

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2017 FROM 7.30 PM TO 11.00 PM

### Members Present

Councillors: Rob Stanton (Mayor), John Kaiser (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Alistair Auty, Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowering, Prue Bray, David Chopping, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliars-Symons, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Ian Pittock, Bob Pitts, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Alison Swaddle, Simon Weeks, Oliver Whittle and Shahid Younis

### 47. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from UllaKarin Clark, Kate Haines, Emma Hobbs, John Jarvis, David Lee, Ken Miall, Barrie Patman, Anthony Pollock, Bill Soane and Paul Swaddle.

### 48. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared personal and prejudicial interests and left the chamber during consideration of and voting on Motion 400 (Agenda Item 60.1), on the grounds stated:

Keith Baker – as a Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd;

David Chopping – as a Non-Executive Director of Berry Brook Homes Ltd;

Gary Cowan – as a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes Ltd;

Stuart Munro – as a Non-Executive Director of WBC (Holdings) Ltd;

Philip Mirfin – as a Deputy Executive Member and Member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;

Alistair Auty – as a Non-Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Ltd and Member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;

Charles Margetts – as a Deputy Executive Member and Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd;

Pauline Helliars-Symons – as a Member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;

Angus Ross – as a Member of the Planning Committee and Member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;

John Kaiser – as a Member of the Planning Committee and Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes Ltd.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that she was a Deputy Executive Member and a Non-Executive Director of WBC (Holdings) Ltd. However, she only claimed one of the allowances under discussion and, as a result, declared a personal interest but did not withdraw from the chamber.

### 50. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

It was moved by the Mayor and seconded by the Deputy Mayor that, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12n), Procedure Rule 4.2.9.1 be suspended to allow Public Question Time to be extended to 45 minutes.

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

**50.1 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Please can you let me know when the pathway from Kerris Way, towards Radstock School, will be reopened?

**Answer**

The footpath is due to re-open by 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at the latest. I have already informed Hillside Members. They are keen to inform residents of this fact.

**Supplementary Question**

Residents have not been given much information about the closure of this pathway and there was a lack of signage letting people know where the path was closed and how they could get around it. Do you agree that the Council could have done a better job communicating with the residents?

**Supplementary Answer**

I am not aware of the diversions that were put in. I will look into that and get back to you.

**50.2 Peter Humphreys asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:**

When the new shopping centres opened recently in Bracknell and Oxford approximately 25% of the units were vacant.

To date only one retail unit has been pre-let in both Peach Place and Elms Field.

What can be perceived as lack of confidence in the Elms Field development has been demonstrated by Wetherspoons, a business one would assume to be in a position to benefit due to its location at the gateway to that scheme approaching from the town centre, announcing it is closing next year.

To make matters worse the council's grand idea was to have flagship business' at either end of the town centre to encourage footfall at the smaller units when shoppers' walk from one to the other. The closure of M&S wrecked that plan.

Taking all these factors into consideration when will the council be announcing that the Elms Field scheme is being abandoned and that £80 million is not going to be gambled on a white elephant?

**Answer**

At the point of the start on site in Bracknell only Fenwick's, M&S and H&M were exchanged together with the Cinema and a number of restaurants. M&S opened early on 27<sup>th</sup> July with the official opening on 7<sup>th</sup> September and as of today they are at 95% let.

Similarly when construction commenced on Westgate, Oxford, a 100 unit scheme, the only legally committed occupier was John Lewis Partnership. The scheme opened to the public on 23<sup>rd</sup> October with 65% of units open and a further 20% exchanged. It is understood that a number of other stores are now under offer and, as they are opening tomorrow, that is pretty useful.

Bracknell and Oxford highlight that only the larger format operators are willing to commit to pre-lets 12 months and more, in advance of opening. Occupiers, increasingly only commit to pre-lets at the earliest 9 months prior to opening, as demonstrated in the leasing programme for both Bracknell and Oxford. The Council is targeting a blend of smaller format high end retailers and local operators for Peach Place.

Positive negotiations are ongoing with a number of retailers and the Council is encouraged by the levels of interest. It is recognised that the target occupiers will only commit closer to opening and the Council remain committed to this strategy as we believe that quality and type of retail will be critical to creating the town that we expect.

We do not believe the scheme represents a gamble and instead offers a good commercial investment. Elms Field has already secured contractual commitments from Premier Inn, Everyman and Aldi, which account for 65 % of the projected Elms Field income. With construction due to commence in January 2018 and a phased scheme opening across to the end of 2019 and early 2020, once again, further occupiers will not commit to pre-lets at this stage.

Wetherspoons have been undertaking a rationalisation of their estate across the UK over the last 12-18 months and it is understood that the decision to close the Gig House is part of a wider corporate strategy.

The M&S store provided a limited food and general merchandise offer, by comparison to a full line store and it was questionable whether it was fulfilling an anchor role. Whilst regrettable, the closure provides an opportunity to secure other operators for this end of town which could make better use of the space and draw people back to Wokingham.

#### **Supplementary Question**

It is reassuring that you have some optimism about the plans for Elms Field, but at the other end of the town, we haven't heard what is going to happen to the M&S site. Is there a plan or was it bought on a whim?

#### **Supplementary Answer**

I think that I have just answered that. There are a number of options and further announcements will come in due course.

#### **50.3 Graeme Robertson asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

I have been issued with a blue badge from Wokingham Borough Council because I cannot walk 20m. I am a member of the 1 life and am a regular user of the gym/pool at the Carnival Pool, attend a weekly yoga session at St Crispin's Leisure Centre and the gym at Loddon Valley - all run by WBC for people with long term conditions.

I have Primary Progressive MS diagnosed in 1998 - as part of my condition I have to

maintain my fitness which is vital for therapy/rehabilitation and retain my independence. I have a blue badge and use a rollator (granny walker) to get in and out of the gym - I can manage to use equipment in the gym but cannot walk very far.

Recently there have been 4 disabled spaces near the main entrance, which apart from able-bodied people abusing the spaces!, has been ideal for me to stagger in and out of the gym. The Council have re-located the disabled parking spaces into the new car park which is too far for me to walk and the disabled spaces are too far away at St Crispin's and Loddon Valley.

The Council claim that they meet the British Standards for disability, by putting benches en-route. They think it is OK for disabled people to sit outside in the winter time, in the rain, etc. I am pretty sure the BS recommends that benches are used, they need to be covered and well lit.

Why have the Council removed disabled spaces outside the Carnival Pool and moved them into the new car park meaning people who have long term conditions who cannot walk, but want to be independent, cannot use the facility?

Since the question was submitted the Council has put in four disabled spaces slightly nearer to the gym, but still too far away and the access for resting places is still not right.

### **Answer**

Disabled access and parking are and have been an important element in the detailed planning for the Carnival redevelopment. However, your comments make it clear to us that the current arrangements are not suitable for all of our residents with disabilities.

The disabled parking spaces you refer to that were recently removed, were temporary spaces to allow disabled access to the leisure centre while the multi storey car park was under construction. As the car park is now complete, the temporary spaces were removed.

We have identified a location to provide some additional disabled parking spaces, that you referred to, on a temporary basis while the existing leisure centre is demolished and the second phase of the redevelopment is built. We are currently arranging for the spaces to be marked, which should then improve accessibility for disabled users.

The Carnival leisure centre redevelopment includes a pedestrianised area, with two coach parking spaces and an area for emergency services. It was decided during the masterplanning of the site that the overall best solution regarding access was for the disabled parking spaces to be located in the multi storey car park, which is directly adjacent to the main pedestrian entrance.

Best practice in disabled car parking standards was taken into account in the design of the site. Specifically: British Standard 8300:2009 (Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people) sets out that access routes on level ground should have resting places not more than 50m apart for people with limited mobility. We have provided level surfaces and benches in this area to provide for resting opportunities in compliance with the British Standard guidance.

However, having received your comments, we are now implementing a temporary solution that will provide better access during the building of phase two of the redevelopment and I think that your point is that they are not in the right place. In that case I will look into that

for you.

### **Supplementary Question**

The supplementary question is around the facilities now, in the interim with the new build and the future of the new build. There is a concern that there is no current pick up or drop off space or covered sheltered resting place in an appropriate place. The new spaces are adjacent to the rear of the building, adjacent to some old benches that are not covered and there is nothing in between. We would like to know what consultation has happened with people with disabilities and protected characteristic. Under the legislation you refer to, with regard to new facilities in the Borough, what detailed consultation has happened in relation to the design of the new build facilities?

### **Supplementary Answer**

That is a very detailed question, so I will get a written reply, probably from another department of the Council.

### **50.4 Caroline Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Wokingham Borough Council is promising us a dream of a town but getting there is a nightmare. Footfall is dramatically down and with Christmas coming, the retail scene is dismal.

The town centre is surrounded by fences, bridges and holes accompanied by high noise levels from the works. Not only have we got two major construction and highway projects happening at the same time, we now have civil enforcement of parking and the opening of the Lexicon driving people to shop elsewhere, we also seem to have major infrastructure works on just about every route into town.

The Council has acknowledged there is a problem. However, the free parking after 3pm has made no difference to the town so please could they go further and increase it to all day or make the first two hours of parking in any session free?

### **Answer**

The long awaited Wokingham Market Place environmental improvement scheme is an exciting investment in the future vitality and viability of this beautiful town. The scheme is a joint enterprise by Wokingham Borough and Town Councils, which implements part of the vision set out by the adopted Town Centre Masterplan.

The town is currently undergoing growing pains, however I can assure you that the end product will not only help revitalise the town it will do credit to this exceptional place. Any temporary damage to the local economy is a real concern to us. However, it was primarily to invest in the economy and vitality of the town that we commenced this project.

I feel that the free parking after 3pm is a real benefit to shoppers in the lead up to Christmas and there are, therefore, no plans to extend the free parking further. However, I will be making an announcement later about weekend parking. We will continue to monitor matters and work with shops and businesses during the remaining construction period to understand the impacts from the 'free after three' change whilst also driving forward as many of the other initiatives raised at the recent business workshop in the Town Hall.

