

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON 22 MARCH 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.30 PM**

**Members Present**

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

**82. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Alistair Auty, Chris Bowring, Emma Hobbs, John Jarvis and Wayne Smith.

**83. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**85. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.2.2 the order of business in the agenda would be changed so that petitions were considered prior to 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 proposed 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 to be carried.

**85.1 Helen Power asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:**

**Question**

With Wokingham town centre suffering complete chaos from the regeneration shambles, why not wait until the Peach Place and Town Centre works are complete and all the retail units successfully let before continuing to destroy Elms Field?

**Answer**

I think there is no doubt that significant change is happening in Wokingham. The Council has embarked on an ambitious regeneration programme delivering the town centre masterplan and vision and the facilities that our residents and businesses deserve.

We recognise that this has not been an easy time for the town but, can now see with the Broad Street section opening tomorrow, these projects are delivering high quality spaces for Wokingham.

Projects of this scale are complex and it is not possible to deliver work like this without some disruption but I challenge the accusation that it is chaos. Officers and Members of this Council, in partnership with Wokingham Town Council and our contractors are working hard together to ensure delivery is well planned and coordinated.

These discussions have also shown that there are significant benefits to running these projects concurrently rather than consecutively. Traffic and impacts can be carefully managed together and it reduces the overall time taken to complete the works by several years.

An example of this will be when we will be able to phase works at Elms Field to benefit from the significant reduction in traffic using the lower part of Denmark Street so we are not doing it again and again– far better than waiting for completion of one then to start and then start another.

Rather than discouraging companies from coming to Wokingham this work has shown commitment from the Council to creating a fantastic town centre and is echoed by the strong interest from businesses, both national and independent, in taking units across the town centre and a briefing I had today showed that, that is increasing at a rate.

So in conclusion I think regeneration on this scale is ambitious, but I think being ambitious is something a great local Council should be.

**Supplementary Question:**

Are the projects financially viable on their own or is the destruction of Elms Field being used to make the complete programme of regeneration financially viable?

**Supplementary Answer:**

No, certainly all of the parts are financially viable. There is no cross subsidisation from one to another.

**85.2 Peter Humphreys asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question**

By way of background I first raised this question via email with the Regeneration team on 8/2/18 who passed it to the so-called Highways Improvements team. When they failed to respond I also contacted the Executive Member for Highways & Transport and also the Leader of the Council. Despite several reminders none of these parties bothered to respond and as well as not being able to answer the question can't name a single individual within the apparently faceless Highways Improvement team who I could chase-up in person. A visit to Shute End proved to be equally fruitless as not a single employee could be found who was working on the Market Place project; well it was a Friday.

Anyway in early February I observed that the hole caused by road works at the entrance to Peach Plaza in Rose Street had been filled in yet part of the highway was still fenced off and the temporary traffic lights with one-way working still in use. The hoardings have moved since then but at that point in time the road could have been re-opened to two-way

traffic. But wasn't. By way of an update the hoardings at the Broad Street junction have been moved forward but if the project had been properly managed the road works at this point would have been done first to free up the junction.

Clearly if the works in the square had been logically sequenced the temporary traffic lights in Rose Street could have been removed weeks ago and with this alternative westbound route opened through the town centre congestion would also have been relieved on Denmark Street, Finchampstead and Wellington Roads. Why was this not done?

### **Answer**

I have looked into the history of your original question from the 8<sup>th</sup> February. As you passed it onto me on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February that was my first exposure to this question. That question was, as you have frequently pointed out a very simple one which was:

“Please explain exactly why one lane of Rose Street is still shut. When I looked earlier in the week there was a small hole with no activity in it. Is this hole necessary? Can it be filled in and two way traffic reinstated?”

That was your question.

This was sent to you on the 14<sup>th</sup> February with a clear answer which was about the hole:

“There is a small hole adjacent to the Peach Place site entrance which related to some Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE) works on Rose Street. They have advised Dawnus (our Peach Place contractors) that this work should be completed shortly at which point Dawnus will be able to put the hoardings back in place at the edge of our site and reinstate the footpath alongside our site, albeit with restricted width adjacent to the scaffolding.”

And for the question on the single lane working:

“I believe they are required due to the width restriction at the corner of Broad Street / Rose Street. The road reduces to a single lane at this point and, as it is a blind corner, cannot be managed safely with the priority traffic approach we have been able to use for the Peach Place works.”

That was sent to you on 14 February. So I am not sure why you assert you have not had an answer but am happy to put it into the public domain for anyone to read.

### **Supplementary Question:**

You have been a bit economical with the truth on that one because the reply came from the Regeneration Team who said that I needed to speak to Highways Improvement, they were just making assumptions. I never got a reply from them or yourself or from Charlotte, so that is the first point.

Over Christmas the lights were removed purely as a political stunt to say we are doing something for you over Christmas. The road was no wider then, then it is now and it could have been opened: subsequent roadworks could have been done on the corner and it could have been opened 6-8 weeks ago. It would have relieved all of the congestion, so why was it so badly planned and are you going to get it right the next time?

### **Supplementary Answer:**

As I said, you had an answer. The answer actually said about the Highways Improvement team, that if you wanted more information, they would provide it and there was no further communication from you whatsoever.

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

#### **Question**

Budget consultation. Can the Leader of the Council explain to me and the nearly 700 other people who made comments on the Budget consultation, why the report on the consultation was not available before the Council meeting in February when the Budget was decided?

#### **Answer**

As was made clear in all the publicity material, this year's Budget Consultation was primarily the first year of a two-year process in order to help inform the difficult decisions the authority could be facing over the next year. A summary of the findings was provided to members of the Executive ahead of this year's budget to ensure that the priorities of our residents were checked against those in our proposed budget.

One of the key findings is that the top three priorities supported by respondents were that:

1. New housing is built where it is appropriate and comes with good infrastructure and facilities;
2. We have a thriving economy with a successful range of businesses and;
3. Roads are well-maintained.

These findings and others were reflected in the Budget approved at Council in February. As stated already, the full findings will inform both further targeted consultations and the setting of next year's Medium Term Financial Plan.

A full report on the findings of this year's consultation will be published soon and all those who took part (and who provided email addresses) will be notified. I know that you will be one of those because you filled in a consultation so thank you very much.

#### **Supplementary Question:**

I am disappointed of course that nothing has been produced for me, a member of the public and anybody else. I have no understanding of why that problem has occurred. As you know there are almost 700 people making comments. I imagine I am not the only one who was looking keenly for this. You have at least answered part of the question by saying that at least some members of the Council have received these comments. It is a pity that nobody thought to perhaps send them to the members of the public. You have also made the comment that I was going to make that this is part of a two pronged approach. Next year you will be moving to the difficult decision. The Leader of the Council has rightly referred to priorities. We have a range of priorities already. They are in every agenda. I would specifically like to refer to the second one and that second one is 'Investing in regenerating towns...' I will not go through the rest of it. What I want to understand is why that priority has not appeared in the consultation? You have heard from two members of the public and you can hear from me as well about the effect of the regeneration; millions of pounds spent, millions of journeys delayed, millions of revenue not being received by local businesses. So can I ask the Leader to ensure that the Budget consultation for this year is done earlier, stating the obvious, as you are obviously going to want to do that, includes reference to the regeneration, which is a clear priority just by the questions you are getting already, and obviously reported earlier to allow, if necessary, a referendum on a higher Council Tax increase, as the Council will be taking back control of

its money from government at the end of next year.

**Supplementary Answer:**

Thank you for your long and protracted second question. I have assured you that the results of the initial budget consultation will be published and they will be.

In terms of regenerating the town, I will refer you to the agenda tonight and the Council Plan Review which is in here. It goes through everything we had promised and what we have delivered. I think it is a really comprehensive plan and I urge you to read it if you have not already got a copy. In terms of the next few years we are going out for consultation for the next Council Plan and it is a really good opportunity for all of our residents, partners, voluntary sector, partners in health, Police, everyone to get involved in shaping what should the priorities be for the coming years. I know that you will want to get involved and I urge you to get involved in that. In that regard you can shape what we do in the future years.

