care for their children be approved;
- 4) full and detailed consultation, with parents, young people and providers, on the proposed changes be supported.

105. RUSCOMBE BURIAL GROUND

The Executive considered a report relating to proposals for additional burial space and the development of a memorial garden in Ruscombe.

The Executive Member for Environment emphasised that although cemeteries existed at St Sebastian's, Wokingham Without and in Shinfield more capacity was required and there was no facility in the north of the Borough. The proposal was therefore to purchase land from the Diocese of Oxford using S106 money and subject to planning permission develop the land to increase burial and memorial opportunities within the Borough.

Councillor Ross also advised the meeting that the Muslim community, who currently had to utilise provision in Reading and pay out of area fees, have been working with the Council to see if a service could be provided within the Borough to meet their needs.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) approval be given to proceed with the acquisition of the freehold title from the Diocese of Oxford consisting of 0.51 acres of land subject to planning permission (as detailed in Part 2 of the report);
- 2) planning permission be sought and the land be developed to increase burial and memorial opportunities within the Borough.

106. SUPPORTED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT 52 READING ROAD, WOKINGHAM

The Executive considered a report relating to proposals to select Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL) as the development partner for the construction of a supported housing scheme at 52 Reading Road.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing reported that the intention was to transfer the council owned property to Wokingham Housing Ltd for redevelopment as supported housing for vulnerable young persons.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Wokingham Housing Limited, the Council Owned Local Housing Company, (or a subsidiary of WHL), be selected as the development partner for the vulnerable young persons supported housing scheme at 52 Reading Road;
- 2) the 52 Reading Road, Wokingham site be transferred to Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL), or a subsidiary of WHL, on terms to be agreed by the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
- 3) the site, subject to Recommendation 1 above, is 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, including the allocation of up to £950,000 Section 106 receipts for the provision of supported housing on this site be approved;
- 5) the development brief for the 52 Reading Road site be approved;
- 6) the transfer of land and funding for 52 Reading Road will be subject to WHL securing a planning consent for the scheme.