### **Supplementary Question**

Would the Councillors be prepared to take a 50% pay cut for the foreseeable future? That is what retailers in Wokingham are experiencing as a result of the works being undertaken

by WBC in the town. Other than relaxing parking further, what else can you do to help us all?

### **Supplementary Answer**

There is considerable work going on following the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October. The plans that we have set out have been circulated to retailers in the town. We are doing everything we can to help keep footfall up and to keep retailers solvent, particularly in the period up to Xmas. That is why we brought in “free after three” and other measures that are being put forward to help out. I hope that they will be successful for the town’s retailers.

### **50.5 Helen Power asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Local residents are becoming increasingly concerned about pedestrians trying to cross Molly Millars Lane to get to and from Lidl. This is very dangerous and they have seen pedestrians stranded in the middle of the road unable to complete their crossing due to fast and busy traffic.

Will you look into providing a safe place for pedestrians to cross on Molly Millars Lane by the Lidl store?

### **Answer**

The safety of our residents is a high priority for the Council and for me in particular. If, as you say, people are having difficulty crossing a road then we will happily look into it to see what we could provide to help.

I know that there are a lot of elderly people in Oaklands Drive in that area, with a care home there as well. I also had the pleasure of meeting some residents in Holmes Crescent recently on this subject, so I am familiar with your concerns.

If a crossing is indeed the solution then the type of crossing we can provide will be subject to ensuring that the design meets all the regulations in regard to design standards and safety considerations. Once this has been agreed, a facility will only be provided if appropriate funding is available. Pedestrian crossings can be relatively expensive, for example a new traffic light controlled crossing can cost in the region of £65,000. The Council only has a limited amount of funding available so will need to consider the need to provide something in this location over the other schemes that may also be completing for the same funding.

So, to confirm, I have already instructed our traffic management team to investigate the issues in this location and to respond to me and I will return their findings to you as soon as I receive them.

### **Supplementary Question**

I do have a concern about the funding, which may be stalled. There appears to be plenty of funding for other projects in the town centre. Do we have to wait for a terrible accident before anything is done in this case?

### **Supplementary Answer**

With respect, that is rather prejudging the issue. We need to look at Molly Millars Lane and the point where you want to see a crossing. We do have a limited budget and we have to take care of Council Taxpayers’ money. So we have restricted funds for all the projects in

the Council. We do, in particular, need to look at those areas where there are safety problems. Even if there is a safety problem in Molly Millars Lane there may also be problems elsewhere. There is another question later on about Church Lane in Earley. So we have to be proportionate in making these decisions.

**50.6 David Chopping (on behalf of Guy Grandison) asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Following the unfortunate accident at the Three Tuns traffic lights and in light of the coroner's report, can we ask the Borough highways officers to carry out a review of safety features in cooperation with their counterparts in Reading Borough Council and the Police to ensure that all practical measures are in place?

**Answer**

The recent incident related to a young Ph.D. student, Ben Pedley, who lost his life in Church Road when, riding his bike, he hit a pedestrian. It was not his fault.

I had the privilege of meeting the family last week to extend my condolences and I would repeat that this evening.

The Council has played a part in the inquest into Ben's death and has fully considered the coroner's report. This report did not indicate that a dedicated crossing facility would have prevented the tragic incident. However, a Senior Traffic Management Engineer who was a witness at the inquest accepted that there was no reason why Wokingham Borough Council could not investigate an additional pedestrian crossing facility across Church Road. We are now in the process of commissioning a survey and study to do this.

As part of the feasibility assessment of a crossing, the Council will consider the accident records. These do not indicate any pedestrian injury trend at this particular crossing point as, apart from the fatal accident, there has been only one other incident in five years which occurred on the other side of the junction. The study will also need to consider the impact of potential additional delay to other traffic using the junction, due to the need to add an additional 'all red' pedestrian phase. This could, in turn, lead to longer delays to traffic which might, as a consequence, divert onto less suitable routes causing safety concerns elsewhere.

Once the Council has the results of the study, it will be able to determine if any safety improvements or pedestrian facilities should be put in place.

**50.7 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

I know that a lot of Wokingham residents have concerns about the 'eyesore' temporary bridge over the railway line at the Tan Hill crossing.

Pedestrians now have to use two bridges to get over the railway at this crossing, and the very steep temporary bridge is impossible to use if you have a bike, pram or wheelchair.

Network Rail's Community Relations Team has written to me stating that the temporary bridge was put in place with the agreement of Wokingham Council. They have also assured me that 'once the local authority install the planned over span bridge which is a permanent solution to this problem, then Network Rail will remove this temporary

structure’.

Could the Council please confirm the planned date for building the permanent over span bridge at the Tan Hill Crossing, and can they confirm that the new bridge will be useable by residents with a pram or wheelchair?

### **Answer**

The bridge across the Windsor lines at Tan House Crossing is a temporary structure put in place by Network Rail to enable the closure of the grade crossing that forms part of the Public Right of Way across allotments and playing fields.

Network Rail has a policy of closing railway crossings as this reduces risk. As and where there are solutions to reduce risk Network Rail is required to address them. The impact of not closing the crossing is increasing journey times on the railway due to speed restrictions, such as that at Smiths Farm User Worked Crossing.

The crossing of the North Downs line has been a bridge with steps for the last 80 or so years and, as such, residents have also had to negotiate steps on this Public Right of Way.

The statement from Network Rail saying that the temporary bridge will be removed once the Council install a permanent solution is misleading. It is not the Council’s responsibility to provide this bridge and there are currently no plans or budget to do so. The Council are however, working with Network Rail and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a solution that is inclusive and value for money. Initial estimates of the cost to replace the two bridges with a single span bridge run into several million pounds for a very basic inclusive structure. As yet no funding has been identified by Network Rail or the Council for this project to be programmed.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can I ask what steps the Council is taking with Network Rail to make sure that a bridge is put in place for residents?

### **Supplementary Answer**

As stated, we do not have any budget at the moment, so that will be a matter for the future. In the meantime, we will continue to have meetings with Network Rail to discuss the matter. It would be good to improve the situation but I cannot promise anything at the moment.

### **50.8 Simon Cooper asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

On the matter of speeding in Grazeley, a recent independent speed survey conducted by the local residents found that the average speed was 48mph and a top speed of 81mph was recorded, following serious accidents in the village as a direct cause of excess speed and the constant fear when trying to exit residents' drives or walk along the paths in the village, please can Chris Bowring advise why it is that Thames Valley Police, Shinfield Parish Council and the local residents of Grazeley all accept there is a serious issue in the village with speeding however WBC persist in their denial there is an issue and refuse to attend the site to witness the daily onslaught that residents live with?

### **Answer**

As part of my response to your previous question at our last Council meeting in September I explained that the responsibility to enforce the existing 40mph speed limit lies with the Police, as the speed enforcement agency. The 40mph speed restriction is the limit, and drivers should travel at an appropriate speed for the traffic, road conditions and weather along the route they are travelling at any given time. Although the Council and Police consider the 40mph speed limit appropriate for this location, the Council had recently installed mobile speed-limit reminder Vehicle Activated Signs that should encourage motorists to keep their speed to below 40mph. We also agreed to undertake additional speed surveys in in both directions within the village.

The results of the recent surveys, now in, show that the average speed northbound was 25.2 mph and southbound was 37.8 mph. This was over a 7 day, 24 hour period. This data is well within the expected tolerance levels of a 40mph speed limit area. Whilst not all the vehicles were travelling at these speeds at all times, these figures do indicate that the average motorist is adhering to the speed limit. It should also be noted that during the busy school times, the speed limit is further reduced through the village, on the approach to the school to 20mph which is legally enforceable by the police.

I am aware that an officer from the traffic management team has recently met with you where you challenged the location of the survey and that it is the approach into the village from Lambwood Hill that is the area of concern and therefore the Council have agreed to undertake a further traffic and speed count.

I will be happy to meet with you and Members and Officers from Shinfield Parish Council, partly to ensure that we are talking about the same location.

**50.9 Rachael Burgess asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

In relation to agenda item 53 regarding members' allowances, I would like to know why councillors deserve an additional £100 to cover increased parking charges, charges which they themselves approved, leaving ordinary residents, visitors and workers in Wokingham to foot the bill? Is it fair that Wokingham's taxpayers will pay twice – for their own parking and those of the Councillors?

**Answer**

Despite what some Councillors have been claiming in the public arena, this report tonight is being put forward by Wokingham Borough Council Taxpayers, who are not Councillors, but just ordinary members of our community who volunteer their time to sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). This is not a panel that Councillors sit on.

This item will be presented by the Chairman of the IRP (Tom Berman) later on in the meeting and I hope that he will be able to give you some clarity over the thinking behind all of the recommendations, which include proposing to give Members £100 to cover increased parking charges.

This item will then be debated by all parties after the presentation by the Chairman and I hope that then it will become clear what individual Members' views are on this topic.

**Supplementary Question**

As car parking charges have recently been waived from 3pm, do you think that Councillors should still get the additional £100.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I cannot pre-empt how Members will vote on this matter tonight. I hope that you will be able to stick around to listen to the debate and how people choose to vote after listening to the Chairman of the IRP.

### **50.10 Keith Malvern asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Every Council agenda includes the Council's Vision and Priorities. What specific priorities does this agenda item (item 52) address?

### **Answer**

The investment in commercial properties will provide much needed income to the Council in the context of the severe austerity measures we have been facing since 2008 and huge reductions in Government grant.

I think it is worth mentioning that, in 2019/20, the Council will be moving into negative Revenue Support Grant which means that £7.2m of our Business Rates will be sent to central government to be redistributed to other councils. So, in the context of the escalating costs of our statutory services, this strategy is set to increase income to the Council.