**85.4 Jacqueline Wilson asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration the following question which was answered by the Deputy Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration:**

**Question**

Can someone please explain to me why the decision to start work on Elms Field (a very unpopular project to most residents) was taken when our lovely old town is already in such total chaos?

**Answer**

As mentioned in my colleague Stuart Munro's earlier response, Wokingham town centre is undergoing significant change as the Council proceeds with delivering the facilities that our residents and businesses deserve.

The regeneration projects at Peach Place, Elms Field and Carnival, along with the Highways project at the Market Place are all important parts of creating a future for Wokingham that will allow it to thrive.

Yes, we recognise that this has not been an easy time for the town centre but, as can now be seen with the Broad Street section opening tomorrow, these projects are delivering high quality spaces for Wokingham.

Projects of this scale are complex and it is not possible to deliver work like this without some disruption but the implications of works having been continually assessed before decisions have been made to move forward with any of the different phases.

Officers and Members of this Council, in partnership with Wokingham Town Council and our contractors are working hard together to ensure delivery is well planned and coordinated.

These discussions have also shown there are significant benefits to running these projects concurrently rather than consecutively. Traffic and impacts can be carefully managed together and it reduces the overall time taken to complete the works by several years.

As an example, we will be able to phase the works at Elms Field to benefit from the

significant reduction in traffic using the lower part of Denmark Street and whilst completing the upper section, is closed for Market Place works – far better than waiting for completion and to start one after that.

Overall we believe that delivering these projects together is the best move for the town and its residents and will ensure that the facilities Wokingham needs will be in place ready to cope with the rapidly growing population rather than waiting until existing infrastructure is overrun.

**85.5 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to his inability to attend the question was asked by Tahir Maher:**

**Question**

Residents have complained recently about localised speeding. Would it be possible to have VAS (vehicle activated signs) in Cutbush Lane/Chatteris Way, Meldreth Way and Carshalton Way?

**Answer**

We have two types of vehicle activated signs namely permanent and mobile ones which record the speed of vehicles.

The permanent ones are placed at locations where injuries have been occurring due to the speed of vehicles. The mobile ones are placed at locations where residents have concerns but injuries might not have occurred. They are in situ for a week at a time and then moved to a new location. Clearly the criteria for which one to implement is less onerous on the mobile VAS.

The Traffic Management team have checked the personal accident history at the above locations and fortunately there have been no injury accidents on the above roads in the 3 years preceding 30 November 2017 relating to speeding. There have been 3 incidents at the roundabout, which were all failure to give way or failure to look properly. So, a permanent VAS would be inappropriate.

If you would like to pursue the mobile VAS option then can you contact your local councillor to help you do that, or you can contact the Traffic Management Team directly at [Traffic.management@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Traffic.management@wokingham.gov.uk) to discuss suitable locations. Any severe or persistent speeding problems identified through this will then be passed through to Thames Valley Police to consider for enforcement

**85.6 Tahir Maher asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

**Question**

Many residents in Maiden Erlegh have signed my petition to try to save the Maiden Erlegh Public Library. What has the Council done to try to save the Library?

**Answer**

The decision to end the Council's use of the Maiden Erlegh School site for a library was taken by Maiden Erlegh School in accordance with the lease arrangements that have been in place for 34 years.

How the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for the residents of Wokingham Borough is currently being assessed and recommendations will be submitted for consideration once this assessment is completed.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for stating that the Council is at least committed to trying to look at options. Can I please ask when I can get the date of these options so that they are firmed up for the residents of Maiden Erlegh so that they know that the library is saved?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Our intention is to bring a paper to the June Executive meeting outlining how the closure will affect the library service and how we will continue to provide a library service. Anyone that has suggestions in the meantime then please send them through to me or the officers and we will have a good look at them.

**85.7 Sue Smith asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question. Due to her inability to attend a written answer was provided:**

**Question**

Can you give me an update on any proposed development of Area DD at Chalfont Park; is the Council still looking at a housing development on this space?

**Answer**

The Council is undertaking a programme of works assessing its property assets across the Borough to identify those which are surplus to requirements and/or which could be used in a more efficient way. Area DD is one such area which is currently being assessed and the option for residential use is one which is being considered. Further detail and options for the site will be available in due course once this initial assessment has been completed. We will ensure that we will consult with all stakeholder on the future of the site at the appropriate time.

**85.8 David Knee asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration the following question:**

**Question**

There is considerable evidence that there is over-provision of restaurants, eating houses etc. throughout UK. With the imminent closure of Prezzo in Wokingham and Woodley and the future of the Café Rouge chain in doubt, how confident are WBC that new eating establishments will open in Wokingham Town centre, notably, Peach Place, and thrive?

**Answer**

Nationally many of the large restaurant chains are struggling with several, such as Prezzo, closing branches or changing their business plans.

Various explanations have been given for this problem, including the increase in staffing costs due to the new living wage, fluctuating ingredient costs, too rapid overexpansion and many businesses entering into unsustainable rental deals simply to secure a location.

However, just as some of them are struggling, others are continuing to thrive as they provide the right offer, know their customers well and are very careful in making sure they

open units in the right locations.

In some ways the current changes in the market have helped us. We know the businesses we are dealing with want to be in Wokingham rather than simply ticking off a box in a campaign to open X number of units before Christmas.

These companies have carried out thorough market research, talked to us about what we believe Wokingham could be, looked at our detailed research into local demographics and are confident it is the type of location where they can be successful and thrive.

As we have said throughout, letting units at Peach Place and Elms Field has never been about simply offering to the highest bidder, and we continue to target companies, both chains and independent, that we believe are right for Wokingham and we are confident that these operators will contribute to delivering our vision for Wokingham.

From the comments we regularly receive from residents and local groups like Wokingham Gossip Girls, naming the types of businesses they would like to see in the town we believe people will be pleased when we start to announce our tenants later this year.

**85.9 Michael Smith asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

**Question**

With the forthcoming development of Elms Field as both residential and commercial properties, what plans are in place to mitigate the significantly increased environmental impact of the removal of the mature trees that previously would have absorbed the increased airborne pollution from the additional traffic, particularly as the current traffic loads constantly cause long stationary queues of polluting traffic on the nearby roads?

**Answer**

Whilst trees are being removed from the site at Elms Field about 100 new semi-mature trees are being planted as part of the development. These trees have been selected to improve bio-diversity and sustainability on the site and will also help mitigate pollution.

Other sustainability investment in the development includes designing buildings to achieve BREEAM Very Good status for commercial properties, inclusion of water fountains to refill water bottles and working with the Town Council to install split recycling bins within the park.

The Elms Field development also includes a new through road from Wellington Road to Shute End which will help address congestion and offer alternative routes within the town, working as part of a large number of highways improvements across the Borough to improve journeys.

Capturing more car parking on the edges of the town, as well as improving the town centre offer to reduce the need for residents to commute elsewhere, should also help reduce congestion. Having a great town centre on their doorstep means people will be able to walk to the town or cycle and take advantage of the increased cycle parking across the centre.

**Supplementary Question:**

Living in Lower Earley, walking into the town centre is difficult. Looking forwards what



plans do you have generally to cut traffic pollution throughout the Borough, due to increased traffic, due to increased housing?

**Supplementary Answer:**

There are a number of highways improvements; bypasses which will help the flow of traffic. We are also investing a substantial amount in cycleways. As you know from Lower Earley there is a good cycleway in Lower Earley, cycleways coming down into Wokingham town centre. We have also recently just opened a greenway so that people can walk or cycle between Finchampstead and the new development at Arborfield Green. As phase 2 of that greenway is underway in that area some of those developments will now be suitable for horse riding. There will be a leisure element as well as people getting places. So the greenway will allow people to go to the Bohunt School for example. So we are investing in a mix of ways of getting people around. Thankfully a lot of people use trains. As you see in Wokingham Station, the car park has been increased, more people using trains. Again in Lower Earley, Winnersh, Winnersh Triangle, the car park there is well used, so again offering alternatives to people taking cars to places. There are Park and Rides as well being installed. There are more Park and Rides planned. So a whole mix of things to try and get people not to have to drive everywhere that they want to go.

