

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 26 MARCH 2015 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Other Councillors Present

Prue Bray

Lindsay Ferris

Tom McCann

Malcolm Richards, Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways

124. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors John Kaiser and Philip Mirfin. The Leader confirmed that Councillor Malcolm Richards, Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways would be attending the meeting on behalf of Councillor Kaiser however as in accordance with legislation he could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

125. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 19 February 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

126. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

A pecuniary declaration of interest was submitted from Councillor Anthony Pollock in respect of Item: 127 Arborfield Cross Relief Road, on the grounds that he owned property at Arborfield Court which could be affected by the proposed relief road. He indicated that he would withdraw from the room for the duration of that item.

127. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

127.1 Phiala Mehring asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

The strategy is lacking measurable targets/goals. Without these how do we know what success looks like or whether the strategy needs to change and adapt over time? For example, targets could be set for:- obtaining a few capital schemes or attracting other funding to reduce flood risk, - reducing surface and highway run-off into the Loddon, Emmbrook or Barkham Brook. Can we please have set targets embedded into the strategy?

Answer

Due to the inability of Phiala Mehring to attend the meeting the written answer below was sent to her:

The local flood risk management strategy has been produced in keeping with guidance issued by DEFRA and the specific requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act.

The strategy sets out six key objectives and each objective has a series of measures that will be used to determine how effectively the Borough is meeting those objectives.

In addition Chapter 8 of the strategy is an action plan for delivery of the objectives. The measures and proposed actions associated with each objective are set out in more detail along with a broad assessment of financial implications and timescale for delivery.

One of the first actions to come out of the strategy will be to prepare a more detailed programme for delivery of the actions.

It should also be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny committee receive an annual report on flooding in the Borough and this will be an ideal opportunity for Members to track progress against the strategy objectives.

Unfortunately some of the replies to the consultation on the strategy were not received by the team and therefore were not taken into account when the strategy was revised. We have now received those responses. We have chosen to delay bringing the strategy to the Executive for approval so as all of the consultation responses can be given due consideration.

128. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

At this point the Leader of Council indicated that he wished to make a statement. He commented that in relation to question EM1 an assurance panel had recently met and made a number of recommendations in this area. One of the recommendations would address the request made in the question by the appointment of an independent individual to seek assurance that all the processes were in place within Children's Services in order to address the issues relating to child sexual exploitation. It was intended to work with the opposition group to shape, frame and appoint the independent individual.

128.1 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

In response to the Leader's statement Councillor Lindsay Ferris indicated that he wished to withdraw his question.

128.2 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Planning and Highways the following question:

Question

At the November Council meeting, Councillor John Kaiser said that the Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Strategy would go to the January Executive meeting. It didn't. Nor did it go to the February meeting, and it is not listed in the Agenda for tonight. Why has it been delayed?

Answer

In the absence of the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the answer was provided by Councillor Malcolm Richards, Deputy Executive Member for Highways and Transport.

The specifics of car parking numbers required across the town will be dealt with in the planning application for Elms Field.

In addition a wider strategy for travel to and around the town is being written and this will incorporate aspirations for car parking. This vision document will be brought to Members in due course.

Supplementary Question

I am slightly nervous about this because as a Council we are making decisions about the regeneration and about roads, major planning applications and so on. What we do not have is a comprehensive vision of what is happening with parking at the moment in the town; both on-street and off-street which is not part of the Council's owned car parks. I would like to encourage you to push Councillor Kaiser into getting a move on and doing something more comprehensive. You referred in the answer to 'in due course'. Do you have any idea of how long in due course is?

Supplementary Answer

I do not have a date for you on that, but I will speak to Councillor Kaiser about it.

The Leader of the Council added:

Can I also suggest that you and Councillor Kaiser get together to have a meeting to thrash this out as I know you have had concerns for some time. I will also raise it with him.

128.3 Tom McCann asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**Question**

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy report shows that you do not have in house expertise to draft a comprehensive strategy; it also shows you do not have enough money in your budget to implement a strategy and you have little expectation of getting any more money. Is your only strategy to cross your fingers and hope it does not rain?

Answer

I am not sure where you get your allegations from Councillor McCann, but you are way off the mark again. By the way, I do not know whether your concerns were raised in the consultation we carried out last year?

The Council has developed the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, in the form required by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, working closely with our term consultant WSP. WSP have a wider range of expertise in this field than a small authority such as Wokingham could ever expect to employ. The project was overseen by the Council's Flood Risk Manager who has a great deal of experience and expertise in flood and drainage matters.

The action plan that arises from the strategy will be overseen by a working group composed of Members and Officers. Where necessary we will also employ expert advice on matters where we need additional resource.