This income will be available to help with the funding of all our services around our priorities, from 'improving educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential' through to 'improving the customer experience when accessing Council services'.

The underpinning principle, set out in every Council agenda, as you will be familiar with, I'm sure, is to 'offer excellent value for your Council Tax'. Our increasingly commercial strategy is intended to achieve just that.

### **Supplementary Question**

In referring to "Our Vision, Our Priorities", for the sake of completeness, you did not include two of the priorities which are "Ensure strong sustainable communities which are vibrant and supported by well-designed development and, secondly, "Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough".

In answer to my specific question which relates to specific priorities you make clear that there are no specific priorities. While the Council is keen for me to support local businesses, and I try to do that, if this proposal, which is nonsensical and a mistake, does go ahead, will the Council be in a position to identify where I will be able to see how I can help our investments elsewhere?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am slightly confused by the supplementary question. I think the essence of it is: will the Investment Strategy be investing in all of the Vision and Priorities and will you, as a Council Taxpayer, be able to influence where that money is spent? If you are able to put your supplementary question in writing I will give you a written response. Then we will both understand each other.

**Note:** The following written answer was provided subsequently:

The Council will keep members of the public updated with the investments that they make

through this new strategy. There may be incidences where there will be commercially sensitive information that cannot be released into the public domain (in line with our Constitution), however we will act in an open and transparent manner. This will enable residents to support local businesses that may in the future be part of this investment strategy. Some of this investment may also be invested in housing too.

I was pleased to see that you were promoting the two consultations that we currently have running concurrently and I hope that by having some printed in the foyer of Shute End we will encourage those visiting the offices to fill them in and spread the word that they are now open. I am also keen that we also have different methods of collecting views from our residents and that we do not exclusively rely on the computer as not everyone has either access to one or can use them for a number of differing reasons.

Thank you also for your suggestion regarding referring in every new policy and strategy to the priorities of the Council. I believe that this is inherent in the work that this Council does but if there are examples where you think that this is not the case then please do let me know and we can take a look to understand the reason behind the decisions.

## 51. PETITIONS

The following member of public presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out against the petition.

Mr Clive Schafer	<p>Mr Schafer presented a petition with 1,900 signatures regarding traffic arrangements in Wokingham town centre.</p> <p><b>To be validated and considered for debate at Council.</b></p>
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## 52. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed the meeting of the following points:

Democratic Services were running a Xmas picture quiz with all proceeds going to the Royal Berkshire Hospital Cancer Support Group. Members were encouraged to buy a quiz sheet at a cost of £2 (minimum);

Members would be receiving an email from the Mayor in the near future with ideas for a fundraising event to be held in the spring of 2018. Members were requested to provide a speedy response to the email, with comments on the proposals.

On 22 November 2017, the Mayor attended the Collation and Induction service for Rev. Anna Harwood at St. Mary's Church, Twyford. The service was led by the Bishop of Reading.

The Mayor was supporting a competition amongst local primary school children to design the Mayoral Xmas card. Alan Hicks had provided cash prizes for the top three schools and the individual winners.

### 53. PROPERTY PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 47 to 50, which proposed the establishment of a Property Investment Portfolio which would mitigate the impact of reducing Central Government funding by creating new income streams.

The report stated that the Council had already embarked on an assets investment programme through the town centre regeneration and the Council-owned housing companies. However, the Council's property portfolio was still relatively small compared to other local authorities.

The report set out proposals for setting up an Investment Portfolio which would look at investments in development on Council-owned land and the purchase and/or development of income-generating or re-saleable property assets. In order to fund investment opportunities it was proposed that the Council would utilise Public Works Loan Board borrowing of up to £100m or the proceeds of asset disposals.

In presenting the report, Oliver Whittle stated that the costs of borrowing would be covered by investment income and, therefore, there would be no cost to the Borough's Council Taxpayers. Progress relating to the portfolio would be reported to the Executive on a regular basis.

The Executive had agreed to the broad principles set out in the report at its meeting on 28 September 2017. However, the Council's Constitution imposed a limit on the Executive's authority to incur up to £15m on individual Capital schemes subject to such expenditure being within Council approved budgets. Consequently, Council approval was required for Recommendation 3, relating to a limit of £20m for investment in individual schemes.

It was proposed by Oliver Whittle and seconded by Charles Margetts that the recommendations set out in the report be agreed.

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, the recommendations were declared by the Mayor to be carried.

Prior to the vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.15, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposals. The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Mark Ashwell	Prue Bray	Rob Stanton
Alistair Auty	Gary Cowan	
Keith Baker	Andy Croy	
Parry Batth	Lindsay Ferris	
Lara Blumenthal	Clive Jones	
Chris Bowring	Ian Pittock	
David Chopping	Beth Rowland	
Richard Dolinski	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Michael Firmager	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Mike Haines		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
John Halsall		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Tim Holton		
Philip Houldsworth		

Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Diane King		
Abdul Loyes		
Charles Margetts		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Bob Pitts		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Oliver Whittle		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the recommendations agreed by the Executive on 28 September 2017, as set out in the report, be noted;
- 2) up to £100m borrowing powers, in line with the Property Portfolio Investment Strategy, be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Leader, Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration;
- 3) in line with the Property Portfolio Investment Strategy, the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Leader, the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration, be delegated authority to invest up to a maximum of £20m for a single transaction.

**54. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES LEVELS**

The Council considered the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), set out at Agenda Pages 51 to 59, following their annual review of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

The IRP Chairman, Tom Berman, addressed the Council and thanked his colleagues on the panel, Nick Oxborough and David George, for their contributions. He also thanked Arabella Yandle, Democratic Services, for the support she had provided to the Panel.

In presenting the report, Tom Berman highlighted the following issues:

- The Panel met eight times and interviewed 13 Members including the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The Panel also issued a questionnaire, receiving a response from 27 Members. Due to time constraints, the 2017 review had been "light touch".

- The Panel was rigorous in testing each of its recommendations against three core principles: (i) Was it affordable relative to the Council's budget constraints? (ii) Was it reasonably similar to good practice in other unitary authorities in the region? (iii) Would Borough residents consider it to be fair?
- The Panel recommended that the time contributed part of the Basic Allowance be increased by 1% backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. This matched the annual increase in Officer pay for 2016/17.
- In regard to the component of the Basic Allowance for Out of Pocket Expenses, the Panel took into account representations made to it concerning car parking expenses at Shute End and the significant fact that Out of Pocket Expenses had been held at the same level for several years and, accordingly, the Panel recommended that this component be increased from £500 to £600 per annum.
- In regard to the third component of the Basic Allowance, namely the provision of IT, communication and home office facilities, the Panel recommended no change to the existing £500 allowance.
- In regard to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs), the Panel noted confusion in previous years about the linkage between SRAs and remuneration to Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) on Council-owned companies and payments to Members on outside bodies such as the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. Legal advice confirmed that the Panel had no remit outside of the Members' Allowances Scheme. Consequently, the Panel's recommendations did not extend to NED or other payments.
- The Panel recommended that, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, Special Responsibility Allowances should be limited to one per Member, that being the one with the highest value. The question of the level of SRA payments for different roles would be addressed by the Panel in a more detailed review in 2018.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for their efforts and their report to Council. She recommended that the Panel's proposals be accepted in full but also suggested that all Members forgo the proposed additional £100 for out of pocket expenses pending the next IRP review in 2018.

It was moved by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by John Halsall that the Independent Remuneration Panel's Recommendations, set out on Agenda page 58, be approved:

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, the Mayor declared that the recommendations were approved.

In accordance with Procedural Rule 4.2.15.6 Andy Croy requested that his vote against the recommendations be recorded in the Minutes.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the time contributed component of the Basic Allowance be increased by 1% to reflect the increase in Officer pay, backdated to 1 April 2017;

- 2) there be no change made to the multiples of the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to those roles as set out in the current Members' Allowances Scheme;
- 3) with effect from 1 April 2018, Special Responsibility Allowances be limited to one per Member (not including Non-Executive Director payments) that being the one with the highest value;
- 4) in line with the Motion passed by Council on 26 September 2016, Members be reminded to provide information for publication on the website regarding payments received from any outside bodies to which they were appointed by Wokingham Borough Council;
- 5) the publication of Members' payments on the website be reviewed with a view to making the information more prominent and immediately visible;
- 6) the £500 component of the Basic Allowance for out of pocket expenses be increased to £600, to contribute to the cost of parking at Shute End;
- 7) the £500 component of the Basic Allowance for the provision of IT continue to be claimed only by those Members who provide facilities which allow constituents and Officers to communicate with them by email and the self-certification process be continued;
- 8) the rate payable for the Childcare and Dependant Carers' Allowance be increased to £10 per hour for up to 35 hours per month.

## **55. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICER - DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES**

The Council considered the appointment of Paul Senior, Interim Director of People's Services, to the statutory Officer roles of Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Social Services.

It was moved by Mark Ashwell and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the recommendation be agreed.

Upon being put to the vote it was declared by the Mayor that the recommendation was approved.

**RESOLVED:** That Paul Senior, Interim Director of People Services, take on the statutory responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Social Services with immediate effect.

## **56. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 61 to 71, which gave details of proposed changes to the Council's Constitution recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group.

The proposed changes were agreed by the Constitution Review Working Group at its meeting on 30 October 2017. The changes related to:

- Business to be conducted at extraordinary meetings of the Council;
- The schedule of meetings of the Licensing and Appeals Committee;
- Procedural rules relating to the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and other senior Officer roles;
- Procurement and Contract Rules and procedures.

It was moved by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Pauline Helliard-Symons that the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, it was declared by the Mayor that the recommendations were approved.