**85.10 Caroline Smith asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

**Question**

Over the years, benefactors have donated several parcels of land for the pleasure and enjoyment of the residents of Wokingham Town. What green legacy are YOU (the current Council) leaving for the future generations of residents of Wokingham Town?

**Answer**

The Council has secured through the planning process significant areas of new Public Open Spaces in recent years. Not only do we have some of the highest standards for the provision of Public Open Space in the local area, but we have also benefited from the need for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) in our area. So far we have consented 48ha (which is equivalent to 63 football pitches in size) of SANGs at 6 sites in the North and South Wokingham SDLs as well as providing 18ha at Rooks Nest Wood in Barkham. Five of these sites are already open to public and the remaining two should be opening in 2018/19. Across the Borough we have consented to date 183 ha of SANGs in total which is roughly the same size as Dinton Pastures, just to give you an idea of scale.

In addition the Council has purchased 26ha (equivalent to 34 football pitches in area) of land at Grays Fruit Farm in order to develop a new sports hub to provide high quality sports facilities that will complement Wokingham Town's existing sports hub at Cantley Park.

With regard to Elms Field in Wokingham town centre, despite rumours, this was never donated to the Council but was purchased from the owners for a substantial amount of money in 1956.

The Council is currently in the process of regenerating Elms Field and, as part of this work, is investing significantly in improving the park. This work includes completely landscaping the space with improved year round planting, large areas of grassed space and plentiful seating. The new park will also have a larger play area and the services needed to run community events such as water, foul drainage and electricity.

The new park will be managed by Wokingham Town Council on behalf of the residents of the town and we believe this space will become a fantastic legacy for generations of Wokingham residents to come.

**85.11 Rachel Bishop Firth asked the Executive Member for Adults' Services the following question. Due to her inability to attend the question was asked by Helen Power**

**Question**

Some of the Council owned garages on Ormonde Road are in a very poor condition. Repairs have now started (and thank you for this) - however a number of them are still damp and dilapidated. The cost of renting a garage is currently £48 / month. Will the Council be offering a rebate to those who are renting a garage which has not been maintained?

**Answer**

As you rightly pointed out the Council is undertaking a programme of repairs to its garage stock. To this end we have allocated a further £150K in the next financial year.

Our ability to undertake these works also requires the continuing collection of garage rents, any reduction in the rents would have an adverse effect on our ability to continue with these programmes.

**85.12 Morgan Rise asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:**

**Question**

You have been responsible for, or heavily involved in the planning of the many thousands of houses that Wokingham is currently in the position of having built in our area. You are now leading the latest local plan where even more houses could be coming, but the infrastructure to support these numbers of houses has not been delivered. When are we going to see plans to ensure our Borough has the infrastructure it needs to support its current and new residents?

**Answer**

First of all I was not responsible for the actual numbers. I was involved in where they should go. The plan you are asking to see already exists and has been in the public domain and has been frequently publicised since 2010, it is the Core Strategy (also known as the Local Plan). This plan sets out how we would accommodate the homes, requiring us to build some 13,000 in the years from 2006 to 2026, by carefully planning, providing and securing the money from developers for hundreds of millions of pounds of new and improved infrastructure and facilities.

Some examples of what has been done, such as:

- We have the Bohunt Wokingham Secondary School at Arborfield Green which opened in September 2016.
- Montague Park Primary School at Montague Park in Wokingham also opened in 2016 and, again, this was very early in the Montague Park phase.
- Part-funded the new Wokingham Medical Centre in Wokingham.
- We helped secure early funding for the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road - this was actually built by a contractor on behalf of the University of Reading and had some

- well-publicised construction delays but the early funding has meant that, despite the problems, it was opened before many of the new homes in the area were occupied.
- The Arborfield Cross Relief Road, which will take traffic away from Arborfield Cross Village, now has full planning permission.
  - Sections of the North and South Wokingham Distributor Roads have been built and we have recently signed a contract with Balfour Beatty to build our other sections of these as well as other major highways projects.
  - We have given planning consent, as Norman has said earlier, to 183 ha of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, or as I prefer to call them, country parks.
  - We have bought Grays Fruit Farm, again as Norman has mentioned, to become a new sports hub.
  - We will be rebuilding Bulmershe Sports Centre and the Carnival Pool and building a new swimming pool at Arborfield Green.

This massive infrastructure investment can be funded because we have been successful in getting financial contributions from developers, about £30,000 per new home at present and because we had a plan in place to deliver the improvements.

You are correct that we are overseeing a new plan – the Local Plan Update. We have been engaging with residents on this in recent years and will continue to do so in order to make sure future housing we are required to accommodate is also so well-served by new infrastructure.

I understand the basis of your question. Unfortunately infrastructure takes a while to build. We wish it could be delivered earlier but the important thing is, it will come. One new secondary school, seven new primary schools, a bridge over the M4, six major new roads, two railway bridges, country parks, new sports facilities at Grays Farm etc.

**Supplementary Question:**

I just want to talk about housing as you mentioned that the objective is how they assessed housing need has been increasing over the past months and now stands at a figure near 900 a year. This has been due to the release of a significant part of the ability of the Wokingham Borough Council being able to say it had a five year land supply. In a number of cases government inspectors have said that the Council has used out of date information to support the argument put forward and therefore upheld a number of appeals. I now understand the Council carried out more updated assessments on the number of houses actually being started and completed in the Borough. However, should this information not have been updated many months ago and may have been able to give the important figures to the Inspector before they started raising different points? It comes across as someone who has bolted the stable door after the horse has already bolted.

**Supplementary Answer:**

In terms of that, we carry out each year an annual housing assessment. The last assessment was carried out in January 2016 and it is based on figures of household projections which come from the Office of National Statistics. Those figures give us a figure of 856 we had to build each year. Appeal Inspectors increased that to 894. They increased on the basis that if you increase the required housing the price will drop. The problem was that they were not even building at the original figure. The original plan which I referred to, early 2010, was actually very clearly end led which meant because we were building in four large locations, the Inspector who reviewed our plan and agreed with it, a plan at which our local MP spoke in support, and myself as Leader as I was then. The Inspector agreed that we would be delivering more houses towards the end of our plan.

That has been shown to have been the case. Because we knew that was happening, I informed the Officers that I wanted an urgent review of the housing numbers carried out and we did that in November. It is normally carried out in April this year. We did it in November and we published that. The basis of that showed we did not have a 4.9 per year figure, we had a 6.78 year. We have had further good news because we have had a further update to the GL report and the report has given us, when we looked at the figures originally we were looking at 900, which you said, it now shows that we need to build on average on a five year basis, 801. Based on 801 we have a seven and a half year land supply. The problem that we have faced in the past is that the developers, and I would refer to them as carpet beggars, who are coming in taking advantage of a loophole in the law, were arguing that 4.9/5.1 was not enough, Appeal Inspectors were backing them, I believe incorrectly, and they were getting that through. They will have a much tougher fight but we will be fighting them. We will fight them all the way through the courts. We will not accept these inappropriate locations being pushed into these unsustainable locations. We are here to represent our residents and that we will continue to do.

**85.13 Guy Grandison asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

**Question**

Given the disappointing decision of the school to ask the Library at Maiden Erlegh to leave the site can the Executive Member confirm what is being done to ensure that Maiden Erlegh residents have access to sufficient library service?

**Answer**

The Council is analysing a range of information about the usage of Maiden Erlegh Library and the impact on residents of the decision taken by the school to use the library space for educational purposes.

I encourage users of the Maiden Erlegh library to use the other nearby libraries in Earley, Woodley or Winnersh. The opening hours of these libraries are longer than for the Maiden Erlegh library so most people should be able to access services in that way. There are also of course the online services.

Wokingham Borough Council also part funds bus services by Readibus and Keep Mobile. Earley Town Council part funds Readibus and Earley Bus for those who find it difficult to get around so these services are available to get to other libraries if required.