As and when specific projects are identified, then funding will be sought to realise them. Funding for flood protection may be from one or more of the following - the Council's own budgets, DEFRA, the Environment Agency, a levy placed on all lead flood authorities of which we are one, or from developer contributions. The Council's capital programme, agreed at the February Executive, clearly laid out additional funding for flood protection schemes. £200,000 a year has been allocated to general drainage and flood schemes and £4.1m has been allocated to address specific flooding problems, including on key parts of the road network. This is significantly more than has been allocated to flood schemes in previous years.

In conclusion, this piece of work lays a solid foundation on which to build stronger protection against future flood events. Already we found last year that work done after the 2007 floods protected areas previously affected and we will be bringing forward schemes to reduce the impact on our roads especially over the Loddon which was the major issue in last year's flood event.

I refute your allegations and trust my statement puts the record straight for our residents.

Supplementary Question

Having spent this afternoon reading through all the wonderful reports on the Flooding Strategy and all the various mechanisms that are recommended in order to fill in forms to get money from the Government, can you at least assure me that if the Government allocates money to the Council for flood prevention that is used for flood prevention rather than filling in potholes in the road which the Council is supposed to do anyway?

Supplementary Answer

The money is only normally allocated for specific schemes. The road ones that I was referring to were things like the A327 between Arborfield and Shinfield where the road floods there and we hope as part of the start of the works for the Easter Relief Road in Shinfield to raise the road so that it does not flood; not fill in a pothole.

129. ADOPTION OF ARBORFIELD AND NEWLAND VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Executive considered a report relating to the adoption of the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways advised Members that the proposed design statement had been prepared by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council to enhance the quality of developments within the parish and to preserve the future rural qualities of the parish. He commented that the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement would be one of 11 Supplementary Planning Documents adopted by the Borough Council.

The Leader of the Council clarified that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was linked to Neighbourhood Plans not Village Design Statements. He commented that as he understood it, a Village Design Statement was much more appropriate for smaller parishes who did not wish to go through the cost or time of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. A Village Design Statement did however offer some protections under the planning system.

RESOLVED: That the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

130. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2016/2017

The Executive considered a report relating to proposed admission arrangements for 2016/2017 for community and controlled schools and co-ordinated admission schemes.

It was noted that the main co-ordinated admission schemes apply to all state funded schools within the Borough (including free schools and academies) and include the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised the meeting that every year the Council reviewed school admission arrangements and made amendments depending on the circumstances of the time. Small amendments for the 2016/2017 admission arrangements were proposed including: publication of 6th Form admission numbers; the inclusion of reference to Education Health and Care Plans; a clarification of Criterion A within the admissions criteria; clarification around siblings; and clarification around summer born children.

It was confirmed that if a Wokingham Borough parent applied for a school place outside of the Borough, the adopted admission arrangements in that area would apply although the Council would coordinate the arrangements.

Councillor Jorgensen commented that she was seeking reassurance that there was enough overall capacity of 6th form places within the Borough; whilst recognising that the Council had no control over the admission arrangements of Academies, which set their own admission arrangements and admission numbers. The Executive Member for Children's Services responded that current provision was adequate, but there was quite a lot of movement into and out of the Borough's 6th forms and capacity would be impacted by the increase in the statutory school leaving age. However, new provision would be added through the new school in Arborfield in addition to the existing school provision and places at Bracknell and Wokingham College; this giving pupils a range of options.

RESOLVED: That the 2016/2017 admission arrangements for community and controlled schools and co-ordinated admission schemes as set out in the annexes to the report be agreed.

131. ARBORFIELD CROSS RELIEF ROAD

(Councillor Pollock left the meeting and did not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.)

The Executive considered a report relating to proposed alignment modifications for the Arborfield Cross Relief Road in order to ensure appropriate mitigation of traffic impacts from the development of Arborfield Cross Garrison Strategic Development Location.

The Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways informed the meeting that following public consultation in 2013, when 70% of responders stated their preference for Option B alignment modifications, the Executive agreed in 2014 to progress with this refinement. Following further liaison meetings in 2014 the Option B alignment has now been considered in detail and has been determined as feasible and appropriate to mitigate the impacts of the SDL development.

To date all directly affected landowners had indicated a willingness to engage in negotiations to acquire land for the road. It was intended to reduce the visual aspects of

the relief road by constructing the road as close to, or below, the existing ground level where this was achievable and there would be appropriate landscaping and planting. The road would be a single carriageway road with a 50 mph speed limit following discussions with Thames Valley Police.

Councillor Jorgensen commented that she was pleased that the Council would again be constructing a cycleway that had physical separation from the road as this would encourage more residents, particularly young children, to use it.