**RESOLVED:** That the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group, be agreed:

1) Chapter 4 The Council Meeting

that Rule 4.2.3.2 be amended as follows:

**4.2.3.2 Business**

“The business to be conducted at an extraordinary meeting of the Council shall be a single item only ***unless exceptionally agreed by the Mayor.***”

2) Chapter 8 Regulatory and Other Committees

that Rule 8.4.2 be amended as follows:

**8.4.2 Meetings of the Licensing and Appeals Committee**

“The Licensing and Appeals Committee shall ***schedule a minimum of*** meet at least four times ***meetings*** per Municipal Year, as scheduled in the Timetable of Meetings, agreed by Council;”

- 3) revisions to Rules 11.5.3, 11.5.4 and 11.6.5.3 (Officer Employment Procedure Rules) and Chapter 11.6 (Delegated Powers Relating to Staffing Matters) as set out in paragraph 4 of the report;
- 4) revisions to the Financial Regulations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 5) revisions to the Procurement and Contract Rules and Procedures as highlighted in Appendix 2 to the report.

**57. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

**Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Leader of the Council**

Under Rule 5.4.16 of the Constitution, I just need to inform Council that an urgent decision was made at Executive on 26th October to introduce temporary free car parking in Wokingham town council car parks from 3pm in order help mitigate some of the issues raised around the Market Place refurbishments and other regeneration works in and

around the town. This measure has been taken to assist businesses during the most important trading period of the year from November to the end of January. Local businesses have also produced a number of promotional videos to share, so please find out more about these and share them with your friends and family.

This week was the closing date for submissions for applications for the new Chief Executive for this authority. I'm pleased to advise there has been a significant level of interest and there will be a full selection day in early January, with the proposed candidate being put forward for Full Council's approval on 19th January.

There is an opportunity for a cross section of Councillors to participate in a facilitated session with the short-listed candidates. We are seeking expressions of interest for those who would like to participate in the Member Panel in January; you will have received an email about this.

The Chairman of the Personnel Board and I have been working hard to ensure that the processes in place for the Chief Executive recruitment are transparent, objective and aligned with the Constitution in order to identify and secure the very best candidate for our authority's future ambitions.

When I was elected Leader of the Council, I made a commitment to make representations to the Government on the big issues that are affecting Wokingham Borough Council. I highlighted two in particular – housing and our financing. Last week, Councillor Lee and I met with Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to raise our concerns around these issues. On housing in particular, we were offered the opportunity to put forward proposals for schemes that could be piloted in Wokingham to help address some of these issues. We especially raised our concern about 'landbanking' – that even though this Council has more than 10,500 granted planning permissions, developers are only building around 1,000 houses per year. As a result, the Planning Inspectors tell us that we are not building houses fast enough! Hard to believe.

We told the Secretary of State that this was unacceptable and needed to change. So yesterday, I was pleased see that the Chancellor directly addressed this issue in his Budget speech, with an urgent review promised to look into the gap, which is due to report in 2018.

Other parties moan and gripe, but the Conservatives deliver.

As this is the last Full Council meeting before the Christmas break. I just wanted to thank the many staff in our authority and companies who have worked incredibly hard this year and will continue to do so over the Christmas period to provide the services that residents need.

I also want to convey our continuing gratitude to the volunteers in our community who will be taking time away from their families over the festive period, for no gain to themselves whatsoever, to work tirelessly across society, including with some of our most vulnerable people. Our community is built on these people – they are the foundation stones of our Borough. On behalf of all Councillors, I want to sincerely thank all these people for everything they do to make Wokingham Borough a great place to live.

**Stuart Munro – Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and Regeneration**

In the interests of brevity I would like to say two things. Firstly, a good news item. The Thames Valley Science Park Gateway building is now open for business, with 20 businesses preparing to move into the building, with lots of people working there. This is a great milestone for the Borough. Secondly, a new hotel is to be built in Winnersh by Whitbread, the parent company of Premier Inns. This will create another 76 jobs which is good news for the Borough.

### **Simon Weeks – Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement**

A couple of announcements. Hot off the press this afternoon, I am pleased to confirm that the Hogwood or Marino site, as it is known in Finchampstead, which is an integral part of the Arborfield SDL and has been dormant since planning permission was granted for 1,500 houses two years ago, has been sold to Legal and General Homes. I am very confident that this will soon start contributing towards our housing numbers which will help with our 5 year land supply. This has been a long running saga, but the deal was struck this afternoon.

Secondly, in the absence of David Lee, who handles strategic planning matters, we have been having a series of meetings during November with the Towns and Parishes to discuss all the sites that were submitted in each of those Towns and Parishes for the current Local Plan Update process. We have had the majority of those meetings with three left to go tomorrow and early next week. I am pleased to report that the Towns and Parishes have participated well. There have been representatives from the Borough and the Town and Parish Councils at those meetings and I think that they have broadly agreed with our initial assessments.

Thirdly, to echo what Charlotte Haitham Taylor has already said as Leader, we are continuing to lobby against the inequity that we are faced with in the Planning system, particularly the fact that it is being exploited by opportunist developers. As well as the meeting that David Lee and Charlotte Haitham Taylor had with Sajid Javid, David Lee and I had a meeting with Alok Sharma, the Housing and Planning Minister. Two weeks ago David Lee and I had a meeting with Theresa May here, at which we again put these points across strongly. So, again echoing what has already been said, I was particularly pleased to hear that the Chancellor in his Budget statement appears to have, at long last, got the message from a variety of different sources and is promising to look into this as an urgent matter, which I am thrilled about.

Finally, at 7pm next Wednesday there is a training session here for all Members and Town and Parish Members on the process of traffic modelling, which may appear initially to be a black art. I would encourage all of you to come along to gain some confidence that the traffic modelling we are doing, looking ahead, is pretty precise.

### **Chris Bowring - Executive Member for Highways and Transport**

Last year, the Council was able to offer free parking on the three Saturdays before Christmas in our town-centre Council-owned car parks. This year, I am pleased to say I can go further and extend free parking to include Sunday as well giving free parking for the entire three weekends. Furthermore, with parking 'free after three' already adopted in Wokingham town, that means that parking there will be free from 3pm on Friday to 8am on the following Monday. I hope that this will be welcomed by Wokingham town retailers who are currently experiencing reduced footfall due to the town centre improvement works.

### **Mark Ashwell – Executive Member for Children’s Services**

Firstly, I need to inform you and Council of an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting illness at Hawkedon Primary School. This is suspected, but not confirmed, as being caused by Norovirus. The school management formally reported the outbreak and sought advice from Public Health England, who managed the incident and a letter has been sent from the school to all parents, as befits best practice.

On Tuesday of this week Mr O’Shea, the Headteacher at Hawkedon, in conjunction with his Governors decided to close the school for 48 hours and has reopened today Thursday. This enabled a full deep clean of the premises. I can inform you that the school has managed the outbreak exceedingly well. The school did everything according to good practice and should be commended for their actions and for keeping a really positive face throughout. Information has been sent to all other schools in the Borough regarding preventive actions.

As a quick update on Children’s Services, my mission to visit every school in the Borough is going really well. I’ve asked for two hot topics at every school I’ve visited to enable me to connect and keep the conversation going. Unsurprisingly, a common theme is funding. Money is short and, with a view to always spending to support teaching, other parts of our schools’ priorities are potentially suffering. I’ve been able to reassure them that this Borough Council is pushing for fairer national funding and has a capital programme of repair and renewal that we will not shy away from.

In Children’s Care and Early Help we have launched our ‘Signs of Safety’ innovation programme for our social workers. Last week I chose to witness this first hand by attending their two day ‘Signs of Safety’ course. They are impressive, really dedicated people and I will be looking to showcase this trailblazing approach to you all early in the New Year.

### **Norman Jorgensen – Executive Member for Environment, Sports, Environmental Health, Leisure and Libraries**

I have three items to bring to Members’ attention.

Firstly, Re3 has launched a scheme to encourage engagement by schools and voluntary bodies to promote further recycling of glass. We wish to capture in our recycling bring banks more of the glass that is currently put out with general waste. If successful this could push up our recycling rate by around 1% thus also decreasing the cost of waste disposal.

Secondly, we have developed a partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council to tap into their expertise in clamping down on fly-tipping. Since this relationship was formed the Council has secured two prosecutions and one simple caution. Fly-tipping is an anti-social behaviour and blights our environment, hence where evidence of perpetrators exists we will take action.

Thirdly, you will see from the agenda for the Executive meeting next week that there are three papers relating to Sport and Leisure. They cover:

- Leisure Management Contract;
- Bulmershe New Build;
- Emmbrook School 3G Pitch.

I am pleased to be bringing these to the Executive as they will, if approved, result in a major boost to our already excellent facilities for the enjoyment and wellbeing of residents. Investment is planned in all six leisure centres with new builds at Bulmershe and Carnival

Pool. New and improved sports pitches and courts have been created in Earley, Ryeish Green, Arborfield and Wokingham and another is proposed at Emmbrook School.

We also expect to make a profit from the operation of these facilities. Contrast this to Reading where the Council seems to have lost the plot on managing their finances and is planning to close facilities.

## **58. STATEMENTS FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES**

### **Stuart Munro – Chairman of Wokingham Holdings Ltd.**

At a high level the housing group has now become well established and I am sure that some of my colleagues will be talking about this in more detail. Bill Flood, the Managing Director of Wokingham Housing Ltd. (WHL), has been recognised as one of the most successful MD's in the Local Government housing sector. I think it is fantastic that we have been recognised in this way.

WHL will hand over 125 new homes in the financial year to its sister housing companies and will generate a profit of £1.1m. In 2018/19 WHL will hand over a further 60 new homes at a profit of just short of £1m. This is a great result. We are really getting there.

WHL had seven projects under development and nine sites in the pipeline and these developments will provide future income, in line with their brief. These include six units of two-bedroomed houses at affordable rents at Grovelands which will provide a gross annual income of over £58k; a facility for care leavers at Reading Road providing a gross annual income of over £58k; 34 self-contained living apartments with onsite care provided by Optalis with an annual income of over £212k per annum; two two-bedroomed maisonettes for shared ownership with a sales value of over £200k and rental income of over £5k per annum, as well as the official opening of Phoenix Avenue in November and the Elizabeth Road scheme.