We are pleased in Wokingham that we have bucked national trends and we are seeing increased footfall in our libraries and we are committed to maintaining a comprehensive and efficient library service after we have vacated the Maiden Erlegh School site.

**85.14 David Cornish asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

**Question**

California Country Park has been fine as it is with just maintenance required for well-used features like the playground and the boardwalk. You've spent money clearing trees for a massive, unneeded and unfinished car park extension, but let the boardwalk fall into ruins. Why are you doing this?

**Answer**

California Country Park was purchased by the Council in 1973 and it became designated as a Country park 1980 and whilst there has been periodic capital investment the basic site infrastructure is in need of refreshment.

In addition the Borough population has grown considerably in this period and visitor numbers to our Country Parks have grown. Looking to the future it is clear that this trend is set to continue with developers currently building 3,500 new homes right on the edge of the park boundary in Arborfield.

Currently the park infrastructure struggles to accommodate the visitors we get on a busy day and it is essential that the Council makes investment to allow the park to continue to thrive in the future.

The boardwalk has periodically suffered from incidents of vandalism and we have carried out regular repairs over the years. However following the most recent incident, a significant amount of rot was discovered in the supporting structure and consequently we have come to the conclusion that the whole structure has come to the end of its life. The Council is currently looking at a number of options with regards to funding, with the aim of replacing the boardwalk at the Country Park.

**Supplementary Question:**

I am interested in your response that you are doing this ahead of development, but how much money is being spent on California and why did they prioritise that spend for houses that are yet to be built and residents that do not yet exist and what other priorities have you put further down the order of infrastructure investment?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I cannot give you a precise figure at the moment. A lot of it is clearly developer contributions through CIL and Section 106, so we look at California Country Park alongside the other things to see what is prioritised. We have earmarked a significant sum for California Country Park which we aim to carry out works for over the next year or so. In addition to that there is also the greenways, the one that has already been installed, and then Phase 2 of the greenway will happen this year. The planning for that is under way so a significant developer contribution is going into infrastructure of that sort in that area.

**86. PETITIONS**

The following members of the public and Members presented petitions in relation to the matters indicated.

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

Karen Davison, Maisie and Lillie	<p>Karen Davison, Maisie and Lillie presented a petition of 293 signatures regarding building a safe walking route to Grazeley Parochial Primary School.</p> <p><b><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport</i></b></p>
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Bob Pitts and Lindsay Ferris	<p>Bob Pitts and Lindsay Ferris presented a petition of over 1500 signatures regarding protecting the Borough's Green Belt.</p> <p><b><i>To be validated and considered for debate at Council.</i></b></p>
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**87. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that he had opened the new Maths wing at Emmbrook School with the former Headteacher. He had also started the Wokingham Marathon on 18 February and presented the cups to runners. A significant contribution had been made to the Mayor's Charity.

The Mayor had recently attended the Wokingham Horticultural Society Spring Show.

The Deputy Mayor commented that he attended the opening of Phoenix Avenue, the first of Berry Brook Home's six affordable homes. The event had been well attended and the Prime Minister had cut the ribbon.

The Mayor presented Bob Pitts with a photo album recording his year in office as Mayor.

**88. COUNCIL PLAN**

The Council considered a report setting out a review of the Council Plan, set out at Agenda pages 27 to 56.

It was proposed by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by David Lee that the recommendations within the agenda be approved.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor indicated that the Council Plan review looked back on the old Council Plan, what we said we would do, what we did, achievements and looking ahead at the creation of the new plan.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor highlighted some of the successes achieved. Wokingham consistently ranked as one of the best places to live and work, with good schools and health and social care services. Services had been maintained and in some cases extended. A new Council Plan would be drawn up over the next year which would set out the Council's vision and priorities for the coming years. Members, residents, partners and stakeholders including the third sector, would be engaged with.

Philip Mirfin commented that the Council had promised to create a thriving Wokingham town centre with the town centre regeneration plan. Various phases had begun work. Dialogue would begin with the other towns, including Twyford, Woodley and Earley, to look at opportunities for improvement in these areas.

Keith Baker referred to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement. There had been a reduction in anti-social parking in the Borough.

Lindsay Ferris commented that the Opposition had not been involved in the development of the existing Council Plan but would be involved in the consultation regarding the forthcoming Plan.

Mark Ashwell highlighted that the Council's Vision for Education was being developed strategically via Wokingham Learning Partnership; a partnership with schools, further education colleagues and the local authority. A Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 0-25 years was being developed and consulted on. A review of resource spaces for pupils for special educational needs was being undertaken. Mark Ashwell also referred to successes around foster carer recruitment.

Julian McGhee-Sumner commented that the Council's website content had been redesigned to make it more accessible via mobile devices. More services were moving online. Support would continue to be provided to those who were unable to access web based services. Reference was also made to the negative revenue support grant proposed by central government. Feedback received from residents attending 'Meet the Council events' suggested that expectations were being met or exceeded much of the time. A revised Statement of Community Involvement had been produced.

Stuart Munro referred to successes regarding new job and apprenticeship opportunities. The City Deal funding supported by the Elevate programme had helped broker 51 apprenticeships and 177 jobs. Stuart Munro also highlighted examples of engagement with small businesses.

Richard Dolinski informed Members that the Council was on target to deliver 500 affordable homes. In addition the Council was one of the top performing councils for getting people out of hospital and back into their homes, preventing bed blocking. The Community Mental Health Team was rated 'Good' and the Older Persons Mental Health Service was rated 'Outstanding.' Opportunities for carers in the community were increasing, including mental health support.

Norman Jorgensen commented that his portfolio was addressing the priorities including vibrant communities, health and wellbeing and quality of life and maintaining and improving waste collection and recycling. The collection of a wider range of plastics as part of the waste collection service had been introduced and, from April 2019, there would be a weekly food waste collection. Norman Jorgensen also highlighted the opening of 3G artificial surface football pitches across the Borough, plans to improve California Country Park and the new management contract for the operation of the leisure centres.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- 1) endorse and approve the publication and communication of the 2014-17 Council Plan achievements as attached in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 2) request that a Borough Plan for 2019-22 produced in partnership is presented to Council in February 2019.

## **89. CHANGE TO ORDER OF BUSINESS**

It was proposed by Alison Swaddle and seconded by Chris Smith that in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.2.2 the order of business in the agenda be changed so that Member Questions be considered prior to Changes to the Constitution.

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

## 90. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Council considered a report regarding proposed changes to the Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group, as set out on Agenda pages 57 to 124.

It was proposed by Paul Swaddle and seconded by Pauline Helliar-Symons that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Paul Swaddle informed the Council that it was his last Council meeting. He and Pauline Helliar Symons stressed the importance of extending the length of time given to present petitions at Council meetings.

Upon being put to the vote the it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council agree the following changes to the Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group:

1) Chapter 4 The Council Meeting

that Rule 4.2.19.2 be amended as follows:

**4.2.19.2 Petitions presented to Council**

*'...Members will be entitled to speak for no more than **three** minutes in support of a petition. A member of the public may present a petition at any meeting of the Council and will be entitled to speak for no more than **three** minutes in support of the petition...'*

2) Chapter 8 Regulatory and Other Committees

that Rule 8.2.7 be amended as follows:

**8.2.7 Speaking by Members other than [Planning] Committee Members**

*'...if the Member who wishes to speak is not the relevant Ward Member they will need to provide evidence that ~~he/she~~ (or their residents) are directly affected by the proposed development. **Ward Members directly affected by the proposed development should register to speak as either a supporter or objector as appropriate. In cases of applications situated in a single member ward and the Ward Member is directly affected by the proposed development, a Ward Member from an adjoining ward may be requested to speak on others' behalf.'***

3) that Section 9 Ethics and Corporate Governance be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;

4) revisions to the Procurement and Contract Rules and Procedures as highlighted in Appendix 2 to the report.

## 91. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2017/18

The Council considered the Annual Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, set out at Agenda pages 125 to 150.



It was proposed by Laura Blumenthal and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that the report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be noted.