Councillor Ross referred to the crossings, public rights of way and bridleways affected by the relief road and commented that that it would be important to work closely with the Local Access Forum and local ramblers in order to take account of the interests of local horse riders and pedestrians. The Leader of the Council commented that he shared Councillor Ross's view and it was his understanding that appropriate crossing provision was being looked at by Officers.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Option B alignment modifications for the Arborfield Cross Relief Road be agreed and progressed through detailed design to a full planning application;
- 2) the Council will continue liaison and discussions with Councillors, landowners, affected residents and other stakeholders.

132. LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which will help the Council, individuals, communities and businesses within the Borough understand and manage local flood risk.

The Executive Member for Environment informed the meeting that the Strategy was required by the Flood and Water Management Act. The Strategy focused upon flood risk from surface water, ground water and streams and ditches as well as how all the sources interacted with one another and river flooding. It formed a single consistent reference point for flood risk management within the Borough. The six key objectives of the Strategy were underpinned by a number of measures that the Council would implement in the future and the document had a 15 year timeframe with short, medium and long term views of flood risk management.

Following the agreement of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy an action plan to deliver the Strategy was to be developed. To assist with this a Member and Officer Task and Finish Group was to be established.

RESOLVED: That the amended Local Flood Risk Management Strategy be adopted.

133. MAKING PROCEDURAL DECISIONS RELATING TO NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Executive considered a report setting out a proposed process for the designation of a neighbourhood area which was required as a result of amendments to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 which shortened the time given to determining neighbourhood applications.

The Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways commented that under the Council's current decision making process it would not be possible to meet the new deadlines required by the new regulations in respect of neighbourhood plan applications

and therefore it was proposed to deal with these decisions through the Individual Executive Member Decision route.

The Leader of the Council requested that the Constitution Review Working Group require that as part of the new process full consultation should be undertaken prior to the Individual Executive Member Decision coming through for publication. The Council followed a similar process in respect of highways issues and consultation with town and parish councils.

RESOLVED: That in future decisions to designate a neighbourhood area be dealt with by an Individual Executive Member Decision (IEMD) and that the Constitution Review Working Group be asked to support this as a recommendation to Council as an amendment to the Council's Constitution.

134. SOUTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD - EASTERN GATEWAY

The Executive considered a report relating to the advancement of the programme for the Eastern Gateway as part of the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR).

The Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Highways advised the meeting that the proposals contained in the report would:

- provide early delivery of a section of the SWDR, including the rail bridge south of Montague Park;
- enable the closure of the Waterloo Road Level Crossing which would provide significant improvements to both road and rail safety for all users;
- assist in unlocking some development areas; and
- assist in alleviating some road traffic cutting through residential roads to the north.

Councillor Ross commented that in providing the road in different sections it was important to ensure that all the various requirements were fed into the process at an appropriate time to ensure they were delivered within the final project. He referred to a pedestrian subway or bridge at the Waterloo Road crossing and the need to take account of the road conditions on Old Wokingham Road.

The Leader of the Council stated that a bridge over the old Waterloo Road level crossing or alternative mechanism was still a matter of high importance. The proposals in the report represented an opportunity which needed to be acted upon, although the points raised would be taken into consideration.

Councillor Haitham Taylor requested that whilst the work was going on in respect of the Eastern Gateway that other road works be taken into consideration and works phased if possible to minimise the impact on residents and local businesses. The Leader commented that in developing major projects of this kind the general principle was that the impact of other works would be taken into consideration.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the preliminary design, site investigation works and all environmental and planning application provisions be progressed for the section of the South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway;
- 2) Officers continue to negotiate terms with Network Rail for securing the Eastern Gateway as part of the overall South Wokingham Distributor Road.

135. COMMUTED SUMS ADVISORY PANEL

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposed establishment of a Commuted Sums Advisory Panel to make recommendations to the Executive about the allocation of commuted sums for affordable housing.

It was noted that the Council could receive over £60m of affordable housing commuted sums over the coming years and the governance structure being proposed was to ensure that resources were targeted effectively and transparently to develop new affordable housing in the Borough.

The Leader of the Council stated that the development of the Commuted Sums Advisory Panel formed part of larger range of measures aimed at strengthening the governance arrangements of the Council's wholly owned companies.

RESOLVED: That a Commuted Sums Advisory Panel be established to make recommendations to the Executive about the allocation of commuted sums for affordable housing.

136. CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH FUNCTIONS (CONTRACT EXTENSION)

The Executive considered a report relating to the continuation of the contract for the provision of chlamydia screening, dental, library, genitourinary medicine (GUM) and family services and school nursing.

Members were advised that the current public health contracts with BHFT for the above services, which were managed on behalf of the Council by Berkshire Public Health shared team at Bracknell Forest Borough Council, were due to expire on 31 March 2015 and there was a need to extend the contract for one year in order that the provision of service could continue.

RESOLVED: That the current contract for the provision of chlamydia screening, dental, library, genitourinary medicine and family services and school nursing be extended on the same terms and conditions until 31 March 2016.