### **Alistair Auty – Chairman of Wokingham Housing Ltd.**

At present Wokingham Housing Ltd (WHL) has 84 homes under construction over 9 sites. To date WHL has passed over for management to Loddon Homes and Berry Brook Homes 68 units. There are approximately 130 potential units in the development pipeline.

The documented delays at Phoenix Avenue are now behind us. Due to the delays, Liquidated and Ascertained Damages were applied which will ensure that we bring the project in under budget.

Fosters Extra Care scheme continues to progress, is to budget and will be handed over in early January. Our other schemes are making good progress and I am sure that many Members will have seen progress at 52 Reading Road, which should be completed by February and will provide much needed housing there.

We have a number of potential sites that we are working on, many in conjunction with the commissioners. That includes the first phase of Gorse Ride which will be a good challenge for WHL.

There will be an official opening event for Phoenix Avenue in the new year and all Members are welcome to attend. If Members would like more information on this event please let me know.

Finally, none of this would be possible without the excellent work of the staff within our housing companies. So my thanks go to Bill, Rachel, Darren, Holly and Karen for their hard work.

**Gary Cowan – Non-Executive Director, Loddon Homes Ltd.**

Alistair Auty and Stuart Munro covered the delivery of new houses which I will expand on in the New Year. Tonight I want to concentrate on Loddon Homes and the current key work on focussing that the management and care arrangements at Fosters, designed for independent living with extra care, are ready for the opening in January. The new scheme for older people replaces the former Fosters Care Home in Fosters Lane, Woodley and is fast approaching completion.

Wokingham Borough Council's housing company, Wokingham Housing Ltd., is building the scheme for its sister company, Loddon Homes. Care will be provided by the Council's social care company, Optalis. When complete the scheme will consist of 43 self-contained apartments all with private balconies or ground floor terraces and will have communal facilities for all residents including two lounges, a kitchen and dining room. The apartments will allow older people to live independently in the security and privacy of their own homes with additional support and care staff available if needed.

This is a scheme that all of us can be proud of in delivering and my thanks go out to the very many people who have made this happen.

**Charles Margetts on behalf of Anthony Pollock, Chairman of Optalis Holdings Ltd.**

The teams in Optalis from the two Boroughs of Wokingham and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are working closely together with staff from the both areas meeting regularly to share experiences, increase knowledge and develop improved working practices in order to improve the quality of services they are offering to the residents of both Boroughs.

We have combined and enhanced the quality assurance teams which we inherited from the two parent Councils which makes better use of our teams' professional and practice skills and experience of the staff so that we can provide better and faster quality assurance to our practitioners.

The finance and HR support systems from both Councils are being brought together to further strengthen the company's financial information systems, budgeting, cost control, management decision making and supporting the HR needs of our large number of front line staff. Optalis is performing in line with budget, which is expected to continue through to the end of the financial year.

Our Supported Employment Service Manager, Donna Morgans, has received the 'highly commended' award in the Workplace Mental Health Awards category at the Thames Valley Business Awards. The award reflects the importance Optalis places on increasing awareness of mental health and pro-actively creating a healthy, productive and transparent culture. Furthermore, we share good practice with local employers, assisting

them with awareness, training, support and reasonable adjustments to become increasingly inclusive.

We work across the community with partners including all Adult Social Care services, the community Mental Health team and Transition teams. We have a prominent voice through the community, actively contributing to various local boards such as:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities;
  - Implementation Group Carer's Strategic Group;
  - Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse Strategic Group;
  - Thames Valley Partnership for reducing reoffending through supported employment.
- A key element of our service is the work we do with local careers leads to provide support for young people struggling in mainstream schools. Whether it is volunteering, work experience or paid opportunities, Optalis supports up to 300 people at any one time enter the world of work.

The award is testament to the excellent work done by Optalis in providing a sustainable long-term benefit to our customers, colleagues and the wider community.

In conclusion, Optalis continues to meet all the objectives set by the Council.

### **David Chopping – Chairman of Berry Brook Homes Ltd.**

Most of what I wanted to say has been covered already, so I will merely add a couple of points of information.

11 properties are due to be handed over this month but the handover of the remaining 5 properties, due to be ready for the week before Christmas, will not take place until the New Year as we will not move tenants in that close to Christmas. These properties will remain the responsibility of Hill until the new year. However the handovers of 4 units at Grovelands and another 4 at Anson Walk will take place just before Christmas because there are identified people who need them.

Berry Brook Homes' website is now live and work is on-going in developing our suite of policies and the business plan. The draft business plan financial position looks positive and shows Berry Brook should have a strong future in meeting our key objectives of providing affordable homes and an ongoing income stream for WBC. We are estimating the company will be profitable in 2020/21, having effectively broken even in 2019/20.

### **59. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

#### **59.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:**

In answer to my question 28.1 at the Executive meeting, held on the 27th of July 2017, you stated that:

“We recognise the important contribution that Parish and Town Councils can bring to the planning process and will be actively engaging with them and Borough Councillors in the site assessment work which will inform the Local Plan Update. We will shortly be starting to engage with them on our initial assessments. The intention is to batch those sites up

into wards, then invite Parish and Town Council representatives and ward Members to discuss the initial assessments”.

Can you update me on how you consulted with the Members, Parish/Town Councillors and residents prior to the public announcement that Master Planners will be funded to look at development opportunities in Barkham, Grazeley and the Twyford areas.

### **Answer**

The Council must follow the clear process and requirements set out in legislation and government policy in updating the Local Plan. This includes assessing all sites promoted through the process, and consulting on potential approaches towards managing development.

Over 260 sites have been promoted into the local plan process by landowners and others. In a few instances, individual sites or clusters of sites are extremely large and complex. To ensure that analysis captures holistic impacts and opportunities, including the correct infrastructure should the site be deemed suitable, a masterplanning approach has been chosen. Members were updated on this through the related report to Executive in July 2017, which you referred to in your question.

Undertaking detailed work now provides residents and others with the opportunity to engage and influence assessments early in the local plan process, allowing us to address a number of lessons learned through our successful Core Strategy.

Masterplanning is simply a sensible way to approach large and complex sites. The relevant Ward Members and Parish Councils will be fully engaged in the process as it moves forward. There will also be an opportunity for residents to comment on the outcomes of that process.

In addition to the work currently being undertaken on masterplanning for the three large sites promoted, we will have met with all the Town and Parish Borough Ward Members during November to discuss all 260 sites submitted. In addition, I have met with seven Town and Parish Councils and requested a meeting with all the others to explain in detail the process we are going through to update our Local Plan.

### **Supplementary Question**

As you might have expected, I emailed the Prime Minister, Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, Alok Sharma, Minister of State for Housing and Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Only Sajid Javid had the courtesy to reply. Needless to say, the reply was not encouraging. What I find interesting is that Executive Members had meetings with Alok Sharma, Sajid Javid and, finally, some of you even met the Prime Minister recently. In the cause of openness and transparency could you make a public statement to us all on the outcome of these meetings?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am sure that David Lee would be very happy to do that once we have the responses from all the Ministers' concerned.

## **59.2 John Halsall had asked the Executive Member for Environment a question relating to the adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy for the Parish of Remenham**

John Halsall notified the meeting that his question had been withdrawn following the decision of the Licensing and Appeals Committee, on 21 November 2017, to progress a formal consultation in respect of the adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy for the Parish of Remenham.

**59.3 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services, Health, Wellbeing and Housing the following question:**

With regard to the 22 Peach Place Flats, where WBC will be using public funds (namely Section 106 Commuted Sums) to pay for these flats. When will these costs be in the public domain?

**Answer**

The project cost for the Peach Place key worker homes is not currently in the public domain as it is commercially sensitive. These costs will be publically available after the completion of contracts between the Council and the housing company most likely in the Spring/Summer of 2018. Details on Council expenditure on capital projects, including affordable housing, are routinely published in the Capital Programme, which is signed off in February each year.

**59.4 Chris Smith asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

Is the Council taking a robust approach to people who do not follow planning guidance?

**Answer**

The planning guidance is set out in the Council supplementary planning documents and this includes the Local Planning Enforcement Plan that sets out how the Council deals with breaches of planning control. Over the last 2 or 3 years the Council has taken an increasingly robust approach to planning enforcement against breaches that have a significant impact on the quality of life for residents in the Borough. Since 2015, 70 enforcement notices have been served by the Council.

Although the Council is committed to ensuring that development in the Borough is of the highest quality, it must take a proportionate approach to the action it employs to enforce breaches of planning control. In fact, for about half of all contact with Planning Enforcement it actually transpires that the issues of concern do not require planning permission.

Our focus is on seeking a negotiated approach to resolve breaches where possible, given that this is more successful and cost effective than resorting to formal action in the first instance. However, should a negotiated solution not be achieved, and where unauthorised development is contrary to guidance and harmful, robust and decisive action is taken.

**59.5 Alison Swaddle asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services the following question:**

Could the Executive Member explain why the call-in of affordable housing at Peach Place by the Liberal Democrats was overturned by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee?

**Answer**

To be honest, not really. I had hoped that more affordable homes would have been good news. But, having said that, I am pleased that the Scrutiny Committee took the decision they did because it was clearly in the public interest that we build more affordable homes.

**59.6 Angus Ross asked the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:**

Please could you provide me with an update on the rollout of superfast broadband across the Borough?

**Answer**

Superfast Berkshire was launched in 2011 under the Government's Broadband Delivery (BDUK) programme to roll-out a high speed service to areas not covered by commercial plans of private sector providers. Over the past five years the programme has driven up superfast broadband capacity across Berkshire from 87% to 95% in two phases.