Laura Blumenthal commented that scrutiny had had a very busy year and highlighted some of scrutiny's achievements over that period. This included undertaking more pre decision scrutiny, scrutinising Executive Members' portfolios and reviewing the 21<sup>st</sup> century Council project. In the next year scrutiny would continue to work closely with the Executive and residents.

Lindsay Ferris referred to the Select Committee which he and Malcolm Richards had attended. He commented that this year there had been a positive move forwards in scrutiny. He proposed that highways and planning be reviewed by scrutiny in the next municipal year.

Keith Baker commented that he was pleased that scrutiny was being proactive and looking forwards.

Angus Ross commented that he was pleased to see that scrutiny of the NHS providers and the Police had been undertaken and proposed that this also be extended to the Fire Service, particularly taking into account the impact of Grenfell and other more local matters.

Pauline Helliard Symons praised the work undertaken by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members were informed that there was now a standing Part 2 item on meeting agendas regarding schools causing concern. Local ward members were invited to attend and participate in discussions. The Executive Member for Children's Services provided regular updates to the Committee.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be noted.

## **92. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

The Council considered the Audit Committee Annual Report, set out at Agenda pages 151 to 154.

It was proposed by Anthony Pollock and seconded by David Chopping that the report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee be noted.

Anthony Pollock highlighted work undertaken by the Committee throughout the municipal year.

David Chopping commented that the Committee undertook an essential function and encouraged non-Committee members to attend meetings in future.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee be noted.

### **93. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

The Council considered the Standards Committee Annual Report, set out at Agenda pages 155 to 160.

It was proposed by UllaKarin Clark and seconded by Ken Miall that the report from the Chairman of the Standards Committee be noted.

UllaKarin Clark outlined the role of the Committee and indicated that the Committee had only had 3 complaints to consider during the year, all of which had required no action.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report from the Chairman of the Standards Committee be noted.

### **94. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Council considered the reports from Members appointed to Outside Bodies, set out at Agenda pages 161 to 210.

It was proposed by Charlotte Haitham Taylor and seconded by David Lee that the reports from Members appointed to Outside Bodies be noted.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor thanked Members for their valuable contribution.

Prue Bray requested that those reports still outstanding be provided in future.

Parry Batth and Pauline Jorgensen outlined the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Standing Conference on Archives, respectively.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That those reports from Members on Outside Bodies as circulated in the agenda and at the meeting, be noted

### **95. CHANGE TO ORDER OF BUSINESS**

It was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Imogen Shepherd-DuBey that in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.2.2 the order of business in the agenda be changed so that the Motions be considered prior to Statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members.

Upon being put to the vote, the Mayor declared the Motion to be lost.

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

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

Firstly, I just want to say that I fully support what Councillor Chris Smith said. It really has been a delight and a real privilege to see so many young people in the Chamber tonight. It is great to see Maisie and Lillie presenting their petition and having such courage to stand in front of all of us here tonight. By moving them forward in the agenda, I think that was absolutely the right decision and also moving the questions forward was again the right decision because we have to take consideration about when they want to go home. It is not about being selfish. It is actually about being considerate and hearing young peoples' voices here and we all have a responsibility to do that. I hope in the future that we will

have many, many more young people coming here and hopefully they will be our future politicians. It really has been delightful to have them here.

This will be the last meeting for a number of Members and I just wanted to start off by saying Councillor Bob Pitts, Councillor Alison Swaddle and Councillor Paul Swaddle will all be stepping down in these elections in May. Councillor Pitts from the wilds of Remenham, Ruscombe and Wargrave contributed to improving outcomes for children in care and represented the Borough at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and capped off his years on the Council by serving as Mayor. I know he had a great success in raising Mencap, his chosen charity. Councillor Alison Swaddle has been a real stalwart for her area and has always gone the extra mile for her residents on individual issues that have come into her inbox. She has been key in getting the plans for the rebuilding of Bulmershe Leisure Centre just right and has served all too briefly as the Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services. Lastly, Councillor Paul Swaddle has been our resident expert on the Constitution and possibly only second to none to Andrew Moulton and Anne Hunter in his knowledge of procedure. Who else could be there to point out to Opposition Members that points of order are not an opportunity to make a long speech. Mr Mayor, I am of course aware that you too will be stepping down in May, but seeing as I am told that you are going to remain Mayor for the next meeting I am going to come back then and say something hopefully favourable and very brief then if I may be permitted.

Of course we are on the cusp of election season and next week purdah starts. This is where we get to go out and sell our versions of an alternative vision for this Borough and I have no doubt that as Leader of the Opposition he can speak himself for his Group, but now let me talk about what some the priorities are for the Conservative Council and how we will deliver for our Borough. It is simply not good enough to deny those who do not currently enjoy the dream of owning a property the right to call a house a home. At the same time we do not want to be swamped by houses in the wrong places, that are simply unaffordable. We have and continue to put pressure on the Government to change planning rules around land banking and we have seen some positive signs for change from the Secretary of State. Our fight for a fairer system will continue. We are committed to providing public transport and roads to help residents make journeys that they need with the minimum of inconvenience. That is why we are investing £124million to develop major new roads in the Borough as well as investing in alternatives to car journeys. Our area is constantly shifting and changing and we need to adapt to meet the needs of our population as it evolves. We will deliver on regeneration which not only breathes new life into Wokingham town but will also bring in new money that will be invested into our vital services throughout the Borough.

As our Budget was passed last month showed we are investing in this Borough. We will sensibly manage this Council's finances, driving efficiency and exploring every opportunity for innovation. Following on from our meeting with the Prime Minister and other local MPs last week, the Chief Executive, Councillor McGhee Sumner and I met with Rishi Sunak, the local government minister, to raise the issue of Council finance. Not only were our ideas positively received but the Minister has agreed to work with us on schemes to encourage innovation and recognise productivity that can be piloted in Wokingham Borough. We will be meeting him again in May. This is the real strength of this Conservative administration. A Conservative Council talks and a Conservative Government listens. We do not do the politics of protest and we do not believe in empty rhetoric and heartfelt sentiments without any substance to improve things for the benefit of local people. Our residents want to see action and our records show that we have delivered and continue to deliver for Wokingham Borough.

**David Lee, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning:**

I was going to tell you all about the good news about our housing numbers but I have already done that. What I would like to just say is that I was very disappointed this morning to listen to Radio Berkshire, and I would like to correct a totally misleading and I believe politically naive statement made by Councillor Clive Jones on Radio Berkshire and indeed in the Wokingham Paper. He was talking about this Council's application to the Housing Infrastructure Fund for £300million to provide much needed and vital infrastructure for our Borough in respect of a possible development at Grazeley. Councillor Jones said, these are the exact words, 'they, (that is your Council) will get £300million in infrastructure. There will be a £450million shortfall. It will land on the doorstep of council tax payers.' He then went on to say 'I am sure local people are going to be campaigning against this and myself as the Liberal Parliamentary candidate will be supporting them.' Councillor Jones knows, or should know that the shortfall he refers to will be met by developers to provide the infrastructure that would be needed should Grazeley be selected as a development site, just as this authority has done on all our current development sites. This authority has forced reluctant developers to accept their responsibilities and provide the necessary infrastructure on their developments by ensuring they make the required contributions, which now equate to some £38-40,000 per unit. They were formerly £5,000 per unit. We got no infrastructure. Any developer on Grazeley will also contribute the infrastructure required. It is called Community Infrastructure Levy. Just to remind you of what has been achieved by forcing developers to accept this Conservative policy; 7 primary schools, 1 new secondary school, a new motorway M4 bridge, 2 railway bridges, numerous country parks, 6 new major roads, the first in 30 years, some 500 affordable houses. If Councillor Jones or any of his colleagues would like a workshop in CIL I will be delighted to arrange it. This is how you look after residents by providing the vital infrastructure and not by telling incorrect facts.

**Keith Baker, Executive Member for Highway's and Transport:**

I am very pleased that we did move the questions forward to allow the youngsters to leave early because I would not have wanted them to see the constant bickering and accusations that we get from the Opposition, calling us cowards. That is absolutely the wrong sort of behaviour for those youngsters to see from our councillors. Prue, I will be giving you new information, not repeated as you accused me of.

First of all, in a few days' time the successful Woodley trial where 10p was added to the 1 hour charge in the Council car parks will be implemented in all the remaining Council run car parks. To counter this extra cost to our residents, the £1 charge for evenings and weekends has been suspended for the length of the trial. This trial will last for 12 months and at the end of that period, the impact on the volume of tickets, the income and the accumulated length of stay will be reviewed. Based on that review the appropriate response will be taken, which could be anything in between making the change permanent to reverting the charges back to what they are today and anything in between. At the same time the 'free after 3' offer will be dropped.

I would just like to add a little bit more about the residents parking scheme review. The consultation document, I've already mentioned that we will have potential options for the new scheme that will have in it, benefits and disadvantages of that particular option. For example a lot people talk about a visitors permit. That obviously has the benefit of allowing visitors to visit a resident but the key disadvantage is it is yet more cars

competing for a finite number of parking bays. The outcome of that consultation will be used to inform the new scheme which will be targeted for the July Executive.

Today I received notification of 4 potential new controlled pedestrian crossings in the Matthewsgreen part of Wokingham. The locations have gone out to consultation to a large number of stakeholders including all the local councillors. Can I urge those local councillors to make comments as this is your chance to influence where they can be installed. I do not want to stand here and hear some of those Councillors saying we did not know about this, we were not consulted, yet again the Conservatives are not engaging with us.

Following a series of comments about the traffic in Wiltshire Road, a temporary Traffic Regulation Order has been issued lasting 6 months to provide additional no waiting stretches of road around the Wiltshire Drive area. Again, local councillors have been notified of this action and I hope to actually talk about more temporary Traffic Regulation Orders to address some of the key issues that we have got around parking and anti social parking. It is a good way to trial it and it does not have to go through the sorts of hoops that the permanent TROs do.

**Simon Weeks, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement:**

I really wanted to echo what my colleague David Lee was just talking about, that is the fact that so many of the houses that have been delivered in the last few years and are going to be delivered in the coming decade through our Strategic Development Locations which as we know are actually being delivered with a really rich infrastructure, which is funded by the developers. It is probably for that reason that as a Council Wokingham has been shortlisted for the UK Housing Awards in the Strategic Housing Delivery category. Last Friday I accompanied senior officers to London where we pitched a case to the panel of judges and answered their very significant number of detailed questions and I will update you when we have the results which are going to be on 2<sup>nd</sup> May which appears to be the day before another significant event.

The other point I just wanted to mention was that I will bring details to a future meeting, but I have just had a review of the annual new homes survey that is conducted by the Council. Members will be aware that this has now been conducted for 6 years and it is a survey which goes to all the new residents in the new properties that are built and asks for their views on the properties, all aspects of that, in order that we can try and see that we are building the right type of properties for the right people. I am very pleased to announce that the latest results for this year show a further improvement in the people who are satisfied or very satisfied with their new homes, getting very close to 90% now with one or two specific sites achieving 100% satisfaction levels. It is very interesting to note that those sites that have a poorer result are sites that were granted on appeal. These are sites which we did not consider to be up to the mark and guess what, the residents are echoing those views. I am also particularly pleased to announce that as part of that new homes survey we of course included all the residents of the new affordable homes which were are building and others are building on our behalf in ever increasing numbers. The actual results on the affordable homes are actually higher than the market homes so that is quite an exceptional result.

**Julian McGhee-Sumner, Executive Member for Finance, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council, Internal Services and Human Resources:**

I wanted to update Members on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council and the programme outcomes that we set. The first one was improving outcomes for our residents. We promised to

focus on the customer experience and where possible deal with any customer requests at the first point of contact, thus saving the need for the customer to have to repeat the information back to us. The good news is that we now deal with over 90% of these enquiries either at the first point of contact or where it is something more complicated at WBC then they do not need to repeat the information a second time. The second point is 'the right people, processes and systems'. We have restructured our management team. We have removed any waste and duplication which allows us to focus on getting the right people into the right contact posts, ensuring that we have the right tools to deliver their role and their systems, and be relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am happy to report that these changes are progressing well. The changes that we have made not only allow our officers to respond faster but also allows the customer to report issues to us in a more convenient way, such as electronically at a time convenient to them, which also allows them to track the issues and see how the matter is progressing. The third point is 'make the Council more efficient.' We continue to invest in new technology which allows our officers to be more efficient and spend their time where they are most needed. This ensures that the customer gets the response they need and remains fully appraised at every step of the way. Phase 1 has already delivered and Phase 2 will be delivered in two tranches and will continue until September 2018. Changes within People's Services has meant that further work needs to be done to ensure that the teams are fully equipped to deliver the services that our residents expect and these will be delivered towards the end of the year. Number four 'continue to meet our statutory requirements.' We are committed to delivering better customer services which will be easier and quicker to transact services with the Council, whilst allowing us to better target our resources needed by our customers and residents. We recognise that our residents value the service that they receive from the Council and whilst we remain the lowest funded authority, David said I had to get that in, we are committed to serving our residents and their families. These changes will make Wokingham Borough Council one of the most efficient councils in the country.

**Mark Ashwell, Executive Member for Children's Services:**

I would like to preview the two reports that I am taking to the Executive next Thursday. These are some of the two most worthwhile and proactive initiatives that I have been involved with since becoming a councillor nearly 4 years ago. I am now able to present to the Executive for its approval, a policy that will give council tax exemption to our very own recruited foster carers. Those recruited by us, for us. It delivers a positive public message that foster carers are massively valued and that our Council is supporting local residents and meeting local needs. This is also an amazing investment to save as a newly recruited in house foster carer saves us an incredible £450 per week per child. That is £235,000 per annum as opposed to using independent fostering agencies.

I am also presenting a policy that will give council tax exemption to Wokingham Borough care leavers. We are all corporate parents to youngsters in our care and when they reach the age of 18 they are then our care leavers. This cohort has an over representation of being in custody, being in homelessness, in poor mental health and a tendency for substance abuse. This is a fantastic way of helping them take the edge off of this transition and ease them into adult life. I am asking for approval up to the age of 21 years. This, while I go away with the help of my fabulous critical friends and colleagues in Children's Overview and Scrutiny, to work up a sliding extension from 21 to 25 years with a discretion for full exemption if necessary, and this is to encourage the responsible transition into adulthood that we are all seeking as corporate parents one and all.

I have two other policies that I would like to very briefly highlight please. That is the Primary School Places Strategy and this is to look at the need for primary school places

against short, medium and long term planning horizons. I will set up an informal cross party project group to consider the short term, being Woodley right now, and the medium term being our Strategic Development Locations. Woodley has seen an increase in demand and has an active housing market and the next wave of potential primary schools in our SDLs is upon us. These schools could open as early as 2020. The project groups would consist of interested Members, i.e. Woodley, and key stakeholders e.g. schools, Parish and Town Councils, and I am looking to take this to Executive later this year. Lastly, our Secondary Schools Places Strategy, Councillor Pittock. In recognition of the pressure of the tension that is potentially being created in secondary schools around the Borough with the success of Bohunt School, this will follow the lead of the more pressing Primary School Strategy, but it will involve a similar informal cross party project group consisting of interested Members and stakeholders. This, Your Worship, I am also looking to take to Executive this year so as you hear we are enjoying being incredibly busy in Children's Services.

**Richard Dolinski, Executive Member for Adults Services:**

As many of you know Wokingham Adult Social Care services and the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust integrated their front door services in June 2016, and since this time professionals and Wokingham residents have benefited from much more of an efficient and effective system. Callers are able to make enquiries for health and social care services to a single number and have access to a range of professional advice, information and support. This includes nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers. I am pleased to report that the service continues to show an extremely high level of customer service and customer satisfaction levels, and with an increasing success in first time fix for adult social care contacts. I think this is really exciting. As we move forwards towards an Integrated Care System across the NHS, our model is being seen as an example of best practice.