The good news is that the third and final phase is now underway after contracts were awarded to BT and Gigaclear in July. In Wokingham Borough coverage will reach 99.53% by the end of the third phase of the project in late 2019. As part of the project discussions will be on-going with BT, Gigaclear and other providers under their commercial plans to achieve the final target of 100%.

The Superfast Project Team will be able to provide more information on roll-out plans for each area by the end of this calendar year. Once this information is available, a communication exercise will be completed to interested residents via Parish and Town Councils.

**Supplementary Question**

I note the recent announcement that providers will be asked to be a little more up front about how many people will benefit from broadband facilities. Clearly, from your comments it will not cover 100% and I wonder whether you would expect an impact from further introduction of mobile networks, especially with the introduction of 5G.

**Supplementary Answer**

Yes. Absolutely right. It is quite hard to achieve 100%. Undoubtedly, 5G will have an impact and I think the good news is that this will enable competition which I think will provide some pressure on the prices that may be charged for higher speeds.

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

Could the Executive Member update the Council on the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement?

**Answer**

Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) started on street on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October. Initially, only warnings rather than fines were issued. Between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October approximately 1000 warnings were served. Since the penalty notices with fines started on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, 950 have been issued.

No issues from the public have been raised with WBC in respect of the tickets issued. There have been a small number of issues raised about visitor permits which need

addressing, about the new permit scheme generally and the website which the Council is also addressing.

A few complaints during the early stages of implementation, were made to NSL, the parking company who administers CPE about the responsiveness of their customer services team. This has been addressed and there has been significant improvement.

Generally, the process of introducing CPE has gone very smoothly.

**59.8 Bill Soane asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

What is the Council doing to combat fly-tipping across the Borough?

**Answer**

In Councillor Soane's absence, the following written reply was provided.

Fly-tipping is anti-social, damages wildlife, spoils the scenery and costs taxpayers to clear up. We are fortunate in this Borough to have many people who voluntarily pick up litter and we very much encourage that and are taking a firm line with those fly-tipping.

Officers have worked within the Rural Crime Action Group, a multi-agency group and produced leaflets like "Don't Pay Twice" and more recently an information leaflet highlighting what residents can do to avoid fly-tipping and how to help us secure a prosecution.

Our current policy is one of zero tolerance and to prosecute wherever or whenever we have sufficient evidence. To allow us to do this more efficiently we have enlisted the help of Buckinghamshire CC by using their Environmental Crime Enforcement Team. Since starting this partnership we have secured two convictions for fly-tipping and one Simple Caution (householder duty of care). On top of this we have four further potential fly-tipping prosecution files to be processed.

We want to give the clear message – fly-tipping is not acceptable.

We're currently talking to Bucks CC to share best practice and work out what else we can do to prevent fly-tipping happening in the first place and when it happens, what's the best way to catch the perpetrators. We all have a duty to:

1. Ensure our own waste isn't fly-tipped by ensuring that anyone taking waste away is a "registered waste carrier" and always get a written quote with an address of where your waste is being taken. This should be on the letterhead from the business removing it.
2. If you see fly-tipping happening do not put yourself at risk or challenge them! When it's safe please take the registration of the vehicle, a photo of the fly-tip in situ, a close up photo of any identifying items like a label, ideally with an address /name on and send it to [customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk) . The latter is all we need to start an investigation.

**59.9 Pauline Jorgensen asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport**

**the following question:**

The 19a/c bus services in Woodley and Earley have been reduced by Reading Buses on the grounds that these services are supposedly loss-making. Could the Executive Member confirm that Wokingham Borough Council increased its funding for the subsidised part of those services, yet Reading Buses still reduced the parts of those bus services that actually made money and are commercial and the Council is not allowed to subsidise?

**Answer**

The 19a/c bus services in Woodley and Earley have been reduced by Reading Buses due to the service's financial viability. The reduction of the service was a result of splitting out the commercial part of the bus services and retaining it and leaving the non-commercially viable parts of the route to be supported by Wokingham Borough Council.

Additional funding was provided to Reading Buses by WBC under contract for an interim period so that the remaining part of the supported service (now route12) would be able to meet the requirements of its users.

To the best of our knowledge, Reading Buses have not reduced the retained commercial parts of the bus service that were financially viable to them.

**59.10 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

With all the extensive pre-planning over several years that occurred on the Longdon Roadworks for the Winnersh Relief Road, Health and Safety planning for school children and residents missed something because one pavement will be closed on one side of the road and then the other side of the road will be closed for weeks for the works. There have been several near misses of people crossing the road, luckily no one has been seriously injured. Why wasn't a temporary signalised crossing installed at the point a pavement was closed?

**Answer**

As these works are being delivered by a third party the Council's role is to review and ensure compliance. I can confirm that suitable facilities are now in place to manage pedestrians more effectively as work progresses.

There were some procedural errors on the part of the developer which the Council did not action swiftly and I apologise for this. Action, as you have indicated, has now been taken to require pedestrian management plans with submissions and that licences to work on the highway are withheld until these are agreed with the Council.

**Supplementary Question**

Will you guarantee that this will not happen again?

**Supplementary Answer**

I do not think it is wise to guarantee anything, but, we will give our best efforts to minimise the possibility.

**59.11 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:**

It is looking increasingly likely that the number of houses that this Conservative

government is going to expect this Council to build in Wokingham between 2016 and 2036 will be nearly 900 a year, a total of 18,000.

This we feel is far too high and would lead to grid lock across many parts of the Borough and also put at risk the very character of this area. It should be opposed as hard as it can be.

However should the Council agree to build this many houses in just 2, 3 or 4 locations, is it your understanding and the Council's officers and legal teams understanding that no other houses will need be built in any other parts of the Borough?

### **Answer**

Under Government planning policy, local authorities are expected to enable the building of enough homes to meet the assessed housing need. The Government recently consulted on a standard methodology for assessing this need which, if confirmed, would require 876 homes per year to be built within Wokingham Borough from 2016.

We have already planned for and granted planning permission for many of these homes through our successful Core Strategy which runs to 2026. The Local Plan Review will consider how the homes required over the longer period to 2036 can best be delivered. Through the Local Plan Update we will ensure that new development is planned to be sustainable. This includes consideration of impacts on roads and other infrastructure. Where development on a site is shown to be unsustainable, these sites will not be taken forward.

Our successful adopted Core Strategy focuses the majority of development in the four Strategic Development Locations. This approach has enabled significant new infrastructure to be delivered alongside new development to mitigate impacts and to try to alleviate pressures on other areas. Engagement on the Local Plan Update with residents to date has shown support for the continuation of this approach.

Where local authorities are delivering an agreed plan, there should be every expectation that development outside those planned areas should be rejected as our adopted Core Strategy has largely enabled us to manage where development occurs. Recently we have experienced some difficulties with the way current Government planning policy, established by the Coalition Government in 2010, is being interpreted by the Planning Inspectorate. This has increased the risk that development in unsuitable and unsustainable locations may be allowed on appeal due to the precise determination of the current 5 year land supply. This is a real concern.

Planning Inspectors are assessing some appeals on applications we have refused on sites put forward outside of planned and agreed areas, purely on a 5 year land supply basis and not on our current plan, nor with consideration of the significant number of permissions granted but not yet built by developers, which totals approximately 10,000.

We are actively engaging with Government at every level, including the Prime Minister, to highlight the failures of the current system. We welcome and appreciate the support offered by other political parties and from our Parish and Town Councils on this contentious issue. The Chancellor's Budget statement on Wednesday specifically acknowledged this and proposed an investigation to tackle this problem. We should be measured and judged on planning permissions granted, not build rate, which is determined by developers and prevailing market conditions and the Government should penalise or

incentivise developers to ensure that they deliver sufficient new homes, not penalise councils for something beyond their control.

### **Supplementary Question**

Following recent Planning Inspectors' decisions, a buffer is being applied to yearly numbers. Is this 5% or 20% and does it go back to all of the undelivered houses over the past few years?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I can confirm that it is 20%, as it is with most authorities. I cannot confirm the latter part. I will ask David Lee to provide a written answer as I do not know that detail.

Due to time constraints, the following questions were not considered and the following written answers were provided.

### **59.12 Ian Pittock asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Members will recall the unanimous agreement my Motion of November 2016 received - that all allowances Members receive from any internal or external posts to which they are appointed by this Council are to be declared to Democratic Services and published in one location on the WBC website. Could the Leader of the Council please state her level of confidence that Conservative Members have declared all allowances for Financial Year 2016-17, so allowing Democratic Services to publish these?

### **Answer**

Your question is an odd one, as it seems to be addressed to me as Leader of the Conservative Group. It is perhaps useful to emphasise that I am also Leader of the Council, and therefore, I feel a sense of responsibility for all Members to comply with their obligations as Councillors, and not just to those of my own Party.

I mention this because there is an ambiguity in your original Motion. You talk about "outside bodies and other organisations", a definition which could also include our companies and payments to Non-Executive Directors, which are not part of this local authority. As such, Councillor Cowan, who receives a payment as Chairman of Loddon Homes also qualifies. Also, as the minutes for the November 2016 Council meeting make clear, you agreed that the onus is on individual Members to advise Democratic Services (rather than, say, their Group Leaders).

So, rather than singling out Conservative Members, and given that I am Leader of the Council, would it not have been better to have asked me for my confidence that all Councillors have declared all their allowances?

In short, my answer to that question is that I am very confident.

### **59.13 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:**

In yesterday's budget, was there any recognition or remediation given to the fact that in 2019/20 Wokingham Borough Council will have a negative Revenue Support Grant and will, in effect, have to pay £6.9 million pounds to central government?

### **Answer**

Thank you for raising one of the most significant financial issues facing the Council. The negative Revenue Support Grant of £6.9m faced by the Council in 2019/2020 means that this amount of our Council taxpayers' income will be passported to other councils rather than being spent on our much needed local services. As you would expect, we are strongly against this.