Finally, on social housing. Only this week we produced an updated version of the Council Tenancy Agreement for our tenants. We have consulted our tenants and have taken into account changes to legislation and have incorporated best practice. This best practice is going to deliver a better service for our residents.

Just quickly, I just want to say a big thank you to the officers in Adult Services and Health. They have been fantastic in supporting me as a new Lead Member, so thank you to them.

**97. STATEMENTS FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES**

**Gary Cowan, Non-Executive Director Loddon Homes Limited:**

Loddon Homes Limited continued to work in making sure that the housing management, care and catering arrangements at Fosters Extra Care scheme are all working well for the new residents moving into Fosters. An open afternoon was well attended by councillors and some council officers in advance of the formal opening planned for April this year. It was good to be able to see the building and speak informally to the residents, and my thanks go to all the Members and Officers who attended that day.

Work is also taking place to ensure that the housing management and care arrangements for 52 Reading Road are all in place for young care leavers, due to start moving in from April 2018. Initial meetings between Wokingham Borough Council housing services, social services and the appointed care provider P3, have been taken along with the first allocations panel meeting. Work is continuing with Housing Solutions on the sale of shared ownership units at Elizabeth Road and Barrett Crescent, due to be handed over at the end of March. One of the two units at Elizabeth Crescent has already been reserved

following independent valuation having now been undertaken to price the homes for sale. These are higher than our assessments in the appeals appraisal stage of the development so this should outperform Loddon Homes' business expectations.

## **98. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

### **98.1 Oliver Whittle asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

#### **Question**

The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) has resulted in better observation of the various parking restrictions, particularly as they relate to Residents Parking. Whilst non-residents are now being identified and discouraged from parking in Residents Parking spaces, the introduction of CPE has also identified the need to accommodate care workers, doctors, builders, and visitors who need to park near their clients and relatives, and sometimes stay for more than the maximum parking time permitted. Is the Council looking at ways to overcome this problem?

#### **Answer**

You are absolutely correct about the improved degree of enforcement of parking restrictions basically shining the spotlight on new issues. When the Police were the only authority to enforce parking restrictions, including those associated with residents permits restrictions, everyone, including the permit holders themselves, ignored the restrictions. Now some of them are getting Penalty Charge Notices for things they have done on a regular basis although prohibited as we now have better enforcement.

As a direct result a root and branch review of the whole residents parking permit scheme has been commissioned by myself to address these new issues. This was last carried out in 2011 also by myself when I had this role before. The target is that within the next few weeks all current permit holders will be consulted on a series of permit options to include in a future scheme. It will not change the current formulaic approach to deciding whether a road can have a permit scheme but will seek to add extra options to cater for some if not all of the categories you mentioned in your question.

The output of the consultation will inform the proposals for a new residents parking scheme. In a few cases it might also trigger a separate re-evaluation of all the parking spaces in a particular road but one is not dependant on the other.

#### **Supplementary Question:**

Can you confirm please when looking at ways of overcoming this problem that the expectations of residents in Wokingham town centre, which is partly my ward, are balanced against the need to provide adequate free on road short term parking spaces for shoppers?

#### **Supplementary Answer:**

In a simple word, yes.



**98.2 Angus Ross asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

**Question**

Could the Executive Member for Children's Services tell the Council about the borough's competitive Primary Schools Football competitions, set up over the last four years, and their successes?

**Answer**

The Wokingham District Primary Schools' Football Association was set up four years ago to introduce competitive football in Wokingham schools.

36 primary schools in Wokingham are involved and this has allowed us to host competitive leagues before and after Christmas.

We also hold 5 annual tournaments at the Madejski Stadium in partnership with Reading FC and the leagues and tournaments expose thousands of Wokingham children to football every year.

Our crowning achievement is the Wokingham District Under 11's team; From our primary schools we select the best 11 children and they go on to represent Wokingham for a year. They travel the South of England playing a variety of leagues and this season they will win the oldest and most prestigious league that the FA run in the UK and that is with one game to go. They are here tonight up in the gallery. In June they are going up to Liverpool to represent the South of England in the national finals, so thanks for coming boys and the coaches, Jack and Philip, and I look forward to you bringing the trophy back down south.

**Supplementary Question:**

We have only talked about the boys. Are there any other incidents recently of school sports teams excelling?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Bohunt, the school's under 13s girls football team, are edging closer to Wembley believe it or not. This team is in the midst of a fantastic season and are just one round away from reaching the prestigious London venue of Wembley. They have had an incredible 10 games back to back without losing and scored 48 goals, conceding just 2. That's the Bohunt under 13's girls' team.

**98.3 Ian Pittock asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

**Question**

Bohunt was designed and built for an intake of 180 pupils per annum, taking into consideration all planned housing developments. Over seven years this would fill the school classrooms to capacity including allowing for two years of 6th Form. Bohunt has increased their intake to 240 pupils per annum resulting in denuding other local secondary schools of pupils and associated funding and which will fill Bohunt to capacity faster, resulting in there being no room for 6th Formers who will, therefore, have to go elsewhere. WBC did not object to the increase in the annual intake, and did not involve local Members. The result is a threat to the funding of other local secondary schools and the lack of a 6th Form at Bohunt. What is WBC going to do to solve this?

**Answer**

An interesting question from a Councillor who only a year ago had the Executive responsibility for Bohunt School before giving up that responsibility to join the Opposition. As you well know it was the Council's intention to establish a 1200 place 11-18 school which implies an admission number in the order of 180 places. The increased admission number which means that the capacity will be required for the planned 11-16 roll has been set by the school itself. Bohunt Wokingham School is an academy and as such is an own admission authority school, responsible for setting its own admission number. National policy supports schools increasing the number of places that they offer in response to parental preference, so the Council had no grounds to object to this decision. I can also confirm that there is no presumption that Wokingham Borough will invest to enable the current students to progress into a sixth form on the site. My understanding is that the school has a funding arrangement with the Department for Education as an 11-16 school. The expansion issue will be addressed at a later date taking account of the Council's resources, the priorities at that point and the school's ambitions and other potential funding sources.

**Supplementary Question:**

Actually I ceased to have responsibility 2 years ago. We originally planned for an additional wing to be built at Bohunt in the event that there was a large increase in the number of pupils, living, repeat living, locally as included in the Local Plan, which is far from the case now or in the medium term. Can you tell me what the unfunded costs would be for WBC to build the extra wing on to Bohunt if it were to be built in the next couple of years? Is it somewhere between £5-10million as my construction industry contacts tell me?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think your construction industry contacts are probably correct.

**98.4 Philip Mirfin asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:****Question**

I know that there are concerns that a large number of mature trees have been felled in Elms Field. To the best of my knowledge, I know that many of those trees were unsuitable for a number of reasons and for every tree felled there, it will be replaced by 25% more semi-mature trees.

So my question is, across this Borough just how many new trees are being planted to ensure that our residents will continue to believe that Wokingham is the happiest place in this country and one of the best places to live?

**Answer**

I must just tell you that it was trees that got me first involved with being a councillor. I was really annoyed at all the trees being cut down when we were building all the back gardens. We were chopping trees down everywhere, we were congesting the roads, there were no new roads etc.

Just to answer the question, I could read out a boring answer but let me just tell you that with the 9 SANGS, country parks that we have built, we have planted in the last 7 years, 30,000 trees. What is not included in that figure is the one that I would suggest was the one that was my most happiest and most pleasing project when as Leader I arranged to

have a joint venture with Barbara Stagles and the Wokingham Veteran Tree Society. We funded 60 semi mature oak trees which were planted all around the Borough. I know that Angus planted one, many other people planted one. So we have not taken lightly, removal of trees but unfortunately when you are actually building something and a tree has to be changed or taken down, we have to do that, but we as has been said earlier on, we replace trees. 30,000 and 60 of those were to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, 60 years on the throne. I do not know if you have a supplementary but I do not see that as a bad record that this Council has achieved.

**Supplementary Question:**

Following on from your answer, should we apologise for removing some trees to be replaced or should we be proud of our record with respect of trees?

**Supplementary Answer:**

It is a bit difficult to answer that because removal of any ancient tree is not taken lightly, so yes I am sorry that we see the loss of those trees but I am also delighted that as a Council we are committed to replacing them more than one for one.

**98.5 David Chopping asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:**

**Question**

Could the Executive Member confirm this Council's Policy on encouraging affordable housing on all new developments within the Borough and this Council's record on delivering what we promise?

**Answer**

The Council's policy for affordable housing on new developments is set out in Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, so if you have nothing to do tonight when you go to bed you can read that and you will see exactly what that is. This requires all sites over 5 homes to provide a percentage of homes as affordable housing. The percentage varies depending on the size etc, but it is around 35%. I would just like to point out that before we had the current policy, which we are operating on, you had to build 15 houses or more to provide an affordable house. The amazing thing, and I can never understand, is that developers always seem to focus on a figure of 14, so I think we have got a pretty good result here.

The Council has an excellent record of securing these affordable homes with only a handful of viability cases being accepted, and that is where the developer says I cannot possibly afford to provide any affordable homes. 35% has been secured on all of the SDLs through a mix of on-site provision and commuted sums.

As a result, you have heard earlier on, that we are on a target to build some 500 affordable houses this year, of which 120 will have been provided by our own housing company. Of this 120 I am delighted that our new extra care unit in Woodley, by the way Woodley never get anything I believe, will provide 34 brilliant homes for our vulnerable and a new halfway house for young people leaving care.

**Supplementary Question:**

It is in relation to the provision of the land itself. On behalf of the housing companies can I ask please can we have some more land?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Yes.

**98.6 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:****Question**

I have been receiving an increasing number of complaints regarding the lack of parking facilities for businesses in areas with Residents Parking Permits. This is having an impact on both local businesses and others. Several have received parking tickets and many residents are having problems finding spaces for someone like a plumber, builder, cleaner or other to park.

I made a suggestion about a year ago where Wokingham Borough Council could provide a Business Parking Permit, one that allows a local business to park in these areas, but restricted to Mon - Fri 8am - 5pm with an appropriate annual charge.

Can the Executive Member responsible please advise what action is being taken to assist these businesses?

**Answer**

It is very interesting that the number of complaints around roads with resident parking permits has increased recently especially along the same lines as you have been talking about. It raises the question which I have raised before as well as to why this is happening. Absolutely nothing has changed, no new residents bays have been created, no non-residents bays have been removed so why the increased complaints? I can only assume this is because the complainants are now being caught ignoring the parking restrictions.

As I have already announced in a previous answer we will be carrying out a root and branch review of the current residents parking permit scheme but it is highly unlikely that they will be changed to allow additional drivers to park in a resident's bay. The issuing of residents parking permits is extremely tightly controlled and restricted to residents who do not have or have extremely limited off street parking with their properties. Almost every road with residents parking bays have significantly more permits issued than spaces available so those residents must be the priority for those spaces.

Our neighbour Reading Borough Council has such a scheme as you propose for which they charge up to £330 per permit, so it could be a money earner. In Reading they have parking permit zones, about 6 of them, rather than individual roads which we have which means a permit holder has the option of parking at over 500 different bays in each of those 6 zones. We only have 341 spaces in total across the whole Borough. We already have an option which businesses could use to satisfy your requirement, which is called a car park season ticket which we could look at special rates if the businesses wanted to contact us.

**Supplementary Question:**

I think that there is lots of small businesses in this area who will not be very happy with an answer like that because people visit for a short period of time as I was talking about. However, I will move on. I registered 14 roads in Twyford which were having issues. In fact I raised the issue about the introduction of Civil Parking with the officers 12 months ago, before it was introduced. We have commuter parking problems in Twyford. The cars

that park there are not parking in illegal places but they are causing major problems. Can I ask what actions the Executive Member is doing for areas which are located around our railway stations and Twyford in particular?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Certainly I will although it is nothing to do with residents parking permits or the business parking permits, but I will answer it. The Enforcement Agency is going out there already ticketing people, which is why we are getting a lot more complaints. That activity will continue. There is an option for the local Parish Council or any Town Council, if they wish to, fund additional activity, which would obviously be focused by them if they paid for it.

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

**Question**

Following the upgrade of the street lighting in the Borough can the Executive Member give me an update including savings made?

**Answer**

It will be a brief answer. The target "End Date" for the Street Lighting Upgrade Project is not until the 31 March this year, so officers will not have the accurate position of the outturn of completed and outstanding units. Until the contractor has submitted his completions list, which will happen in the first week in April, we will not know. Once the final position is known officers will provide a full status update for Councillors, in response to this question.

**98.8 Motion without notice**

It was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Imogen Shepherd-DuBey that, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12n), Procedure Rule 4.2.10.8 be suspended to allow Member Question Time to be extended to enable all questions to be heard.

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

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

**Question**

Is the Council aware of any proposals for potential housing or other development south of the M4 near Cutbush Lane? Recently engineers have been taking soil cores in University owned fields which suggests possible development that would seriously impact my residents in Hawkedon ward.

**Answer**

As we are updating our Local Plan, as I think you know, many sites have been promoted, some which meet this general description and can be found on our website in the document or interactive map below:

- [Suggested sites for development list \(PDF document\)](#)
- [Interactive map of suggested development sites website](#)

We have a number of formal applications in Shinfield which are on University land; these are in the public arena and are reported to relevant lead Members through normal governance arrangements.

**Supplementary Question:**

I have looked at the Local Plan map, David and the area that I am talking about is not included on there so maybe you can have a chat with your friends at Reading University and see if they are planning on putting some houses there in the next few years?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think if somebody owns a field they can do what they like on the field as long as they do not build a house without permission

**98.10 Imogen Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:****Question**

The residents of Emmbrook have seen very little progress when it comes to the new roads that WBC are expected to build. This is creating a number of questions about WBC's commitment to building the infrastructure that we need. In particular, this relates to the Western edge of the Northern Relief Road, Winnersh Bypass and the Forest Road improvements, where there is very little progress information available to both Councillors and the public. When are we going to see practical information, such as timelines and real time progress status for these projects and ideally have something publicly available on the WBC Website?

**Answer**

I find this a bit amazing to tell you the truth because in our Borough News we discuss this. Regular updates on the major road projects are provided at each of the community forums along with updates on the Council's website and to Lead Members and to the Strategic Highways Board on which Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey sits. So I am amazed that you think that the information is not actually being provided. The information typically provided includes the project programme for all major infrastructure including road schemes along with an update on the project status and an identified completion date. For highways the Council is now within a SCAPE contract to build all of these major road schemes and bridges, this information has been made available through the above media as well as in media releases through newspapers and social media, including the Council's website. Directly related to requested traffic calming features along Old Forest Road, a series of workshops and meetings has been attended by local Members, Councillors and local resident representatives, with any number of emails flying back and forth about it so I think you all know that.

The Council is committed to delivering the major road schemes which is supported by the recent planning approvals and project progressions associated with the Arborfield Cross Relief Road and the South Wokingham Eastern Gateway. Results on the ground at Station Approach, Shinfield East, Montague Park and in parts of North Wokingham are already finished and open.

The major projects being delivered are significant and challenging and therefore real time progress status is not very practical. However, it is considered that through the outlets mentioned above, and especially through Rachelle who you know, the information being sought is already available.

**Supplementary Question:**

This is not a question about what Rachelle knows, it is about what information is publicly

available. Why is there not information on the website where people can look up what particular things are doing?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Well as far as I know we deliver this [Borough News] to each house and as far as I know, we took a double page spread in the Wokingham Paper. We do everything else, unless you want me to go physically around the 62,000 units that exist in this Borough. I do not know what else we can do.

**99. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS**

Due to time constraints, Minutes of Committees and Ward Matters were not considered.

**100. MOTIONS**

**100.1 Motion 402 submitted by Prue Bray**

Due to time constraints the Motion was not considered and, in accordance with Rule 4.2.8.1, was deemed to have fallen.

**100.2 Motion 403 submitted by Richard Dolinski**

Due to time constraints the Motion was not considered and, in accordance with Rule 4.2.8.1, was deemed to have fallen.

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