We were extremely successful in reversing the Government's intention to introduce negative RSG in 2018-19 but not for 2019-20. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the recent Budget Statement that indicates its removal in 2019-20.

We will continue to do all we can to lobby the Government, using our local MPs and any other routes at our disposal. Negative RSG is not acceptable or fair and we must stress the imperative to keep 'local taxes local'.

I hope all political parties will support this and the various initiatives we are taking to mitigate a shortfall, such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council, building a property investment portfolio, and applying to join the Government's Business Rates pilot.

## **60. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING**

At this point in the meeting, 10pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m) Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm for a maximum of 30 minutes, to enable further business within the Agenda to be transacted. The Motion was proposed by Chris Smith and seconded by Andy Croy.

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

## **61. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS**

### **61.1 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Finance the following question:**

One of my older residents has recently telephoned the Council to renew their bus pass. They were told that they could not do it in writing and had to do it online. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council Members' Update, sent to Councillors early in November, under Key Messages on Page 1 says "Whilst self service will be actively promoted, there are traditional options for those who need them". This appears not to be the case with bus passes.

Also, at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, on 24 January 2017, Agenda Item 55 (Section 9), Objective 1 states "Ensuring that residents who are less comfortable with new technologies have alternative methods of contacting and interacting with the Council". Clearly this is not happening. Why is it not happening and why is the Executive Member responsible for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council not ensuring that measures agreed by the Executive are enforced?

### **Answer**

I can only assume and assure you that this is a one-off. I sat with the Customer Services Team earlier this week and listened to the phone calls and how they were handled. They handled them extremely efficiently and effectively. Also, I would mention that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council programme hasn't actually reached the Customer Services area. This is an area that has yet to be addressed. I am sorry that a particular resident has had a problem. Bus passes can be arranged by coming in. I will take this up and get back to you.

**61.2 Shahid Younis asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

The development of the Bulmershe Leisure Centre is welcome news for Woodley and Earley residents. Can you update Members on progress relating to this project?

**Answer**

There is a paper coming to the Executive next week. The paper proposes a new build for the Bulmershe Leisure Centre. If agreed by the Executive, this would deliver a substantially improved facility in Woodley which would consist of a 4 badminton court sports hall, a 25 metre six lane swimming pool, a 75 station gym, two studios and a learning pool with a movable floor which means that the deck of the pool can be adjusted from zero down to full depth. There would also be a café.

This would be a significant improvement on the current facility which is very dilapidated, with many of the rooms effectively shut off because they are not in a fit state. I look forward to the opening in due course and I think that this will be a major addition to our facilities.

**61.3 Ian Pittock asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

Can you please explain why the long established arrangements for the Finchampstead scouts' use of the hut in California Country Park, including the free car parking area next to the hut, are to be changed for inferior arrangements to the detriment of this valued youth group. I should point out that the lead Member in Finchampstead on this issue is, to his credit, Rob Stanton, our very own Mayor. Even he has faced difficulty in making any progress on this matter. Can you please explain?

**Answer**

This is still under review so I am not able to say one way or another. The issue is around the amount of charges for use of a facility. Historically it has been a very low charge. We are looking at how we can continue to help the scouts, but in a way that is fair to everyone. I do have it on my agenda and will come back with further details in due course. The scouts, as with many other voluntary organisations, do a splendid job so we look to encourage them, but we need to be fair and have a level playing field across our facilities.

**61.4 Tim Holton asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

On Monday 6 November, and for the whole week, there was an increase in congestion along Rushey Way, stretching beyond Toseland Way. As far as I could tell, this was caused by the closure of Loddon Bridge Road by a utility company. Please can you explain why the company was not compelled to work 24 hours per day to get the repair fixed in the shortest possible time? On several occasions it was not apparent that anyone was indeed working.

**Answer**

I don't have the details on that issue. I will have to give you a written answer.

**61.5 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Re the proposed works on the Reading Road by WBC and SGN, which may close the Reading Road during the next fiscal year. Can you open the Winnersh Relief Road (Part 1) temporarily to be used as an alternate route for diversions. The only alternatives are the A4 or the Shinfield A327 or the slightly delayed Shinfield Eastern Relief Road.

**Answer**

That is a question about which I would like a little notice, so I'll have to look at it and give you a written answer.

**61.6 Charles Margetts asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

In my ward there is an application awaiting determination from a speculative housing developer in a totally unsuitable location. Can the Executive Member advise me what he is doing to raise the issue of speculative housing applications in inappropriate, unsuitable locations when WBC is making every effort to hit required Government housing numbers and has 10,000 plus planning permissions granted across the Borough?

**Answer**

Some of the points have already been covered. We have been lobbying senior ministers to recognise and correct the anomaly that allows WBC to be judged not on the planning permissions issued in accordance with our Local Plan, but on the number of houses built by developers. We should not be judged on a matter we cannot directly influence.

If the Government wants more houses built when permission is granted it needs to incentivise or penalise developers to get building. It is quite unjust that we are measured on the actions, or in this case the inactions, of others. Our residents quite rightly expect quality, infrastructure-rich new developments in sustainable locations. Exploitation of the planning system, weakened by opportunist developers is a serious risk, so I am glad that the Chancellor recognised this in his Budget statement yesterday and proposes to investigate and address the issue. I have already referred to the number of meetings we have had with senior ministers to lobby on behalf of Wokingham's residents to get this anomaly addressed promptly.

**61.7 Prue Bray asked the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee the following question:**

Re the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee minutes for 16 October 2017, the Call-In meeting, Page 7 of the Minutes records that the Committee resolved that "The Executive be recommended to ensure that any future affordable housing scheme which departs from the Council's normal procedures be supported by details of how the scheme is different and the benefits provided for the Council. This should include the reasons why any detail has been included in a Part 2 section (e.g. that financial data is commercially sensitive).

Could you please tell me what progress has been made with that recommendation?

**Answer**

Nothing has happened yet to illustrate the recommendation, but I can give you my full assurance, as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, that I will be monitoring anything that is likely to happen in that area. I am sure that I can rely on my colleagues to alert me to anything I miss.

**61.8 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Residents in my ward, Southlake, are under the impression that this Council has cut its funding subsidies to Reading Buses to operate in Woodley. Please can you confirm that this isn't the case and, in fact, that this Council has invested more money to subsidise buses in Woodley?

**Answer**

If you are referring to the 19 a/c service, up to this year we were investing £70k in subsidy which has subsequently been increased by £44k. So, indeed, we are heavily subsidising this service for residents in Woodley and Earley.

**61.9 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Two residents in my ward asked me to campaign against the loss of the 19a and the 19c. I was pleased that a number of Councillors came to the public meeting, including two from my ward, Alison Swaddle and Shahid Younis. What representations have the other Councillors from my ward made to you about the loss of those two bus services?

**Answer**

There are general discussions going on in the Council about how we can deal with what is now the number 12 bus service. I am sure that the points will be brought out in the debate which we will get to in a few minutes.

**61.10 Keith Baker asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Some of you will know that I am a 10 year plus governor at Addington School. The school is not in my ward but many children in my ward attend it. Following the recent Ofsted inspection the school was rated as "outstanding". This was for the third time in a row which is exceptional. While other schools are finding their Ofsted ratings standing still or going backwards Addington is a shining light in this arena. Furthermore, the recent assessment was achieved with a new Head and two new Deputy Heads. Can I ask the Leader to write to the Head and Chair of Governors congratulating them on such a wonderful achievement.

**Answer**

It is indeed exemplary that the school has achieved that standing three times in a row, especially in light of the much harder Ofsted regimes and inspections and, indeed, under the new Headship. It is very difficult to achieve an outstanding Ofsted inspection rating under the new arrangements and I congratulate the Headteacher and Chair of Governors who made this possible. I will indeed put pen to paper.

**61.11 Imogen Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

On the edge of my ward there is a new SANG, on the Old Forest Road. There is one dropped kerb to get into the SANG but no dropped kerb to get out of the SANG. So wheelchair users have to travel 200 metres down the road to get to the dropped kerb as there is no pavement on the other side. What consideration happens when we build new

facilities of this nature relating to people with disabilities?

**Answer**

The point here is about equality impact assessments of how people with disabilities and impaired mobility can get into these locations and out again. I can assure Imogen that this is part of the process for consideration of any of these plans. If there is a particular issue with this one we can certainly have a look at it and see what can be done.

**61.12 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

We had a petition earlier on with 1,900 signatures which I assume will come to Council for debate. When will this item appear at Council? Will it be brought to an extraordinary meeting in January?

**Answer**

I will take advice from Democratic Services. I understand that Officers need to validate the petition to ensure that it contains over 1,500 valid signatures. Once that is done a suitable date will be identified for it to come to Council.

**62. ADJOURNMENT**

The Mayor announced that the meeting would be adjourned for three minutes to facilitate a comfort break.

**63. MOTIONS**

**63.1 Motion 400 submitted by Prue Bray**

*(Councillors Auty, Baker, Chopping, Cowan, Helliar-Symons, Kaiser, Margetts, Mirfin, Munro and Ross declared personal and prejudicial interests in this item).*

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion, submitted by Prue Bray and seconded by Lindsay Ferris.

“This Council recommends that no Councillor on this authority who carries out more than one Council-appointed role for which additional payments are available, including

- roles for which Special Responsibility Allowances are payable;
- roles as Non-Executive Directors of council-owned companies; and
- roles on Outside Bodies which attract payment;

should take more than one of those additional payments”.

In proposing the Motion, Prue Bray highlighted the earlier debate on the Annual Review of Members’ Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel. At the end of that debate the Council agreed the recommendation that Members should receive no more than one Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). If passed the Motion would extend this by committing Members to the principle of only accepting one payment – SRA, Non-Executive Director or outside body.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor opposed the Motion on the grounds that outside bodies, such as the Fire Authority, should be able to make their own decisions on the allowances they

paid. Furthermore, it was felt that restricting allowances in this way could restrict the range of people able and willing to take on public duties and serve the local community.

Following debate, upon being to the vote, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be lost.

Prior to a vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.15, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed decision. The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Prue Bray	Mark Ashwell	Rob Stanton
Andy Croy	Parry Batth	
Lindsay Ferris	Laura Blumenthal	
Clive Jones	Chris Bowring	
Ian Pittock	Richard Dolinski	
Beth Rowland	Michael Firmager	
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	Charlotte Haitham Taylor	
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	Tim Holton	
	Philip Houldsworth	
	Norman Jorgensen	
	Pauline Jorgensen	
	Dianne King	
	Abdul Loyes	
	Julian McGhee-Sumner	
	Malcolm Richards	
	David Sleight	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Simon Weeks	
	Oliver Whittle	
	Shahid Younis	

### **63.2 Motion 401 submitted by Andy Croy**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Andy Croy and seconded by Beth Rowland.

“Buses in Woodley and Earley

This Council notes:

(1) The Local Transport Plan 3, 2011 to 2026, (LTP);

(2) The public consultation for the LTP (p33) identified "ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible" as the most popular response from the public;

(3) One of the goals of the LTP is: "to promote an integrated and inclusive public transport network that provides a convenient, acceptable, reliable and affordable alternative to car travel";

(4) The LTP states (p75): "Bus services are a vital means of transport for vulnerable and economically challenged people as they provide access to key facilities such as employment locations and health care. Better services will improve accessibility for everyone;

(5) Policy PT2 (of the LTP): Increasing our residents use of bus services. We will work with bus operators to enhance the quality, viability and attractiveness of bus services across the Borough so that the need to provide subsidies is minimised;

(6) Policy PT6 (of the LTP): Availability of Services. We will work in partnership with key organisations to enhance bus service provision to health, education, leisure, retail and employment opportunities;

(7) The report to the Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> June which stated:

The 19a/c bus services provided the following social benefits:

- The only bus service along Drovers Way & Coppice Road,
- The only bus service along Miles Way & Comet Way,
- The only bus service along Culver Lane, Woodley,
- The only bus service along Vauxhall Drive, Woodley,
- The only bus service along Silverdale Road, Maiden Erlegh,
- The only bus service along Church Road, Earley,
- Access between Woodley and Maiden Erlegh,
- Access to Hurricane Way GP's Surgery,
- Access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital";
- 

(8) The 19a/c served some the most deprived areas of the Borough;

(9) The 19a/c had a high proportion of concessionary bus users. This demonstrates the social need being met by the services;

(10) The 19a/c provided quick and affordable access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, a service that was especially valuable for older residents;

(11) The 19a/c service was essential for residents to access work, healthcare and retail facilities; its 'village on wheels' community spirit helped to reduce social isolation and increased the well-being of its users;

(12) A meaningful consultation on the future of the 19a/c service was not carried out before the service was stopped;

(13) A cap was imposed on the funds available to renew the 19a/c service;

(14) A tender process for replacement services is underway will not be complete until late 2018.

This Council:

(1) Regrets we have to date been unable to find adequate funding to extend the 19a/c service beyond September 2017;

(2) Acknowledges the replacement services are not fit for purpose;

(3) Apologises to residents for the distress, upset and inconvenience caused by the ending the 19a/c service;

(4) Instructs the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to discuss with Reading Buses any opportunity to re-extend the 19a/c service until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place;

(5) Instructs the Lead Member for Finance to agree with the Lead Member for Highways, adequate additional funding until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place.

It was moved by Keith Baker and seconded by David Chopping that the Motion be amended by inserting/adding the words in bold set out below:

This Council notes:

(1) The Local Transport Plan 3, 2011 to 2026, (LTP);

(2) The public consultation for the LTP (p33) identified "ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible" as the most popular response from the public;

(3) One of the goals of the LTP is: "to promote an integrated and inclusive public transport network that provides a convenient, acceptable, reliable and affordable alternative to car travel";

(4) The LTP states (p75): "Bus services are a vital means of transport for vulnerable and economically challenged people as they provide access to key facilities such as employment locations and health care. Better services will improve accessibility for everyone;

(5) Policy PT2 (of the LTP): Increasing our residents use of bus services. We will work with bus operators to enhance the quality, viability and attractiveness of bus services across the Borough so that the need to provide subsidies is minimised;

(6) Policy PT6 (of the LTP): Availability of Services. We will work in partnership with key organisations to enhance bus service provision to health, education, leisure, retail and employment opportunities;

(7) The report to the Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> June which stated:

The 19a/c bus services provided the following social benefits:

- The only bus service along Drovers Way & Coppice Road,
- The only bus service along Miles Way & Comet Way,
- The only bus service along Culver Lane, Woodley,
- The only bus service along Vauxhall Drive, Woodley,
- The only bus service along Silverdale Road, Maiden Erlegh,
- The only bus service along Church Road, Earley,
- Access between Woodley and Maiden Erlegh,
- Access to Hurricane Way GP's Surgery,
- Access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital;

- (8) The 19a/c served some the most deprived areas of the Borough;
- (9) The 19a/c had a high proportion of concessionary bus users. This demonstrates the social need being met by the services;
- (10) The 19a/c provided quick and affordable access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, a service that was especially valuable for older residents;
- (11) The 19a/c service was essential for residents to access work, healthcare and retail facilities; its 'village on wheels' community spirit helped to reduce social isolation and increased the well-being of its users;
- (12) A meaningful consultation on the future of the 19a/c service was not carried out **by Reading Buses** before the service was stopped;
- (13) A cap was imposed on the funds available to renew the 19a/c service;
- (14) A tender process for replacement services is underway will not be complete until late 2018.

This Council:

- (1) Regrets that, **despite Wokingham Borough Council increasing its funding**, we have to date been unable to **encourage Reading Buses** to find adequate funding to extend the 19a/c service beyond September 2017;
- (2) Acknowledges the replacement services are not fit for purpose;
- (3) **Feels that Reading Buses should apologise** to residents for the distress, upset and inconvenience caused by the ending the 19a/c service;
- (4) Instructs the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to discuss with Reading Buses any opportunity to re-extend the 19a/c service until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place;
- (5) Instructs the Lead Member for Finance to agree with the Lead Member for Highways, adequate additional funding **be sought from Reading Buses** until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place;
- (6) **Supports the cross-party approach suggested by Councillors, endorsed by Reading East's Member of Parliament, to work together to encourage Reading Buses to provide a service which is fit for purpose.**

Following debate, upon being put to the vote, the Mayor declared that the amendment was carried.

Prior to the vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.15, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed decision. The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Mark Ashwell	Prue Bray	John Kaiser
Keith Baker	Andy Croy	Rob Stanton

Parry Bath	Lindsay Ferris	
Laura Blumenthal	Clive Jones	
Chris Bowring	Ian Pittock	
David Chopping	Beth Rowland	
Richard Dolinski	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Michael Firmager	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
Pauline Helliari-Symons		
Tim Holton		
Philip Houldsworth		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Oliver Whittle		
Shahid Younis		

It was moved by Keith Baker and seconded by David Chopping that the amended (substantive) Motion be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was declared by the Mayor that the amended (substantive) Motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** That:

This Council notes:

- (1) The Local Transport Plan 3, 2011 to 2026, (LTP);
- (2) The public consultation for the LTP (p33) identified "ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible" as the most popular response from the public;
- (3) One of the goals of the LTP is: "to promote an integrated and inclusive public transport network that provides a convenient, acceptable, reliable and affordable alternative to car travel";
- (4) The LTP states (p75): "Bus services are a vital means of transport for vulnerable and economically challenged people as they provide access to key facilities such as employment locations and health care. Better services will improve accessibility for everyone;
- (5) Policy PT2 (of the LTP): Increasing our resident's use of bus services. We will work

with bus operators to enhance the quality, viability and attractiveness of bus services across the Borough so that the need to provide subsidies is minimised;

(6) Policy PT6 (of the LTP): Availability of Services. We will work in partnership with key organisations to enhance bus service provision to health, education, leisure, retail and employment opportunities;

(7) The report to the Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> June which stated:

The 19a/c bus services provided the following social benefits:

- The only bus service along Drovers Way & Coppice Road,
- The only bus service along Miles Way & Comet Way,
- The only bus service along Culver Lane, Woodley,
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- The only bus service along Church Road, Earley,
- Access between Woodley and Maiden Erlegh,
- Access to Hurricane Way GP's Surgery,
- Access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital";

(8) The 19a/c served some the most deprived areas of the Borough;

(9) The 19a/c had a high proportion of concessionary bus users. This demonstrates the social need being met by the services;

(10) The 19a/c provided quick and affordable access to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, a service that was especially valuable for older residents;

(11) The 19a/c service was essential for residents to access work, healthcare and retail facilities; its 'village on wheels' community spirit helped to reduce social isolation and increased the well-being of its users;

(12) A meaningful consultation on the future of the 19a/c service was not carried out by Reading Buses before the service was stopped;

(13) A cap was imposed on the funds available to renew the 19a/c service;

(14) A tender process for replacement services is underway will not be complete until late 2018.

This Council:

(1) Regrets that, despite Wokingham Borough Council increasing its funding, we have to date been unable to encourage Reading Buses to find adequate funding to extend the 19a/c service beyond September 2017;

(2) Acknowledges the replacement services are not fit for purpose;

(3) Feels that Reading Buses should apologise to residents for the distress, upset and inconvenience caused by the ending the 19a/c service;

(4) Instructs the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to discuss with Reading Buses

any opportunity to re-extend the 19a/c service until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place;

(5) Instructs the Lead Member for Finance to agree with the Lead Member for Highways, adequate additional funding be sought from Reading Buses until the tender process is completed and an acceptable new service is in place;

(6) Supports the cross-party approach suggested by Councillors, endorsed by Reading East's Member of Parliament, to work together to encourage Reading Buses to provide a service which is fit for purpose.

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